

## FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 JUNE 2022 AT 7.30 PM by Microsoft Teams video conference

---

**PRESENT:** Cllr D. Cornish, Chair. Cllr. R. Margetts, Vice Chair.  
Cllrs S. Bromley; S. Gurney; G. Jukes OBE; S. Weeks & R. Woof.

K. Dagnall, Clerk.

#### **127/2022 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr E. Biskup and Mr. J. Alexander, Footpath Warden.

#### **128/2022 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present.

#### **129/2022 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 were agreed and will be signed in due course.

#### **130/2022 MATTERS ARISING**

##### **26/2022 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 for an update.

#### **131/2022 INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2022/23**

Expenditure to date is £27 on fuel for the Warden's equipment.

#### **132/2022 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK**

Current / priority projects were discussed.

##### **Footpath 1 (New Mill Road to Farley Hill)**

As noted at the previous Committee meeting, Loddon Valley Ramblers has been in contact with a proposal to divert the footpath, drawn up in conjunction with the landowner.

Cllrs Cornish and Jukes visited the site on 28 June with a representative from the Ramblers. It was agreed that the proposed diversion would benefit walkers and would be supported. It was noted that the diversion would remain informal – a permissive path - until such time as an application is made to WBC to formalise the route through a Definitive Path Modification Order (DMMO).

The existing right of way remains in place and useable, but signage is in place recommending the use of the new alternative route.

The Clerk will advise the Ramblers and WBC of the Parish Councils support for the alternative route.

The Ramblers have requested a contribution toward the provision of one of the three kissing gates needed to replace stiles on the route in order to make the path from Church Lane, Farley Hill to Forges Lane stile free.

It was agreed that a contribution of £550 would be made, subject to this being approved by Main Council. It is proposed that Community Infrastructure Levy funds will be used to fund the gate.

### **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.

### **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. The Clerk is following this up with WBC. If necessary, the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways will be contacted.

### **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.
- Following a meeting between Cllrs Cornish and Margetts, the Clerk and WBC in March 2022, WBC has now produced an outline feasibility study, funded by the Parish Council. The study indicates that the route is feasible provided width issues at two specific locations can be overcome.
- WBC is currently promoting active travel and may have funding available through the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Cllr Margetts has contacted WBC Cllr Fishwick, the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, and a meeting is being arranged to discuss the current position including any alternative proposals for cycle routes to Wokingham.

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

In April 2022 the Parish Council submitted comments on the planning application regarding amendments to the restoration plans for land at Fleet Hill Farm.

A meeting will be arranged with WBC 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.

Cllr Weeks advised that FP54 alongside the Blackwater River now has new warning signage and locks on the gates where the path crosses the gravel haul road from Hampshire to

Manor Farm. This indicates that the path is closed. The Clerk will report this to WBC and Cllr Weeks will contact Inert, the contractor working on site.

Cllr Weeks will also seek information from Inert regarding their programme of works at Manor Farm.

### **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 visited the site to assess feasibility and constraints, and the project was discussed with WBC at a meeting in March 2022. WBC committed to undertake a highway safety study as the first stage in evaluating whether a path is feasible in this location. The Clerk has requested an update.

### **'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 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 followed up with WBC.

### **Footpath 8 – width issue**

A further matter to be raised with WBC is what action is being taken to address the ongoing issue with encroachment on Footpath 8 from a hedge alongside the path.

### **Manor Farm permissive path**

The permissive path on Manor Farm was closed by the landowner in May 2022. It is understood that this was initially due to a spate of thefts, then to concerns over a proposal to make the path a bridlepath. Cllr Cornish agreed to contact the British Horse Society to request that the proposal is withdrawn.

## **133/2022 CIRCULAR WALKS, PROMOTION AND SIGNAGE**

### **Circular walk way-markers / right of way finger posts**

Some of the 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.

It was agreed that the circular walks should be checked, with Councillors replacing way markers as they find them, or installing new as required. Way markers can be collected from the Parish Office.

Any issues with finger post 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.

### **Proposed Finchampstead to Crowthorne circular walk**

- Cllr Cornish previously circulated information on a proposed new circular walk. Cllr Cllr Woof has undertaken a map-based check of the route and agreed to check the walk on foot.

#### **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. The Clerk has provided Cllr Biskup with a list of publications and other reference points. Cllr Woof will forward any relevant Ordnance Survey information to Cllr Biskup.

#### **134/2022 CONDITION / MAINTENANCE OF RIGHTS OF WAY**

Paths requiring more significant improvements are covered under agenda item 132/2022 '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. Issue apparently resolved.
- 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. Issue apparently resolved.
- 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. Cllr Cornish will check the path.
- 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. Agreed that this is unnecessary and will not be progressed.
- A section of path west of Rooks Nest Woods was badly flooded, apparently due to a ditch being blocked. This is within Barkham Parish and has been reported to WBC. Issue apparently resolved.
- FP52: A complaint has been received recently about the path from Waverley Way to Sand Martins Golf Course, which also links to other local paths. The path is said to be overgrown and fallen trees are reducing head clearance. The path is also muddy at times. Cllr Gurney will check the path.
- Byway 24 / Heath Ride: The work undertaken to the path by WBC in 2019, funded by the Parish Council, has significantly improved the path but with the level of use further work is likely to be needed within two years. It was agreed that this should be raised with WBC with a view to permanent improvements being made to the path, particularly as WBC is promoting it as a cycle route.

#### **135/2022 FORUM**

No matters were raised.

**136/2022 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The scheduled date for the next Committee meeting is 7 December but it was agreed this should be brought forward. The Clerk will arrange a date for the autumn.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS – RoW 30 June 2022**

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)
130/2022	Contact WWPC over proforma agreement with WBC over path works	Clerk
132/2022	FP1 – contact Ramblers and WBC. Bid to Main Council for CIL funds for gate	Clerk
132/2022	Rooks Nest access improvements – follow up with WBC	Clerk
132/2022	Bridlepath 26 drainage – follow up with WBC	Clerk
132/2022	Cycle routes to Wokingham – meeting with WBC Executive Member	RJM/DC
132/2022	FP54 signs / locks – contact WBC and Inert	Clerk/SW
132/2022	Cemex sites / future nature reserves – arrange meeting with WBC	Clerk
132/2022	Fleet Hill path – follow up with WBC	Clerk
132/2022	Manor Farm permissive path – contact BHS re bridleway proposal	DC
132/2022	Other matters for meeting with AF at WBC – date tba FP8 encroachment Missing link Path on NMR east of Sandhurst Road ref cycle route to Wokingham Byway 24 permanent improvements	Clerk
133/2022	Check circular walks and replace way markers as required. RJM to do Simons Wood walk  Collate information on fingerposts needing relocation	RJM/other  All/Clerk
133/2022	QR code trial for one circular walk	SG/Clerk
133/2022	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.	RW
133/2022	South Wokingham walks proposals Desktop study of existing walks DC to prepare brief / maps for EB/other	EB DC
134/2022	Check condition issues	DC/SG
136/2022	Rearrange date of next meeting	Clerk