

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

First meeting of 2019/20
Ground Floor Meeting Room 2
County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1
Wednesday 15th May 2019
10am – 12.30pm

AGENDA

2019 (1)

	Item	<i>Coffee available from 9.45. Please be seated by 9.55</i>
10.00	1	Welcome by the Chair
	2	Presentation from KBI Flexipave about sustainable porous paving solutions on public rights of way - with Q&A/discussion
10.30	3	Annual election/re-election of Chair and Vice-chair
	4	Apologies for absence and declarations of interest - to declare any personal or prejudicial interests
	5	Confirm the minutes of 27 th February 2019 (2018/3)
	6	Matters arising from minutes
10.45	7	Presentation on Ridgeway Riding Route and circular walks/rides -with Q&A
11.15	8	Rights of Way Improvement Plan - emerging cross-team delivery plan
11.25	9	Traffic Regulation Order promotion on the website – emerging work
11.30	10	Outline proposal for Oxfordshire Greenways
11.40	11	Space for questions from members of public/observers or AOB
12.00	12	Confirm date, time and location of future meetings Fixed dates - 3 rd Wednesday in May and November and optional 3 rd Wednesday in February, 20th November 2019 , (19 th February 2020), 20th May 2020 All 9.45 for 10am location probably County Hall or Speedwell House

n.b. all times are indicative only

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum is a Local Access Forum – a statutory independent advisory body, established and administered by Oxfordshire County Council to assist with improving access to Oxfordshire’s countryside under s94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Contact any member via the OCAF Secretariat: Oxfordshire County Council, Countryside Area, 3rd Floor Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford OX1 1NE Tel 01865 810226, email: paul.harris@oxfordshire.gov.uk or visit

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ocaf

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF 2018/19
Wednesday 27 February 2019 Speedwell House, Oxford

2018 (3)

Attending:

Members and their interest areas:

Stuart McGinness, **Chair** (SMG) - User - off-road cycling and leading youth cycle training

Dave Cavanagh (DC) – User - Walking and practical voluntary action on paths

Philip Chamberlain (PC) – Landmanaging - Arable farmer and diversified farm estate

Gordon Garraway (GG) - Other – green space protection and recreational trails

Ilse Lambert (IL) -User-Trail riding (motorcycling)

Rachel Livingstone (RL) – Lost ways/DMMOs and equestrian users

Anne Luttmann-Johnson (ALJ) – User - wheelchair user access to the countryside

Sarah Martin (SM) - User - walking and botany, permissive access

Observers/Guests:

Chris Blomfield (CB) - Trail Riders Fellowship

Chris Hurworth (CH) - Trail Riders Fellowship and motorcycling interest member of Bucks LAF

Lawrence Smith (LS) – OCC Definitive Map Officer

Sarah Aldous (SA) – OCC Technical Officer Countryside Access

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:

Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Countryside Access Strategy & Development Officer

Hugh Potter (HP) - Group Manager Area Operations Hub

Mike Walker (MW) - Principal Officer Countryside Records

1. Welcome and introductions

Chair opened the 45th meeting of OCAF and welcomed members, observers and OCC staff. Those present gave brief introductions. SM noted that perhaps OCAF should think about an action plan to commemorate its 50th meeting in 2020/21.

2. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Cllr Yvonne Constance, Matthew Judson, John Griffin. Regular observer Chris Marriage was also unable to attend. Members were informed that founder member Andrew Hawkins had resigned his membership, Members recorded their thanks for his contribution to the work of the group over the years.

3. Confirm the minutes of 21st November 2018 (2018/2)

Signed as correct

4. Matters arising - action items not on the agenda or already actioned

2018 (2) Action 1: (*Chair and Secretary to circulate a draft OCAF representation about the Expressway to members and then send to Highways England*). PH thanked members for their amendments to the letter which would be sent out shortly

2018 (2) Action 2: (*Hugh Potter to circulate list of Traffic Regulation Orders affecting public rights of way and ensure information is posted to countryside access web pages*). PH informed the group that he had produced the temporary closure orders as maps and was working with

the OCC web team to get them on line. This was expected end March and he would send members the link so they could test how it worked.

5. Countryside Records update

Mike Walker (MW) introduced his report which he hoped the meeting found useful. He outlined the new team structure, including Lawrence Smith who was in attendance, and reported that the team was now up to full strength. RL asked what support officers were doing and MW confirmed that they would assist with producing Order plans, logging od applications, website updates as well as undertaking other tasks such as responding to searches, posting of notices and landowner deposits. SMG noted the new structure and expressed hope that this would mean faster progress.

MW referred members to appendix 2 and showed that over 60 applications were in progress this year. Thirty-one of the Trail Riders Fellowship applications were determined against and the cases have been dismissed. MW confirmed to RL that where possible a faster process would be followed such as the Creation Agreement at Shiplake and other cases where similar opportunities will be looked at. A conversation then ensued about what determination and order making meant.

DC asked what the team's target was now. MW said that, as of April 1, the team will consider what targets it should aim for over the ensuing 12-month period. This needs to be a flexible programme as some cases could turn out to be more complex or become contentious requiring Planning Inspectorate involvement. As team manager his job was to stretch the team to achieve more and balance this against the need for flexibility and any unknowns. SMG congratulated the team on the progress being made.

GG questioned who dealt with landowner deposits. MW said that the support staff were the first point of contact and outlined the protection mechanism open to all landowners. He confirmed to DC that it didn't affect the accumulation of user rights prior to the deposit nor historic records-based claims.

6. Managing vehicles proposed draft OCC policy

HP thanked OCAF for their proposed policy which had been considered by officers and led to the drafting of something that fully fitted the council's needs as per the report – that was higher level and necessarily pragmatic. He acknowledged that there were only 30 miles of byway which was a small network and added that the majority of routes affected by vehicles were restricted byway so it was still important a policy was developed. Other authorities' policies had been looked at along with other ways of working and current/emerging issues. Most policies were made prior to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) as the old classification 'Roads Used as Public Path' created most misunderstanding – and before government created the restricted byway classification.

HP said the intention was to revise the policy in light of any comments and take to Monitoring Group for its views. He was also seeking clarification about the best way to get this adopted as policy and he was hoping to take to Cllr Constance under he delegated powers as Cabinet Member for Environment.

DC said that the policy was couched in caveats and he understood the need for a nuanced approach and that officers were trusted to use their best endeavours to find the best solutions. HP stated that all options were there to be considered. Prior to NERC the only permanent traffic regulation order was on the Ridgeway and this showed that OCC officers, even without a policy, considered the wider issues.

IL expressed the view that she was quite happy with the policy in general but was somewhat concerned about the focus of repair for non-motorised users and hoped that this would be appropriate for all users. HP confirmed that it would be a balance of route and site circumstances that determined the solution and if it was intended to maintain access for all then this would not exclude others. He reiterated that the focus was on vulnerable users.

PC thanked OCC for including the rights and concerns of landowners in the policy. HP responded that it was appropriate to understand access to land in order to ensure the right surface provision or alternative routeing arrangements.

SMG questioned the next steps. If OCAF agreed with the policy it would go back to officers and not change substantially before adoption. HP confirmed this was the case

OCAF Members then APPROVED the OCC draft managing vehicles policy as supplied to the meeting

7. Buckinghamshire RoWIP consultation

PH introduced the note and suggested he and the Chair should put a response together based on the report. CH said that a special meeting of the Bucks LAF would be taking place in May specifically about the next RoWIP and that OCAF would be welcome to attend.

Action 1: The Chair and Secretary to respond to the Buckinghamshire Council RoWIP consultation review letter

8. Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Spatial Plan

PH outlined the content of the paper. Members discussed some of the content and how much was relevant to countryside access and public rights of way. The inclusion of public rights of way under natural and built environment. GG pointed out that health and wellbeing including higher levels of physical activity were important and access was a key part of this. GG also asked whether resources to protect the rights of way team could be included. PH suggested that this wasn't the focus of this plan which was at a higher level than the five district local plans and focused on strategic spatial planning policy.

PC acknowledged the benefits and the need for addition connections and said that the plans need to think about the needs and views of landowners if they realistically want to realise the ambitions of the plan and make them work.

DC highlighted the response of the Ramblers with the focus on the opportunity to make the area more convivial for non-motorised users and to include movement within and outside of developments as this benefited health and wellbeing.

9. Space for questions from members of public/observers or AOB

Oxfordshire Way: GG said that the CPRE was publishing a new guide to this route in March this year. The route was devised in the 1970s with a publication active since 1978. It linked to park and ride sites.

Recycled tyres: RL had been looking at using recycled tyre solutions for pothole and bridleway works and suggested this could feature in the next meeting. She added that it was compulsory to incorporate a surface that included recycled tyres for all new developments in Wales. One supplier (KBI) offered a seven-year warranty which is why Wokingham had trialled it recently. CB later added that he used to work in the tyre industry, so any re-use was a good idea. HP offered to talk to colleagues about the Wokingham example.

New Technical Officer function: RL asked what SA's new role entailed and SA explained that she would provide technical support and programme management but currently she also had to cover City and West areas. Other officers were assisting with cover and they were looking to appoint soon. HP added that it was a challenge to recruit high calibre staff.

DC raised the issue of rail crossing and diversion/stopping up policy as across the county Network Rail was seeking to close crossings. His understanding was that OCC officers had a good working relationship that reduced the likelihood/impact of closures and this was nuanced on a case by case basis. He gave the example of the new footbridge at Uffington and other diversions to road bridges. He asked for a breakdown of policy and figures.

HP stated that in the time available complete figures could not be obtained but there was a generally good relationship. There were many different project schemes and managers and it was often down to individuals on a case by case basis. OCC officers would hear the Network Rail case for safety and give rights of way position. Trains were faster and quieter now which affected sightlines. Connectivity and journey time assessments were all relevant.

MW supplied the national context having put together the rights of way side of discussions with a view to formalising a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with Network Rail. There is extreme pressure to improve railway efficiency, increase line speeds and limit delays, with decisions frequently taken at the highest level in the national interest. Network Rail had worked with the rights of way profession to develop a shared approach to reduce the risk of crossings which led to meetings to develop an agreed way forward. This has taken a degree of negotiation and Network Rail is now happy to sign the memorandum of understanding. This will create a framework which, fundamentally, puts communication at the forefront of any consideration of level crossing closure. This includes local meetings to discuss infrastructure /safety considerations and impacts on the rights of way network. Additionally, looking at wider picture of mitigation and additional safety measures may indicate a notable change of direction.

RL questioned who decides on alternatives with the example at Tackley. SA said that she as local field officer worked with the diversion officer to look at suitable provision, and HP added that officers will work with the parish and BHS to get the best solution here. DC asked if all costs were covered by Network Rail and HP confirmed that some costs were covered but there was ongoing dialogue about recharging staff time. MW added that there was always a balance where staff time is concerned as it is necessary for us to fully engage in the process to secure the best outcome, or at least one where the public's rights been secured as best as possible. SA said for Transport and Works Act (TWA) diversions there was less control and leverage by OCC as Network Rail exercised its statutory powers and OCC was only a consultee. This included matters of accessibility and landscape impact balance. PC added that cost and use had to be factors as the ideal of keeping all routes open and safe couldn't be maintained for all current crossing points.

[Post meeting note: the changes to public rights of way that came about due to East/West Rail Phase 1 were done via a TWA Order All the changes that are going to be made due to E/W Rail Phase 2 will also be done via a TWA Order.

10. Next meeting

As per agenda item - fixed as far as possible for the 3rd Wednesday in May and November and optional 3rd Wednesday in February. Next meeting 15th May 2019, venue normally County Hall or Speedwell House. Meeting ended 11.50am

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Agenda item 8

Date: 15 May 2019

Title: Rights of Way Improvement Plan - emerging cross-team delivery plan

Introduction

Oxfordshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan is valid from 2015 to 2025. A commitment to produce a biennial delivery plan was included in the statement of action, but partly due to restructuring, staff changes and operational pressures this has not taken place.

Although the functions of countryside access and public rights of way remain broadly similar to before there are now three distinct professional areas (Highways Operations, Countryside Records and Countryside Access Strategy). This means up to five different line management and responsibility arrangements where parts of countryside access are included as part of five group managers' wider remit.

Although this change can create challenges there are significant opportunities afforded by the new arrangements and the attached outline thematic paper aims to capture some of these.

OCAF Action

Members are invited to consider the attached document and make comments including how members feel they could be involved in RoWIP delivery monitoring.

Oxfordshire County Council.

Paper for OCAF to assist with developing Rights of Way Improvement Plan Delivery plan 2019-2022

There are three teams¹ which work across the Communities Directorate to meet the vision and aims of the adopted Oxfordshire Rights of Way Management Plan 2015-2025 (RoWMP) which in term meets the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) vision for **thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire.**

RoWMP Vision:

To record and maintain the existing public rights of way and countryside access network for all users and would-be users, and where possible improve the extent, facilities, use and understanding of the network, so that public rights of way fulfil their role as a vital part of life in the County.

RoWMP Aims:

1. Public rights of way are recorded, protected, maintained, promoted, and improved when opportunities arise
2. A public rights of way and countryside access network that adapts to balance the current and future needs of communities and users, farmers and landowners and the natural and historic environment
3. A public rights of way and countryside access network which is reasonably accessible to those with limited mobility, vision or understanding
4. Countryside access contributes to a thriving local economy and communities are able to be actively involved in caring for and promoting responsible walking and riding in their area

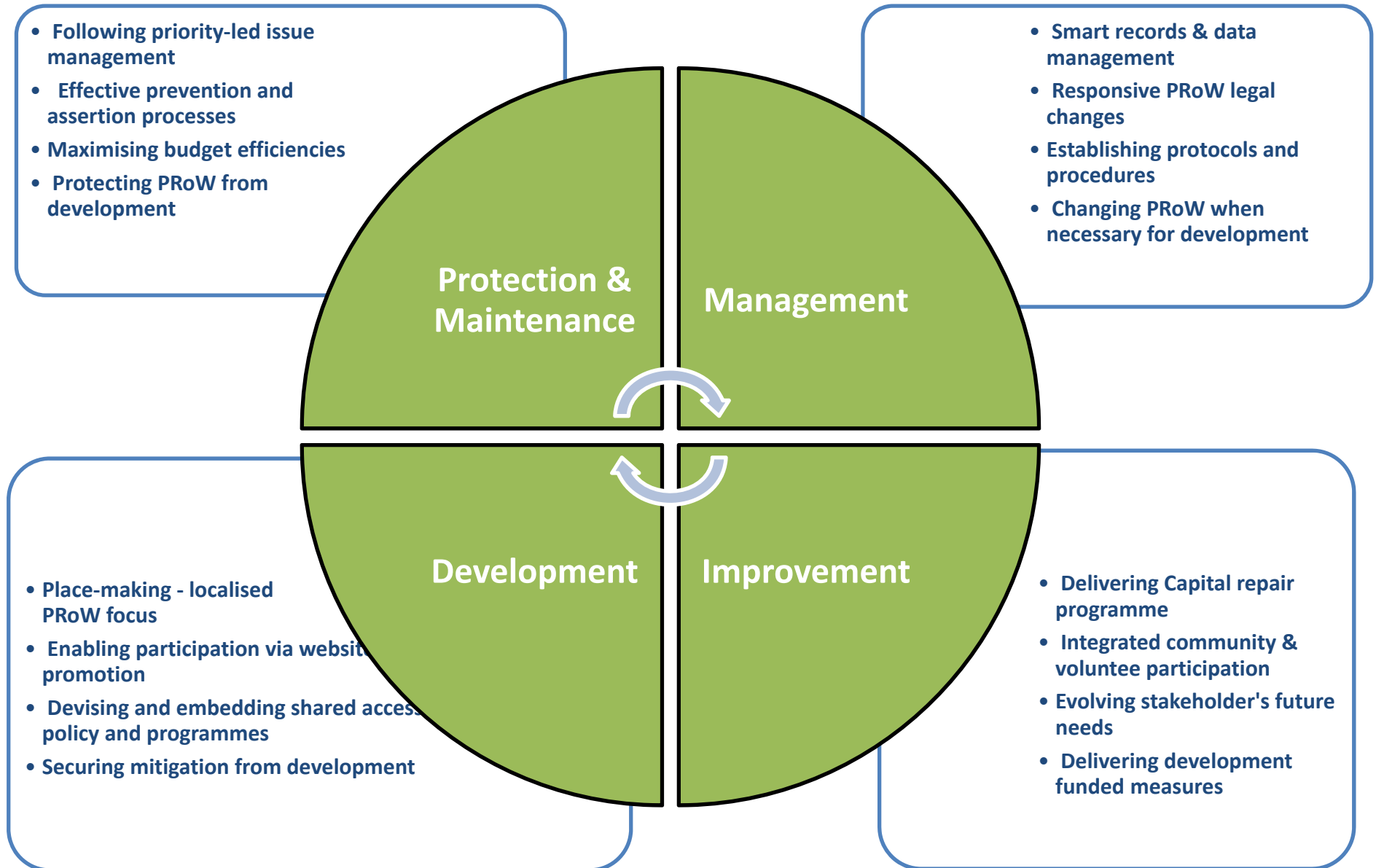
These teams work across four inter-connected themes on the rights of way and countryside access network– Protection & maintenance; Management; Development and Improvement. Taken together with key performance areas (Pas) they form the integrated countryside access delivery framework and the foundation for coordinated service delivery.

For each of these suggested performance areas, OCAF members are asked:

- 1) Are the four themes the right ones?
- 2) Do the Performance Areas make sense?
- 3) Are there any missing?
- 4) How do we identify what is 'good' service for the Performance Areas?
- 5) How do we measure performance and over what time period?
- 6) Any other views and how does OCAF want to be involved?

¹ Area Operations (11 FTE in 3 sub-teams), Countryside Records Team (5 FTE), Access Strategy & Development (1 FTE)

Shared Public Rights of Way & Countryside Access themes and key performance areas



Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Agenda item 9

Date: 15 May 2019

Title: OCAF's views on outline Oxfordshire Greenways approach

Introduction

Members may recall the Oxfordshire 2050 plan being outlined and discussed at the last meeting. Following on from that a call for ideas was issued for 'strategic location ideas' on which broad locations should be considered within the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 for large-scale housing or employment, or infrastructure projects, or for strategic environmental or social designations or protections.

The Countryside Access Strategy and Development Officer put forward a proposal for "Oxfordshire Greenways" which this is currently being evaluated by the Oxfordshire 2050 team alongside the other proposals -that are mostly for additional residential development sites. The shortlisted proposals will be subject to additional assessment, and timescales are unclear at the moment.

OCAF Action

Members are invited to consider the summary of the Oxfordshire Greenways approach which is comprised of questions with the officer's views. Comments are welcomed.

Questions about your proposed strategic-scale location...

Q1. Which broad strategic-scale location in Oxfordshire do you think may be suitable for considering as options in the Oxfordshire Plan?

A network or collection of Greenways **across Oxfordshire** -with a focus on the edges of the current, expanding and new communities - looking out into countryside and providing active travel links for walkers, cyclists and equestrians to facilities, attractions and between settlements.

Q2. What type and size of development (or other proposal) do you think could be located at your proposed location (as identified in Q1)?

A network or collection of **Oxfordshire Greenways (OG)**

Oxfordshire Greenways will be made up of mostly traffic-free multi-user (walker, cyclists, horse-rider) and family friendly easy to use leisure utility routes connecting people to places and giving access to nature, and providing social, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for residents, visitors and tourists. The OG would complement the proposed Oxfordshire

Cycling Network with its focus on longer commuting journeys and unlock greater use of active travel both for leisure and utility use for more people.

The OGC could comprise:

- Existing suitable public rights of way
- New and upgraded-status public rights of way
- Designated and protected quieter roads
- Phoenix Trail and similar disused railway/transport corridors incl. canal towpaths
- Existing and future suitable publicly accessible open spaces and routes

Not all Greenways would need to start from scratch as its about identifying suitable existing and potential routes from current networks as well as making new connections to and through new developments and as standalone routes. It could build on current funds secured from planning developments and form a strand within existing projects in early phases.

Although the main focus for Oxfordshire Greenways is multi-user access geared towards leisure use and being family friendly /traffic free for residents and visitors, all the other associated benefits of habitats, biodiversity, transport, contact with farming, social, health and wellbeing play an important part and indeed in some cases may be the main focus if that helped meet funders' objectives.

Route 1 of the Science Vale Cycle Network, between Wantage and Harwell is a current example in development - a leisure commuting focused route using upgraded and improved public rights of way and quiet roads that will balance cycle, walking and horse-riding needs alongside farming and land-managing through attractive countryside on a robust and well-managed path. When completed the route will provide many opportunities for recreation and active travel in the area and from settlements to the Harwell Campus and provides a safer means to travel as an alternative to cars for some people.

Q3. Why do you think this is a good location (as identified in Q1) for your suggested use. What do you think are the benefits to the local or Oxfordshire area in terms of social, environmental and economic benefits?

The adopted statutory Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2015-2025 identifies that the public rights of way network and the wider roads/countryside access network doesn't fully meet the needs of users nor have these resources been developed effectively to maximise opportunities. The network is disjointed due to roads, railways, rivers and other barriers. under managed and in some cases damaged. No focus has been able to be made on providing family-friendly leisure multi-use routes between settlements and connecting people through attractive countryside to attractions and local facilities -or just to give contact with farming and nature.

Green space is good for people. Spending time outdoors and taking part in outdoor activities, from birdwatching to dog walking, makes us feel better and improves our health. The physical and emotional benefits of spending time out of doors are well understood. Ensuring we have great places for children to spend time outdoors, safe from

traffic and close to wildlife, is also recognised as an important part of childhood. Family-friendly routes can also offer a way for children and adults to gain the skills and confidence to choose active travel modes for leisure and utility uses.

Green space can also be good for nature. Wildlife will readily colonise new areas and creating the right mixture of habitats to attract the greatest diversity of wildlife, including in parks and alongside paths, is entirely achievable with appropriate management. Connectivity is as crucial for wildlife as it is for people. Forming 'wildlife networks' that allow both to move and adapt can be achieved alongside creating green corridors for people. Rivers, bridleways, disused railways, walking and cycling paths are all examples of potential greenways that connect people to each other and to nature whilst also supporting a wildlife network (Sustrans Greenway Management Handbook 2016). Greenways can also help in protecting more sensitive areas and species as they can be used to encourage people to avoid impact areas.

Q4. Are there any challenges that might need to be overcome to bring this forward?

1. Mapping and understanding the availability and condition of existing resources
2. Landowner engagement - negotiating and securing additional routes and upgrades
3. Funding improvement and development works
4. Repair and ongoing maintenance
5. Promotion, engagement and education

Many of these could involve communities and volunteers