

## FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

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

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**PRESENT:** Councillor D. Cornish, Chair.  
Councillors S. Bromley; S. Gurney; G. Jukes OBE; S. Weeks & R. Woof.

K. Dagnall, Clerk.

#### **288/2022 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mr. J. Alexander, Footpath Warden.

Following the resignation of former Councillor Mrs. Margetts from the Parish Council, the position of vice chair of the Committee is vacant. It was agreed that Cllr Jukes would cover the role until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2023 when all Committee memberships and roles are reviewed.

#### **289/2022 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present.

#### **290/2022 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2022 were agreed and will be signed in due course.

#### **291/2022 MATTERS ARISING**

##### **130/2022 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) and WBC have successfully implemented a joint project involving improvements to paths through Gorrick Woods but it is unclear whether this has led to an agreement being put in place which other Local Councils can adopt.

The Clerk will contact WWPC and WBC for an update.

##### **132/2022 Manor Farm permissive path closure**

The landowner closed the permissive path in May 2022, due to the local British Horse Society submitting a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application requesting that an old historic route which follows part of the path is designated a bridleway.

Cllr Weeks will follow this up with the landowner.

#### **292/2022 INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2022/23**

Expenditure to date is £176. Further expenditure is expected before the end of 2022/23 but will be well within the agreed budget.

The proposed budget for the Committee for 2023/24 is £2750. Any projects will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) wherever possible.

### **293/2022 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK**

Current / priority projects were discussed.

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

The alternative route is now in place and three stiles have been replaced by kissing gates, making the path from Church Lane, Farley Hill to Forges Lane stile free. The work was carried out by Loddon Valley Ramblers, and one kissing gate was funded by the Parish Council.

It was noted that the only remaining path where it would be beneficial to replace stiles with kissing gates is FP14 on Church Farm. This will be progressed at an appropriate time.

#### **Rooks Nest Country Park – access improvements**

Work on the project is underway and will be completed in December or early January. This is a joint project involving WBC and the Parish Council, and the works are being implemented by the WBC Countryside Service.

#### **Bridlepath 26 drainage improvements**

Work commenced this week involving clearing the blocked culvert and ditches and installing a pipe to divert water from the path. WBC has put an emergency closure order in place for the duration of the works, expected to be 8-10 days. The Parish Council has organised and is funding the works.

It was agreed that the need for surface improvements would be considered at a later stage.

#### **Cycle routes to Wokingham**

WBC has submitted a bid to the Parish Council for CIL funds to implement a section of a route from Nashgrove Lane to Wokingham via Sand Martins Golf Course. The Parish Council previously commissioned a feasibility study on this section of the potential route.

The bid was considered by the Finance & General Management Committee on 30 November, and it was agreed that more information is required before a decision can be made on potential funding.

Cllr Cornish will follow this up with WBC.

Cllr Gurney noted that Wokingham Town Council (WTC) has recently improved paths across the Leslie Sears Playing Fields and the Viking Fields. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged with WTC to share information on projects and plans relating to walking and cycling routes between Finchampstead and Wokingham.

#### **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.

The project was discussed with WBC at a meeting in March 2022 when WBC committed to undertake a highway safety study as the first stage in evaluating whether a path is feasible in this location. The Clerk will continue 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 decided not to apply for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO). It was agreed that WBC would 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.

It was agreed that no further action by the Parish Council is required at present.

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

This project has been on hold pending completion of other Parish Council projects.

A meeting will be arranged with WBC in spring 2023 to discuss the next stages with the restoration, to seek clarification of the long-term plans and to push for completion of the sites at the earliest opportunity.

This will include discussion on the upgrade and redesignation of Footpaths 33 and 54 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 network / Parish Council forward plan for rights of way**

Cllr Jukes advised that the British Horse Society response to the Regulation 16 consultation on the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan includes useful information about bridlepaths and circular routes for horse riders.

The Parish Council's Rights of Way Project Plan was prepared with reference to the Parish Councils CIL Project List, the WBC Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) which itself covers walking, cycling and equestrian routes, and projects put forward by the Ramblers. It was agreed that this forms a basis for a forward plan for Finchampstead rights of way and should be reviewed and updated for discussion at the next meeting.

### **Cycle / foot path on Nine Mile Ride east of Sandhurst Road**

The creation of a path alongside Nine Mile Ride to link to paths leading north through Gorrick Woods towards Wokingham was previously discussed and WBC prepared plans and an estimated cost. It was agreed that while this would be a valuable link in the network it was lower priority than some other project and would not be taken further at this stage.

### **Additional items to be raised with WBC**

#### **Footpath 8 – width issue**

Confirmation of action WBC is taking to address the ongoing issue with encroachment on Footpath 8 from a hedge alongside the path.

#### **Byway 24 surface improvements**

The Parish Council funded improvements to a section of Byway 24 leading to Wellingtonia Avenue in 2019. However, the path is well used as a cycle route and is promoted as such by WBC and permanent improvements are desirable.

### **294/2022 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 or cleared.

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.

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

- Cllr Cornish drafted directions on a proposed new circular walk and Cllr Woof has now checked the directions and walked the route.
- The next stage will be to identify 'points of interest' to feature with the directions for the route, and to map the route.
- Permission to put way markers on the route will need to be obtained from the National Trust and Bracknell Forest Council.
- It was agreed that this new walk should be used for the QR code trial, rather than the St. James' Church walk as previously proposed.
- Cllr Woof will lead on progressing the project. Cllr Gurney and the Clerk will assist with the QR code trial.

#### **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. It was agreed that a desk top study should be the first stage for the project.
- Cllr Woof agreed to progress this.

#### **St. James' Church circular walk**

This walk includes an optional link to where the War Memorial was formerly located, overlooking the Blackwater Valley. It was agreed that the directions for the walk should be amended to omit reference to the Memorial and to refer only to the view, but the link should remain.

#### **Rooks Nest to St. James' Church, Barkham**

It was noted that Barkham Parish Council is working with WBC on potential improvements to this path (Barkham FP10A). The timing was queried in the light of the solar farm project which will affect the path. The Clerk will raise this with Barkham Parish Council.

#### **295/2022 CONDITION / MAINTENANCE OF RIGHTS OF WAY**

Paths requiring more significant improvements are covered under agenda item 293/2022 'Improvements to the Rights of Way Network' above.

No issues were raised but it was noted that activity on FP5 should be monitored.

#### **296/2022 FORUM**

Cllr Weeks suggested that monitoring usage of some of the local paths would be useful. The Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership uses discreet people counters on the Blackwater Valley Path and it may be possible to borrow these. Cllr Weeks will look into this.

The Clerk noted that the 'local walks' page on the Parish Council website is consistently one of the highest used. Information on this will be circulated.

#### **297/2022 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next Committee meeting will be held on 21 March 2023.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS – RoW 7 December 2022**

| MINUTE REFERENCE | ACTION   | RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S) |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 291/2022         | Contact WWPC / WBC over proforma agreement with WBC over path works  | Clerk                 |
| 291/2022         | Manor Farm permissive path closure – discuss with landowner (Clerk and GJ to forward relevant information)   | SW                    |
| 293/2022         | Rooks Nest access improvements – monitor to completion   | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Bridlepath 26 drainage – monitor to completion   | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Cycle routes to Wokingham<br>Nashgrove Lane to Wokingham via Sandmartins – follow up with WBC  | DC                    |
|                  | Arrange meeting with Wokingham Town Council  | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Fleet Hill path – follow up with WBC   | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Cemex sites / future nature reserves – arrange meeting with WBC  | Clerk                 |
|                  | Ask Swallowfield PC about biodiversity net gain projects   | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Additional matters for meeting with AF at WBC – date tba<br>FP8 encroachment<br>Missing link<br>Path on NMR east of Sandhurst Road ref cycle route to Wokingham<br>Byway 24 permanent improvements | Clerk                 |
| 293/2022         | Review and update FPC RoW project plan for circulation and discussion at next meeting  | DC/GJ/Clerk           |
| 294/2022         | Check circular walks and replace way markers as required.<br>Collate information on fingerposts needing relocation   | All<br>All/Clerk      |
| 294/2022         | Finchampstead – Crowthorne circular walk<br>Map route. Information on features.<br>Use for trial with QR codes on way markers<br>Seek permission from NR and BFC                                   | RW                    |
| 294/2022         | St James' Church walk – amend directions   | Clerk/RW              |
| 294/2022         | South Wokingham walks proposals<br>Desktop study of existing walks   | RW                    |
| 295/2022         | Condition issues – monitor FP5   | DC                    |
| 296/2022         | BVCP people counters – follow up on potential loan<br>Circulate web analytics on local walks page  | SW<br>Clerk           |