

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 APRIL 2022 AT 7 PM by Microsoft Teams video conference

PRESENT: Cllr D. Cornish, Chair.
Cllrs E. Biskup; S. Bromley; G. Jukes OBE and S. Weeks.

K. Dagnall, Clerk.

23/2022 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs. R. Margetts and R. Woof, and Mr. J. Alexander, Footpath Warden.

24/2022 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

25/2022 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2021 were agreed and will be signed retrospectively in due course.

26/2022 MATTERS ARISING

486/2021 Risk assessment

Cllr Woof will complete the review of the final circular walk. Carry forward.

486/2021 Permission to work on rights of way

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has indicated that it may be possible to develop an arrangement allowing Town and Parish Councils to carry out more work on rights of way. Wokingham Without Parish Council (WWPC) has been working on a pilot with WBC and it is hoped that this will lead to an agreement being put in place which other Local Councils can adopt.

The Clerk will contact WWPC regarding the current position.

27/2022 INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2022/23

Details of the 2022/23 budget were circulated. There has been no expenditure to date.

It is expected that any larger works will be covered by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.

28/2022 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

The Rights of Way Project List was circulated, and current / priority projects were discussed.

Footpath 1 (Farley Hill)

Loddon Valley Ramblers has been in contact with a proposal to divert the footpath, drawn up in conjunction with the landowner. It was agreed that the proposal would be acknowledged but no comments would be submitted pending a visit to the area, and discussion with WBC.

Bridleways on The Ridges

The British Horse Society put forward a proposal involving a range of improvements to access for horses, but the National Trust has stated that these are not compatible with its aims and will not be progressed.

Rooks Nest Country Park – access improvements

The Parish Council and WBC need to make a joint decision on whether to proceed with the project. WBC has still not responded to a request made in December 2021 for a meeting to discuss the next stages. The Clerk will continue to follow this up.

Footpath 8 – width issues

The ongoing issue with encroachment due to a hedge alongside the path is still not resolved. WBC had committed to follow this up in May 2021 with a view to securing a long-term solution to the problem. This will be raised at the next meeting with WBC.

Cemex UK Ltd sites at Fleet Hill Farm and Manor Farm / future Nature Reserves

The Parish Council has submitted comments on the recent planning application regarding amendments to the restoration plans for land at Fleet Hill Farm.

A meeting will be arranged with WBC for May 2021 to discuss the next stages with the restoration and to push for completion of the sites at the earliest opportunity.

This will include discussion on the upgrade and redesignation of Footpath 33 to form an extension to the bridleway network; the current situation with the proposal to redesignate Footpath 29 as a bridleway, and links and safe access between paths on the Manor Farm and Fleet Hill Farm sites.

Bridlepath 26 drainage improvements

An order has been placed for the works, involving clearing the blocked culvert and ditches and installing a pipe to divert water from the path.

The timescale for implementation depends on the WBC requirements over closure of the path during the works. At present it appears a full closure will be required through a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, at significant cost and causing a 3-month delay. Cllr Weeks agreed to follow this up with WBC.

‘Missing link’ between bridlepaths 26 and 34

The Parish Council, the British Horse Society (BHS), the Ramblers and WBC are all keen to see this link designated as a public right of way.

Following research, the BHS has decided not to apply for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO). It is proposed that WBC approach the landowner regarding a ‘Deed of Dedication’. If this is refused WBC has suggested a ‘Deemed Dedication’ for which evidence of use will be required.

This will be raised at the next meeting with WBC.

Cycle routes to Wokingham

- Cllrs Cornish and Margetts met representatives from WBC and Sand Martins Golf Course in April 2021 to discuss the potential upgrading of a section of public footpath around the Golf Course to a permissive cycle path.
- WBC had agreed to prepare a proposal for a survey and feasibility study and provided a cost for this in March 2022, but this was significantly higher than anticipated. Cllrs Cornish and Margetts and the Clerk met WBC in March 2022 and agreed an alternative approach; WBC has now produced an outline feasibility study,

funded by the Parish Council. This will now be looked at in detail such that the next stages can be considered.

- It was noted that Wokingham Without Parish Council has recently worked with WBC to implement resurfacing work on Byway 28 which runs from Nine Mile Ride, alongside Gorrick Wood and to Wokingham.

WBC had previously provided a proposal to create a path alongside Nine Mile Ride heading east from its junction with the Sandhurst Road. This would link with paths through Gorrick Wood and Byway 28. It was agreed that this proposal would be looked at again and discussed with WBC and Wokingham Without Parish Council.

Fleet Hill path to link Footpath 29 with the Tally Ho

This potential link is included in the WBC Rights of Way Improvement Plan and forms part of the Blackwater Valley Path. The Loddon Valley Ramblers have been in contact regarding working together to progress its implementation.

Cllr Cornish has visited the site to assess feasibility and constraints, and the project was discussed with WBC at a recent meeting. WBC has committed to undertake a highway safety study as the first stage in evaluating whether a path is feasible in this location.

29/2022 CIRCULAR WALKS, PROMOTION AND SIGNAGE

No cycling / no horses signs

Several of these signs, explaining to horse and cycle riders why they should not be using paths intended and suitable only for walkers, were installed in 2021. Additional / replacement signs are available from Cllr Cornish or the Parish Council Office.

Circular walk way markers / right of way finger posts

Some circular walk way markers are missing, damaged or dirty and it was noted that some fingerpost signs are now obscured by vegetation and should ideally be relocated.

Cllr Cornish agreed to develop a proposal to cover the checking of the circular walks, with a view to Councillors replacing way markers as they find them. Cllr Woof has a stock of replacement way markers.

Any issues with fingerpost signs should be reported to the Clerk who will collate a list for submission to WBC.

QR code links to path / route information

- It was previously agreed that signs with QR codes linking to information about the path including its designation and number should be trialled on one of the circular walks. Cllr Gurney and the Clerk have made some progress with this, using the St. James' Church walk as a trial, and intend resuming work on this soon.

Circular walk maps

- The maps have now been updated to the new style and published on the Council's website.

Proposed Finchampstead to Crowthorne circular walk

- Cllr Cornish previously circulated information on a proposed new circular walk. Cllr Cornish will check the draft directions and Cllr Woof agreed to undertake a map-based check of the route. Carry forward.

Potential 'South Wokingham walks'

- At a previous meeting the possibility of working with neighbouring Parishes to promote 'south Wokingham walks' was discussed. In its simplest form this could be publishing information on walks developed by other Parishes, or new walks could be developed with consistent signage and promotion.
- To avoid any duplication this would need to include consideration of existing walks including those promoted by the Ramblers and the AA. Cllr Biskup agreed to start a desk top study to identify existing routes and Cllr Cornish will look at maps available to assist with the project.

30/2022 CONDITION / MAINTENANCE OF RIGHTS OF WAY

Paths requiring more significant improvements are covered under agenda item 28/2022 'Improvements to the Rights of Way Network' above.

- Footpath 3: Reading Road to New Mill Road. Flooding issues were reported to WBC in early April 2022.
- Footpath 6: Section before descent to White Horse Lane is wet and muddy with a trench forming in the path. This is a recurring issue and has been reported to WBC on several occasions. The Clerk will report this again.
- Footpath 19: Drift Lane to The Ridges. Sections of this path were muddy in February 2022. The origin / owner of a pile of scalplings near the section is unknown. The condition of the path will be monitored.
- FP29/33: The Clerk has asked Cemex UK Ltd if it can assist with laying material on the muddy area at the junction of the two paths, as an interim measure pending future improvements to the path.
- A section of path west of Rooks Nest Woods is badly flooded, apparently due to a ditch being blocked. This is within Barkham Parish and has been reported to WBC.

31/2022 FORUM

Cllr Weeks advised that the Finchampstead Society May Day Walk will take place on Monday 2 May at 11am. The starting point may be the Memorial Hall or Manor Farm – contact Cllr Weeks for details.

32/2022 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held on 6 July 2022 at 7.30pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS – RoW 27 April 2022

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)
26/2022	Complete risk assessment of third circular walk	RW
26/2022	Contact WWPC over proforma agreement with WBC over path works	Clerk
28/2022	Update project list and actions to taken	Clerk/ all
28/2022	Arrange meeting with WBC to discuss FP8 / Missing link / path on NMR east of Sandhurst Road	Clerk
29/2022	Suggest sections of routes for Cllrs to check and replace way markers as required. Collate information on fingerposts needing relocation	DC/all All/Clerk

29/2022	QR code trial for one circular walk	SG/Clerk
29/2022	Finchampstead – Crowthorne circular walk Walk route to check instructions. Map route. Draw up and publish directions and map in same style to other walks. Consider adding information on features.	DC/RW/Clerk
29/2022	South Wokingham walks proposals Desktop study of existing walks DC to prepare brief / maps for EB/other	EB DC
30/2022	Monitor progress with resolving condition issues	Clerk