

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 MARCH 2024 AT 7.30PM At the FBC Centre, Gorse Ride North, Finchampstead

PRESENT: Councillors C. Mortimer, Vice Chair
Councillors S. Bromley, S. Gurney, G. Jukes OBE, S. Weeks & R. Woof.

Mr. J. Alexander, Footpath Warden

396/2024 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor D. Cornish, Chair.

397/2024 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

398/2024 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 06 December 2023 were agreed and signed by Cllr Mortimer, Vice Chair.

399/2024 MATTERS ARISING AND OTHER MATTERS

276/2023 Progress agreed priority projects as detailed in Project List.

- FP8 Cutting back of hedges – No progress has been made.
See item 401/2024 and carry forward.
- Cemex nature reserves - The Cemex working group are planning to meet on 3 April. Cllrs Weeks and Jukes to advise the Committee of any significant progress made in due course. See item 401/2024 and carry forward.
- The following still needs to be addressed and a meeting arranged with Andy Glencross at Wokingham Borough Council (WBC):
 - Fleet Hill planning application and adopting the ROW.
 - FP33 upgrade to Bridleway.
 - Re designation of FP17A to a Bridleway.See item 401/2024 and carry forward.
- Agree a strategic plan to upgrade footpaths to bridleways. No progress has been made as the Committee are awaiting input from WBC. Carry forward.
- FP20 – No progress has been made as the Committee are awaiting clarification from the applicant and WBC. Carry forward.
- Reinstatement of the missing link between bridlepaths 34 and 26 - WBC is in favour of this but are unlikely to progress currently due to a lack of manpower. Carry forward.
- Update from WBC on the Cycle route to Wokingham. Tan House Bridge is not complete. Report further WBC updates to the Committee. Carry forward.

277/2023 – Complete the circular walk.

See item 402/2024 for update.

278/2023 - Maintenance required at FP13.

No update. Carry forward.

400/2024 INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2023/24

Details of the 2023/24 budget were circulated. Expenditure to date is £25 on footpath equipment maintenance. The footpath warden confirmed all existing equipment is in good working order. He is looking for a new supplier for 5 x 4 posts to enable him to repair the existing kissing gates.

Cllr Weeks to contact Simon Bartlett at WBC about supplying the posts.

401/2024 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK/REVIEW OF PROJECT LIST

The Rights of Way Project List was updated following December's meeting and circulated. The List was prepared with reference to the Council's CIL Project List and the WBC Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) which includes projects put forward by the Ramblers.

The Project List was reviewed and will be updated and circulated to the Committee in due course.

It was agreed at the previous meeting to allocate Committee members one or more rights of way over which they will have a 'watching brief'. Cllr Cornish to complete this allocation and circulate to the Committee.

Priorities for the Committee were agreed as follows, with actions detailed in the Project List:

- **Access Improvements**
None to report.
- **Small improvement projects**
 - Resolving hedge encroachment on Footpath 8 – We understand that previously Primrose Cottage's gardener has done some pruning here, but this is not adequate. Review and discuss options with footpath warden, J Alexander.
- **Major projects**
 - Progressing the completion of the future nature reserves at Fleet Hill and Manor Farms, east and west of Longwater Road, owned by Cemex UK Ltd. To include the completion of new rights of way on the sites and linking to the wider network and securing the future management of the reserves.

The next meeting with Cemex was due to be on site in March 2024. Little progress has been made to date and it is unclear what vision exists from Cemex and other parties. Cllr Jukes has organised a meeting of the working group on 3 April 2024 to brainstorm what the Committee would like to achieve.

The following still needs to be addressed with Andy Glencross at WBC:

- Fleet Hill planning application and adopting the rights of way.
 - FP33 at Longwater Lane to be upgraded to a bridleway.
The general state of FP33 at Longwater Lane was discussed and noted how it has deteriorated significantly in recent times.
 - Re designation of FP17A to a Bridleway
- An agreed strategic plan is needed to decide and implement the upgrade of appropriate Footpaths to Bridleways. The Committee is awaiting clarification from WBC.
 - Re designation of FP20 to a bridleway. The Committee is awaiting confirmation from the applicant and WBC as to whether this is on their list. Cllr Cornish to follow up with Andy Glencross at WBC in due course.
 - Reinstatement of the missing link between bridlepaths 34 and 26. WBC is in favour of this but are unlikely to progress currently due to a lack of manpower. Cllr Cornish to follow up with Andy Glencross at WBC in due course.

- Cycle route to Wokingham linking with Finchampstead via Nashgrove Lane. Tan House Bridge is still not complete, so no further work on the Finchampstead – Wokingham cycle path can be progressed. Cllr Cornish to follow this up with WBC in due course and advise the Committee.
- New Path (RoWIP Finc 17) alongside B3348 from FP8 to Fleet Hill Lane FP29 and on to A327 Tally Ho. In March 2022 WBC committed to doing a highway safety study on footpath 29 to Tally Ho section. DCG and Cllr Mortimer to follow this up with WBC and update the Ramblers.
- Hogwood Farm/Finchwood Park paths: With multiple landowners, there is little chance of success in terms of a potential link using the track from Wheatlands Manor to FP8 and Fleet Hill B3348. Cllr Weeks to discuss with David Hamilton.
- **Deferred projects**
 - The Committee agreed to review the surface improvements on Byway 24 in a years' time. This is currently included under 'Deferred Projects' B1.5 in the Project List.

402/2024 CIRCULAR WALKS, PROMOTION & SIGNAGE

Proposed Finchampstead to Crowthorne circular walk

The new Circular Walk needs to be completed; the mapping remains a challenge. It also needs writing up, points of interest and more photos adding and improved waymarking in Ambarrow Woods. Discussion needs to be had with the National Trust as this is their land.

Cllr Woof to lead on this with the assistance of Cllr Gurney.

Cllr Evans has volunteered to trial the walk when dog health risks allow, and Cllr Mortimer will also trial it to validate the route instructions.

403/2024 CONDITION / MAINTENANCE OF RIGHTS OF WAY

To note current issues and actions being taken.

Vermont Woods bridleway/public path

Some issues have been reported along this path which is used to access California Country Park and is regularly used by walkers, joggers/runners, dog owners, cyclists and horse riders.

The path is in need of improvement, particularly outside 67 and 69 Vermont Woods which is muddy and slippery with the grass verge being churned up due to a lack of maintenance of the original path. Although this is not an official right of way, the Committee have agreed to partner with WBC to make some general maintenance improvements to the footpath itself.

Cllr Weeks to follow this up with WBC.

There is a potential trip hazard outside 26 Vermont Woods where tree roots are pushing up the adjacent private pathway which provides access to both 26 and 28 Vermont Woods. Next to these trees is a self-seeded tree which will eventually restrict path access and require maintenance or removal. The responsibility for the maintenance of this falls with WBC and the resident to resolve.

There is also significant overhang of several metres of tree outside 22 and 24 Vermont Woods which blocks sunlight, and the wooden fencing boundary which forms the border between Vermont Woods pathway and the Council woodland for California Country Park is rotting and broken in some sections and requires maintenance. It is the responsibility of Countryside Services to maintain these areas.

CIL Application for the resurfacing of Range Road

The proposed resurfacing of Range Road is part of a wider project to upgrade the surface of those byways (Public Rights of Way) that have a large number of residential properties. The Committee decided not to support WBC's CIL application at this time but agreed to review in the future.

The 'no cycling no horses' signs

The 'no cycling no horses' sign at the kissing gate on FP16 / Off Dell Road into NT Ridges has been vandalised and needs replacing. Other damaged signs to be replaced where required.

404/2024 FORUM

Cllr Weeks informed the Committee of his meeting with the owner of Warren Crest Farm who intends to improve and fund the footpath facilities himself. The Committee have agreed to make a small contribution to the work as a gesture of goodwill.

Cllr Weeks to progress with the Landowner.

Cllr Gurney suggested naming our circular walks as names of flowers. To be discussed at the next meeting.

405/2024 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held on 03 July 2024.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS – RoW 26 March 2024

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)
399/2024	<p>FP8 Cutting back of hedges - Review and discuss options.</p> <p>Update the Committee with any progress made following Cemex working group meeting on 3 April.</p> <p>Cemex nature reserves - Schedule a meeting with Andy Glencross to discuss the Fleet Hill planning application and adopting the ROW.</p> <p>Schedule a meeting with Andy Glencross to discuss: FP33 upgrade to Bridleway. Re designation of FP17A to a Bridleway</p> <p>Agree a strategic plan to upgrade footpaths to bridleways. (pending input from WBC).</p> <p>FP20 – Clarification is needed from the applicant and WBC.</p> <p>Follow up with Andy Glencross about the reinstatement of the missing link between bridlepaths 34 and 26.</p> <p>Update from WBC on the Cycle route to Wokingham.</p> <p>Maintenance required at FP13.</p>	<p>ALL/JA</p> <p>SW/GJ</p> <p>SW</p> <p>DC</p> <p>All</p> <p>DC</p> <p>DC</p> <p>DC</p> <p>DC/JA</p>
400/2024	Contact Simon Bartlett at WBC about sourcing 5 x 4 posts for JA so he can repair the existing kissing gates.	SW
401/2024	Allocate RoW 'watching brief' to each Committee member and circulate to all.	DC
401/2024	Chase WBC re highway safety study on FP29 to Tally Ho section, and update Ramblers.	DCG/CM
401/2024	Speak to David Hamilton about potential link using the track from Wheatlands Manor to FP8 and Fleet Hill B3348.	SW
402/2024	<p>Finchampstead to Crowthorne circular walk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss mapping and promotion with the National Trust. - Trial walk to validate route instructions. 	RW/SG EA/CM
403/2024	<p>Vermont Woods footpath maintenance:</p> <p>Contact WBC to discuss partnering with them to make the necessary improvements/contribution to the muddy footpath.</p>	SW
403/2024	The 'no cycling no horses' sign at the kissing gate on FP16 / Off Dell Road into NT Ridges has been vandalised and needs replacing. Others to be replaced where required.	ALL
404/2024	Agree FPC contribution to improvements to footpath at Warren Crest Farm. Contact Landowner to agree.	SW
404/2024	Discuss 'flower' theme name for circular walks at next meeting.	SG/ALL