

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Local Access Forum Annual Review 2023 to 2024

Chairman – Geoff Priest
Vice Chair – Lisa Hughes

Total number of LAF members (at 3 rd December 2024)	16
Number of members representing users of public rights of way or access land	8
Number of members representing owners and occupiers of access land or land over which PROW subsist	1
Number of members representing other interests	5

Member Interests and Organisations

British Horse Society
Ramblers Association
Disability and Inclusion Forum
Windsor, Ascot, Maidenhead Active Travel
Windsor Cycle Hub
Parish Councils
Climate Awareness and Local Nature Recovery
National Farmers Union

Meeting Diary

Dates of the meetings: 20th June 2023, 28th November 2023, 22nd July 2024, 3rd December 2024.

All meetings are held in the evening The Town Hall, Maidenhead. Members of the public may attend in person (after contacting the Secretary in advance) or watch via YouTube online.

Guest Speakers

RBWM Natural Environment team
Greg Nelson – RBWM Trading Standards & Licensing Manager
Claire Taylor – LAF member and member of Eton Wick Waterways Group
Steve Sansom – Age UK Berkshire

Monitoring Success

As part of the annual consultation review of the Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026, the LAF provided feedback and comments on the targets and objectives for the coming year through which progress, workloads and priorities are monitored. The chair and vice chair were duly elected from among the membership in July 2021 to serve for a two-year term and were then re-elected for a further two years in June 2023.

Recruitment and Training

The RBWM LAF remains keen to target recruitment at youth groups and local colleges to increase engagement with young people in the work of the LAF.

RBWM LAF – Long time LAF member representing walking and the East Berkshire Ramblers stepped down in October 2023, though was suitably replaced with another ramblers member. One other member left the Forum following the May 2023 election results.

The LAF are always on the lookout for good value training opportunities including possible site visits.

Advice and Activity

- LAF Chairs Meetings - The LAF was active in the restart of the LAF Chairs meeting, regional get togethers to share information and best practice amongst LAFs in the southeast. The first LAF Chairs meeting in four years took place in July 2022. Discussion included need for engagement with central government, Natural England and Defra and greater information sharing/communication between LAF's regionally and nationally. Further meetings took place in January 2023, June 2023 and December 2023. Unfortunately, no further meetings have happened in 2024 due to lack of staff resource to organise.
- Public rights of way diversion application for Maidenhead Footpath 19. The Forum commented on the informal consultation with the decision to make the order made by the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel.
- The LAF commented on the consultation to continue the PSPO (Dog Control) and PSPO (Cycling in pedestrianised areas) in February 2024. In general, the consensus was that both PSPO's ought to be continued however there were comments which did not receive full consensus within the Forum which related to altering the timings for cycling access in pedestrian zones. As a result of feedback, a subsequent PSPO Cycling times variation consultation was published in June 2024 to allow cycling.
- The LAF received the annual Milestones Consultation in late 2023 and responded in February 2024. The Council produces a Milestones Statement & Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review, which sets out priorities, targets and service standards for public rights of way work in the coming year, and reviews progress made in the previous year. Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel approved the 24-25 Milestones Statement on 20th May 2024.
- Informal Bisham FP21 Diversion Proposal (April 2024) LAF Fast Response Team – supported the diversion proposal subject to the issues identified regarding surface and accessibility. Further discussion of this proposal is still taking place with the Parish, landowner, planning enforcement and user groups.
- The Natural Environment team consulted the LAF on one occasion this year, for an update on the Biodiversity Action Plan and concerning the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire.
- Other consultations noted by the Forum were on Active Travel - LCWIP delivery across the borough with members invited to comment on several walking and cycling

improvement schemes such as those proposed for the upgraded crossing and more recent junction improvements at St Leonard's Road, Windsor and pedestrian/cycling zone at King Street, Maidenhead.

- Temple Footbridge closure – Thames Path National Trail – a highly contentious issue on this high-profile route being tracked by the Forum over the last two years highlights the problem of Thames crossings and other wide span timber bridges such as those across the Jubilee River and elsewhere on the public rights of way network which are deteriorating and coming to end of life. Forum members were quoted in the local press and are aiming to keep lobbying the relevant organisations (The EA) as well as central government for funding to resolve.
- Members heard with keen interest of a cross boundary issue affecting the public rights of way network in Eton and Eton Wick concerning flooding of local waterways and the ways in which these issues could be resolved.

Site meetings

Oct 2024 – Members attended St Leonard's Road Cleaner Greener Safer Streets - recent proposals to create a safer walking and cycling experience at the busy junction area and NCN link towards Windsor Great Park at Stag Meadow.

Subgroups activity

Accessibility Working Group – though stalled over the last year due to lack of resource there is still intent within the LAF to progress this project to put accessible walking routes on the website.

Multi-User Working Group – the enthusiasm of remaining equestrian member of this group has been noted due to their continuing endeavours to raise the issue of horse riders as vulnerable road users and to ask the council's Active Travel team to confirm that multi-user routes are pursued with full consideration of the needs of horse riders as well as cyclists and pedestrians.

Cycling Groups – LAF members representing WAMACT and WCH have continued their drive towards influencing the RBWM Transport team's vision of what Active Travel should look like across the borough. Feeding into design and outcomes from site specific schemes such as the St Leonard's Road scheme, in Windsor, amongst others. Reporting to the LAF on their activities and vocalizing the requirement for education across the road user hierarchy to encourage considerate behaviour.

Working Group – meeting in September 2024 the group started the review and update of the LAF's Planning Position Statement.

Volunteer Works

The LAF noted reports for ongoing volunteering activity across the network happening in 2023. The number of volunteer workdays total = 31 as well as 375 hours spent by the East Berkshire Ramblers undertaking the Spring and Autumn condition surveys.

Volunteer Groups include- The Conservation Volunteers, Good Gym, BCA Foundation year volunteers.

Challenges

Same as last year – even greater reductions in resources in terms of officer time/workload/budget/Council support.

Same as last year – No clear guidance or support from Defra or Natural England.
Pushing the access agenda within the need for sustainability.

Looking Ahead

The Forum continues to be interested in improved provision for horse riders in conjunction with multi-user provision.

Building communication links with parishes and communications within different teams of the appointing authority.

Comments from LAF Chair

" The PROW team worked hard in the last year to produce excellent results with a reduced headcount; meeting or exceeding the various targets agreed by the LAF. The team always seek to involve members of the LAF in upcoming RBWM projects that they consider have a relevance to the remit of the forum."

Geoff Priest (Chairman)

25th May 2024