

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Second meeting of 2019/20
County Hall, Meeting Room 3
New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND
Wednesday 20th November 2019
10am – 12.30pm

AGENDA

2019 (2)

| | Item | <i>Coffee available from 9.45. Please be seated by 9.55</i> |
|--------------|------|---|
| 10.00 | 1 | Welcome and brief introductions |
| | 2 | Apologies for absence and declarations of interest - to declare any personal or prejudicial interests |
| | 3 | Confirm the minutes of 19 th June 2019 (2019/1) |
| | 4 | Matters arising from minutes and updates |
| 10.20 | 5 | British Horse Society presentation and discussion regarding planning |
| 10.50 | 6 | Ridgeway National Trail Cycling Route presentation |
| 11.20 | 7 | OCAF - support letter for National Trails |
| 11.30 | 8 | Review of rights of way liaison groups |
| 11.45 | 9 | Space for questions from members of public/observers or AOB |
| 12.00 | 10 | Confirm date, time and location of future meetings (19 th February 2020), 20th May 2020, 18th November 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:

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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF 2019/20
Wednesday 19 June 2019, Speedwell House, Oxford

2019 (1)

Attending: Members

Stuart McGinness, **Chair** (SMG) Dave Cavanagh (DC) Gordon Garraway (GG)
Matthew Judson, **Vice-chair** (MJ) Ilse Lambert (IL) Rachel Livingstone (RL)
John Griffin (JG)

Observers/Guests:

Chris Blomfield (CB) - Trail Riders Fellowship

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:

Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Countryside Access Strategy & Development
Hugh Potter (HP) - Group Manager Area Operations Hub
Mike Walker (MW) - Principal Officer Countryside Records

1. Welcome and introductions

Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members, observers and OCC staff. Those present gave brief introductions.

2. Election of Chair and Vice-chair

Stuart McGinness re-elected Chair and Matthew Judson re-elected Vice-chair

3. Apologies and declarations

Apologies received from Cllr Constance, Philip Chamberlain, Anne Luttmann-Johnson, Sarah Martin. No declarations

4. Confirm Minutes from meeting 45 - 27th February 2019

Minutes signed as correct record by Chair

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

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 changes in Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) team meant information has changed. He will work with the new staff try to get TTROs uploaded and let people know.

2018(3) Item 9 (AOB) Rail crossings: DC asked PH to explain what Transport and Works Act Orders (TWAOs) meant for the team. PH said that it meant OCC did not have to process the orders which meant reductions in conflicting workloads. MW explained that the TWAOs were the right piece of legislation to use for national infrastructure schemes such as East/West Rail. All the tasks get wrapped up in one order rather than individual orders for each authority and each crossing. Although there was no guarantee of outcomes for all affected rights of way crossings OCC is fully engaged with the process from earliest stages. RL asked how OCC and user groups are notified and questioned the level of engagement with user groups and the awareness of their needs. HP confirmed that for East/West Rail there had been open dialogue with officers for an extended period of time and that consultation guidance would be circulated. It was inevitable that, although officers were engaged, compromises had to be reached for

some paths and it was down to government to take the decision on the order. HP responded to the question about notification explaining that rights of way were included as part of the consultation but there was less direct response and accountability. DC highlighted the major upset in East Anglia and the Ramblers' fightback and asked whether lessons had been learnt. MW referred to the previous meeting and the minute – there had been increased engagement at a national level and it was hoped that the situation would now improve. GG said he was puzzled about crossing diversions for Great Western which had gone very well but did not use TWA and asked if there was a risk that could happen in the Vale or elsewhere in the future for similar smaller-scale schemes. MW replied that TWAO was usually used for national-scale infrastructure schemes but whatever legislation was used it was important to get early involved and proper discussion. He confirmed to DC that TWAO could be used for other scale schemes but Network Rail were being encouraged to only use this for strategic national schemes but this could not be guaranteed.

JG highlighted experiences with the Goring Gap gantries and the lack of consultation with the AONBs about landscape and visual impact meaning that, although some monies had been paid for mitigation measures, Network Rail had failed in its obligation to consult with AONBs and he felt still needed to be kept an eye on and interested parties needed to be confident that they will consult with OCC so these parties can reinforce the county council's position looking at the overall picture. He added that he assumed there would be no parish level consultations. MJ, PH and HP referred to East West Rail where a small number of paths were affected, plus the Expressway and HS2 where access officers provide input through a senior OCC liaison officer who coordinates involvement. PH explained his role was earlier engagement to secure higher-level principles like no at-grade crossings, Although the case would always be made for rights of way the reality is that not all rights of way will have bridges or be retained on their current line especially for national infrastructure where legislation was designed to deliver the infrastructure schemes. MW added that we seek to influence but compromise was inevitable.

Action 1: PH to circulate Transport and Works Act Order consultation notes with the draft minutes

6. Presentation on behalf of KBI Flexipave

PH ran through some slides prepared by KBI for their 'Flexipave' product which had been requested by RL. PH explained that the firm were going to give the presentation but they had not been able to fit in the site meeting with the OCAF meeting. PH suggested that if it or similar were used in Oxfordshire a site visit could be worthwhile, as well as seeing how the product fared after a number of years in a rural rights of way situation with standard maintenance.

Members noted the presentation and discussed the possibilities and limitations of the product and suggested PH could look to identify schemes 5-10 years post installation to see how they fared over the longer term and return to a future meeting.

7. Rights of Way Improvement Plan - emerging cross-team delivery plan

PH explained the background to the development of the RoWIP and the lack of business delivery plan - mainly due to changes brought about by the restructures few years back which created a more diverged management and operational structure, as well as ongoing staff capacity issues. The RoWIP business plan is intended to sit above team plans and targets to identify how the overall set of functions are working. He was keen to have OCAF involvement to help assess, guide and challenge what the authority does. Themes and targets could form the performance management framework and OCAF was invited to think about if and how members want to be involved – as up to this date there had been little discussion about the progress on implementing the RoWIP.

DC said that the four areas in the document seemed to capture what it was that the teams do in the area of access management but the RoWIP and access operations were massive so things could get bogged down and perhaps it was better to have narrower focus or working groups to look at parts of the plan and work how best to usefully engage as members want to help not hinder. SMG added that small working groups of 1-3 people interested and focused on one subject area could discuss this and bring ideas back to the meeting rather than waiting for OCAF meetings with the sub group encouraged to take action and help the teams. PH acknowledged these points and said there had been good involvement by OCAF about developing a proposed managing vehicles policy and Definitive Map Modification Order prioritisation approach recently and that this was more about slightly different and higher area of performance monitoring. It could be that there was less interest in getting under the hood which was fine but PH was concerned that the group had at least had the opportunity to be involved at this level. DC said that a smaller scale approach could help with that and focus on most relevant items. PH asked about any specific issues that members felt they wanted to start with. SMG highlighted development of residential and transport in relation to countryside access that was a key issue in Oxfordshire needing more input. PH suggested Hampshire's LAF guidance on development and equestrian access was a good reference and undertook to circulate to members as this was similar to the OCAF letter to parishes but a little more detailed and planning focused.

JG said that he struggled with the strategic/high level performance document but supported the clear aims or the RoWIP. As lay people members have to focus on things that matters on the ground and put their time into that. SMG added that OCAF members are path users and if members don't understand the document then its unlikely others will. OCC needs to make it more easily accessible and relevant for people to relate to their lives, including what others can do at parish and district level. At the moment there seemed to be no joined up thinking and issues could be developed from abstract concepts so that people can relate these to things they find on the paths – and what others can do in a joined-up way. SMG questioned how PRoW fits in with what parish/district council do as there doesn't seem to be any joined up approach from OCAF and the authority outwards -and if nothing is produced there's no way that they can access it.

MW agreed with SMG. He explained that the idea of RoWIPs is that they are a strategic document that the public, through LAFs, can have influence over all areas of rights of way and access work. Many do not appreciate the breadth of work involved such as development, improvements and strategic infrastructure. Over the last 20 years when developing RoWIPs and similar documents, targets and milestones would be set for an authority to try and achieve. To some extent this has been turned upside down since 2008 and the start of austerity. It isn't just about what the rights of way team can do but others as well as. If OCAF comprised all of the relevant interest areas we would want to ask those interests what they were doing about access -whether that is farmers, parishes, user groups etc. as it's important to enthuse others. SMG said that websites contain links that could combine better as at the moment everything in its little box rather than seeing what information there is and how it could better connect. DC asked who the performance monitoring is geared to. JG said its about rights of way, so delivery is about all people and making the aims work for them. Anyone involved in delivery of the aims needs to be aware of them and knows what they can do about them. DC added that it wasn't just about using the resources but knowing how they can actively contribute to their improvement.

PH said the first RoWIP contained many targets and actions but this one had to be very different with a different sense of direction given by management. There were few actions and targets because so many changes were thought to be coming soon under Deregulation Act and there was a significant reduction in resourcing. However, a few years down the line it was felt by officers that something may need to be done to better increase coordination and monitoring. He questioned whether OCAF, as the statutory advisory body think OCC should be doing more to get more ambition, targets and report on them or not. PH acknowledged that although the diagram may be confusing it can all be simplified with more information attached. He then

outlined some of the ways that each performance target could be made more real. It wasn't about making arbitrary targets but putting some detail underneath each heading to say what OCC and others are or could be doing considering how operations and monitoring could be improved. Many timely areas of interest including agriculture, Brexit, and tourism as all are opportunity areas and if OCAF members are enthusiastic about improving access then there are many things that could be done. OCC would value OCAF working with us to refine the direction of travel and do things better.

IL asked if the group could elaborate on some of the statements to go deeper into rights of way matters. PH said yes, but it didn't necessarily mean OCAF had to write the document, just to be involved. It's about exploring what each subject area might look like and this could be a paper or working group to explore options. The start of this discussion internally and externally is acknowledging there is a static RoWIP with no actions and targets which makes it more challenging to be able to prove success in delivering the aims of the RoWIP. Limited-scope reports go to Monitoring Group, but they are not shared wider. GG said that he felt that OCAF operates at a higher strategic level and Monitoring Group is meant to focus on performance on report clearance rates and resourcing and he wanted clarity about OCAF's role. SMG replied that OCAF wasn't looking just at strategic level as OCAF was at the top of the stakeholder structure and it was the group's role to put things out to parishes and path wardens rather than just making decisions or providing input to strategic matters. All the information is relevant and should be fed through from top to bottom so that everyone knows and understands what Oxfordshire does to enhance access as some information isn't going out as efficiently as possible. DC asked what could happen beyond volunteer groups and what communities can do more of, as the expectation is that OCC does everything – which it clearly can't. He would be keen to get parishes to do more to try and get redundant path stiles and gates removed. This involvement could tackle aspects that the rights of way team cannot get around to do. He suggested that OCAF could consider the extent of how much communities can be encouraged to do more in parishes and how OCAF can work with OCC to encourage parish action. RL referred to the stopping of the OCC cropping letters to landowners as they previously had a positive effect and it is unlikely that some parishes would take this kind of action. JG said partnership works well where it works well – for example in the Chilterns the Society works with OCC within a support framework that gives volunteers confidence to do more but he acknowledged with DC that this active engagement was patchy outside the AONBs which is where the Parish Path Wardens were filling the gaps. MW said he wouldn't have imagined this working some years back but now, having now experienced what happens in Herefordshire for a very small investment of time and money, he is now of the view that it is more realistic that parishes do more in the interest of their residents and visitors.

PH said that OCC used to have an Oxfordshire Together programme for highway works but not on rights of way. HP confirmed that grass cutting was the most successful part of the scheme with the one verge cut paid for by OCC and the parishes funding any additional cuts they felt were necessary. Some aspects are now expanding like developing 'super users' to be trained with protective equipment to use the systems and book works into the system in order to directly influence action on the ground. PRoW was excluded at the time but OCC is learning from existing arrangements such as parish path wardens who could be used as a contact alongside the rights of way officer. Two full time members of staff were working on community engagement in all highways areas and OCC was now trying to be a more enabling and supportive organisation.

DC referred to the use of power tools and expressed his concern about needing to limit what you can and can't do on PRoW. HP said most parishes have their own insurance and there would be a simplified risk and delegation form to make sure that standards of training and safety are met as part of the overall framework. Many other authorities doing similar and HP gave the example of Devon who are quite far ahead and he added that there was an appetite from OCC management and councillors to try and make this work.

PH reminded the group about the OCC produced parish guide for countryside access. He suggested that perhaps a first working group could look at this and see how it can be improved to make it more accessible and up to date.

Action 2: PH to circulate link to Hampshire LAF guidance on planning and equestrians with draft minutes

Action 3: PH to circulate the short version of the parish guide and a link to the longer version and invite OCAF members to join a sub group to start discussing how it needs to be revised

8. Traffic Regulation Orders on the website

PH presented slides of the new system that had been developed and informed the group that the data needed adding before it could become operational. Members welcomed the provision of information as there was nothing available from OCC at the moment.

GG asked about progress on the Marcham Mill TTRO. HP said that an impasse had been reached about design and cost allocation and he was going back to the landowner and agent. It was a very challenging legal situation with things made more difficult by the lack of a nominated professional point of contact for negotiations and action on the landowner's side.

9. Different approaches to byways affected by development

PH presented slides of four different locations around Wantage area where byways were affected by significant areas of development to some extent and with four different potential solutions. PH went through and summarised each of the proposals and the solutions that have been developed.

For route 1 of the Science Vale Cycle Network between Wantage and Harwell PH confirmed to DC that funding for this comes from the Local Enterprise Partnership and went through the background to the project's development. Agreement in principle had been reached for the dedication of the footpath and private access track as bridleways. The key focus for the scheme and the TRO is the Ginge Brook and what can be constructed for walkers, cyclists and equestrians to provide a safe route without undue impacts on landscape or the environment. The intention was to seek TRO to restrict access for motorised users and carriage drivers for the Ardington to Ginge Road byway section and for motorised users on the section east of the Ginge Road running to Newbury Road.

JG asked about Icknield Greenway title. PH confirmed that this was an informal title he had come up with to communicate what the route was all about. He referred to the European Greenway Network (<http://www.aevv-egwa.org/>) as an example of what could be done across Oxfordshire and the opportunities from other funding sources.

PH said that the four different schemes and solutions for byways all met the draft 'managing vehicles' policy that OCAF had helped developed as all followed a proportional, reasonable and measured approach. Some objections were likely, but these approaches were considered to be the best way forward considering health and safety and engineering issues in a way that modernised the network. Open and transparent consultation process would be followed where responses would be listened to.

DC asked about any cost burden for maintenance over current situation. PH replied that there was already a maintenance burden and the schemes will provide the means to invest in the network. Access development officers try to influence transport schemes to ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriate to the location. PH confirmed that there would be a future

maintenance burden but the specification would be increased to provide many years' service life - for example the bridge crossing will aim for 120 years.

PH ran through the **responses to the informal consultation TRO stage for the Science Vale Route 1**, where comments in support and objection were made. Most comments were objections by motorcyclists and 4x4s users. He gave some facts associated with the route including when the bridge was installed and funding/project requirements. He summarised objections as including existing safe use, maintenance, obstructions, definitive map historical anomalies, criminal activities, engineering, and consultation process issues. PH said that the next steps were more engineering and design works as well as proceeding with the TRO and this would be adjusted to make the project more prominent. MJ referred to the email informal consultation that was sent that didn't seem to refer to the consultation webpage and so it wasn't clear that the TRO was related to a project. PH responded that he noted that point and would make adjustments and people needed to read the full information in order to make an informed response and referred to the consultation website where this was shown to be mentioned clearly. PH added that it might be possible to run two consultations in parallel; one with original level and one with less restrictions (allowing motorcyclists) to ensure that progress wasn't stalled if one TRO could not proceed – but at this stage nothing was confirmed as the key concern was ensuring NMU safety on what will be a newly constructed facility so it could be signed off as safe. OCC was aiming for delegated decision by cabinet member in September 2019. He confirmed to GG that as a parallel process OCC was seeking additional dedication of footpath to bridleway upgrade and the private access track to be dedicated as a new bridleway. CB pointed out the short timescale if aiming for September meeting. PH explained this is why twin-track TRO might be needed or why it may slip to October decision. He added that even with this possibility and bearing in mind the responses to the informal TRO, he could still see that the restriction of all MPVs is needed as this was about a newly created and constructed greenway that needed restrictions in order to ensure safety for walkers, cyclists and horseriders.

IL asked about danger issues compared to other byways in Oxfordshire and the UK that were just as narrow or steeper etc. and she suggested that this could be a much bigger issue than something for the Oxfordshire LAF. PH acknowledged the concern but reinforced the point that restrictions were about this being a construction of a new facility needing safe design signed off by the scheme's principal designer. The informal consultation set out the intended position and thoughts in order to inform the formal TRO process. All information would be put in the public domain and people are able to influence the outcome through responding to the TRO. From his perspective and understanding there was no intention in Oxfordshire to ban MPVs from all rights of way using every available means – this process was a necessary step which is why the presentation of what was happening elsewhere in byways had been made to show the context.

Note: At this point SMG left the meeting and MJ took over the Chair for the remainder

10. Outline proposal for Oxfordshire Greenways

PH gave the background to his proposal of Oxfordshire Greenways submitted to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 team that used previous RoWIP development work and suggestions such as GG made about protecting rights of way. He said that he felt that greenways could fill the gap between commuter-type cycletracks and the more rural rights of way network. Oxfordshire 2050 was focused on 100,000+ new homes and he felt that greenways could help meet the aims for family, tourist, recreation and leisure users.

RL suggested that the Witney to Lechlade route using the old railway line should be added to connect up the sections that aren't yet available. PH agreed and referred to similar routes like Phoenix Trail at princes Risborough and the Cuckoo Trail in East Sussex that show what can be done. Many rights of way such as tree lined routes could be utilised to form this greenways network. MJ said it was important to follow the aims of the RoWIP and shouldn't take away from the network for some users. CB asked if Greenways would involve Sustrans. PH replied that this proposal was just made from his access strategy perspective and put forward as an outline

proposal that would complement the more commuter-friendly and urban tracks and roads. He gave an example at north-east Didcot where the development could support the upgrade of the footpath leading from Ladygrove Farm to the Earth Trust's centre to make a cycle and horseriding friendly route and provide an off-road connection. All of the schemes would involve negotiations with landowners and he hoped that Oxfordshire Plan could provide complementary funding for this approach to be used alongside developer contributions and third-party funds. Hopefully Science Vale route 1 could be completed in the next one to two years and be used as a showcase of what can be done with networks to promote and improve access and help transform awareness and appreciation of pleasant and safe routes for families. RL highlighted the substantial levels of development in Carterton but without any additional access provision. PH said there was a plan by transport planners to provide for cycling between the two settlements, and rights of way had contributed to this as well as identifying other possibilities but provision on the ground may be delayed until enough houses are occupied to then get the funding released. PH added that the fifth Local Transport Plan was going to be developed soon and he would be inputting the RoWIP aims to that. MJ said that this is where the RoWIP needed to be focused.

11. Questions and any other business

GG raised the new and emerging Oxfordshire Environment Board which has a steering group set up that CPRE and other Oxfordshire groups had formed. He thought that OCAF should consider expressing an interest he felt as a good rights of way network was an important part of a good environment. GG suggested that Earth Trust's chief executive would be a good first point of contact.

Action 4: PH to contact Earth Trust about Oxfordshire Environment Board

12. 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 **20th November 2019** venue normally County Hall or Speedwell House.

Meeting ended 12.15

List of abbreviations/acronyms

KBI – A company in Yorkshire making the KBI Flexipave surfacing solution
OCC – Oxfordshire County Council
OCAF – Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (a statutory Local Access Forum)
RoWIP – Rights of Way Improvement Plan
TTRO – Temporary Traffic Regulation Order
TWAO – Transport and Works Act Order

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

The Rt Hon Teresa Villiers MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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By email only to correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk

25 October 2019

This letter constitutes formal advice from Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (a Local Access Forum). As a body listed under Section 94(4), DEFRA is required, in accordance with Section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

Dear Theresa,

Funding of National Trails

I am writing on behalf of the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (OCAF) to support the letter (27th August) from the National Trails Alliance to you regarding the increasingly parlous state of the viability of the 15 National Trail Partnerships of England and Wales. We are fortunate in having two National Trails passing through our county, The Ridgeway and the Thames Path.

OCAF is a statutory body, comprising volunteers representing a wide variety of interests in relation to the countryside. We advise the County Council and other bodies on ways to improve access to the countryside and related areas for residents, visitors and tourists. Consequently we are supportive of the endeavours of The Ridgeway and The Thames Path trail partnerships not only for maintaining and improving the trails themselves but also for encouraging more of the public to use them for their enjoyment and well-being. We are all of us aware of the benefits – to mind and body – of people being active in the countryside.

We recognise the passion and commitment of the Trail Partnerships for increasing accessibility of the Trails and peoples' experiences on them. The great work that has been done in a short time, and the exciting plans for the future, are in real jeopardy

because of deteriorating funding, not only in terms of the diminishing value of grants but also in relation to funding not being guaranteed for several years in advance.

We urge you to respond positively to the Trail Alliance's modest requests.

Yours sincerely



Stuart McGinness
Chair Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

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Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Agenda item 8

Date: 20 November 2019

Title: OCAF's views on review of other rights of way liaison groups

Introduction

OCC is reviewing its Rights of Way Monitoring Group and the area rights of way meetings, which necessarily means some assessment of the group's interaction with OCAF. Officers are under pressure to ensure that time and resources spent on working with stakeholders are productive and positive.

Back in 2015 a review took place and the decision outcome document from that review is attached. Despite this review attendance and participation is less than it could be and OCC is interested to know views on how these meetings can be made more relevant, vibrant and interesting. The same assessment could arguably apply to OCAF.

OCAF Action

Members are invited to consider the decision document from 2015 and consider how well the recommendations have been implemented and what members and groups could do to make improvements – or if other changes are considered necessary.

The Future of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group

1.0 Background

At the last meeting I introduced a review paper to consider the function and future of the Monitoring Group meeting [MG]. It outlined the reasons for the review and invited your comments based around the four proposals put forward.

Over the intervening months we have received comments from most stakeholders including several who do not attend regularly which has helped inform the recommendations below. We are grateful to those who took the trouble to respond.

2.0 Issues & findings

What became clear very quickly is that the responses fall into two distinct categories, those that felt passionately that MG was an essential forum for groups to come together and meet with OCC officers to discuss PRoW matters, and those that felt there was not sufficient business to draw them to the table, often combined with the demands on their time, they didn't feel they could commit to regular attendance.

We have taken time to reflect on these comments and now six months on and taking into account developments in the intervening period, have made a decision on how best to take things forward.

2.1 Partnership - One thing that remains particularly relevant is the importance of maintaining and increasing partnership arrangements with outside bodies. The authority has recently launched an initiative to expand its work in this area and this is an area where Countryside Access has been strong over many years. We are fortunate that our work is based in an area that readily lends itself to volunteer engagement and there remains considerable support and enthusiasm from many of the groups that attend MG to make these partnerships work. However we do not take this for granted, these relationships have been cultivated over many years and an important aspect often forgotten is partnership works both ways.

2.2 Representation - Broader representation remains a concern if the group is to continue and remain viable. Realistically it is unlikely to increase and expanding membership will continue to prove challenging. As alluded to above outside groups & organisations face similar issues to OCC around capacity & competing priorities, comments from Sustrans, West Oxon DC, NFU and others underline this. Officers accept they have little control over this but acknowledge they could be more proactive to get specific representation for key issues. For example we have the Chiltern Society paper about cycling on the next agenda and it would be useful to have the CTC present to outline their campaign over use of public footpaths. We are looking into this.

2.3 Combining OCAF & MG - We have also looked closely at how the business of the MG can be incorporated with OCAF. The point was made strongly by some respondents that they fulfil different objectives and while it remains possible to incorporate them the opportunity to debate issues fully will be limited. The point was also made that while this may work in other authorities they may not have had a MG type meeting in place previously, or if they did it was amalgamated with the Local Access Forum when they were established many years ago. So it remains possible to do this but will the quality of the debate, due to time available, suffer accordingly. Bear in mind also the membership and purpose of the two meetings is different and concern was expressed about this, and that depth of knowledge and scrutiny could also be issues affecting the quality of debate and outcomes. Having to become a member of the group was also considered an obstacle however this option remains open to all should they chose and fulfil the application criteria.

2.4 Improving links with OCAF - There should be closer links between the MG & OCAF. While some of the folks are members of both groups there is currently little understanding or awareness of the role of the two groups more widely. Encouraging OCAF members to attend MG and visa versa would assist this as well as wider distribution of the papers to ensure broader understanding. Again OCC can only do so much to facilitate this, both OCAF and MG members will need to make the effort to ensure this works in practice. But it will lead to a stronger awareness of views and shared objectives to support work across the broader Countryside Access area. Sharing papers between meetings is a start.

2.5 Stronger partnerships - It's important to remain objective about the purpose of the meeting and the concerns raised in the consultation paper. OCC can only do so much to ensure the meeting remains viable and we consider that if participants feel the meeting should be retained then part of the onus on making it a constructive and objective forum rests with them, not just with council officers. This means we seek greater engagement from those attending. Times have moved on and the top down cascade of information in one direction does not reflect the partnership we seek to retain. Bringing papers to the table, reporting on projects, updates from the groups would broaden the understanding around the table on what we're doing collectively to deliver PRow management in the county and improve access where opportunity permits.

2.6 Increasing awareness - We suggest it is beneficial for us to distribute the papers of the meeting more widely amongst the membership of your organisations so they are informed about developments and understand about how their involvement is contributing to bigger objectives both locally and across the county. When I chaired the Area Forum meetings I was always struck by the fact that hardly anyone attending had seen the MG papers or often weren't aware of what was happening outside their immediate area or the bigger issues affecting Countryside Access. I think there would be real benefit in addressed this and I've outlined some

suggestions below. This goes to the core of the MG purpose and relevance, if the papers are retained amongst only those who attend there is little point in OCC going to the effort of producing them in the first place.

3.0 Recommendations

In summary we feel MG retains a purpose and should continue but subject to a revamp and refocus based around the following recommendations

| Topic | Recommendation | Actions |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Membership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining & broadening membership is in the interests of the wider group but topics/capacity of some groups may limit their attendance • OCAF members [not already part of MG] attend as observers to gain awareness and understanding of group and its function/purpose and how it links with OCAF • MG members to attend OCAF as observers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCC to proactively seek wider representation especially for key papers or topics • MG members to ensure their organisation is represented through substitution or where relevant additional members attend with specific interests relevant to the discussion topics • OCAF/MG members to agree how best to take this forward e.g. via rota to circulate around key groups |
| Agenda/discussion items | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCC will continue to produce reports/updates on the activities of the CA/DMC/NT teams and policy and discussion papers to the group • MG members bring forward discussion papers/agenda items for discussion in the wider group. Could include updates on volunteer activity, projects to raise awareness e.g. PPW, SCPMV or AONB initiatives visitor payback etc. • Emphasis on greater leadership from the groups to shape & direct the meeting, not just respond to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports will be more focused on activity/performance of the teams and delivery against RoWMP objectives but seeking MG views as before • MG groups should be more proactive to bring forward their concerns to create a wider discussion with OCC and other partners and agree where possible shared actions to address • OCC will request items from the groups to include in the agenda ahead of each meeting |

| | OCC reports | |
|---|---|---|
| Terms of reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a terms of reference for the group to outline its purpose and the roles of the respective groups and organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For discussion at the next meeting – would this be useful or should we retain the current principles without a formal agreement It could help new members, or those in outside organisations where there is a regular turnover of staff to grasp MG's purpose & relevance to their activity |
| Increasing awareness of MG and OCC & partner activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the papers more readily available to the membership of all groups Share papers of OCAF/MG meetings with members of both groups to broaden awareness of the role/ business of each meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCC to provide papers by email/pdf which can be distributed easily by members within their groups Consider placing the papers on the OCC CA webpages so they are available to the wider public and engage wider interest/involvement Area Forum meetings reports to include a link to the online reports providing a further mechanism to distribute the papers |
| Frequency of meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain as bi-annual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no proposal to change the frequency of reporting & Forum meetings so there is no driver to change the MG meeting |
| Timing of meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Friday the best day for the meeting, is this something that precludes some travelling to Oxford/Eynsham | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider at next MG meeting & encourage those not attending to indicate if this may assist them in future |
| Renaming the group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the changed emphasis should we consider renaming the group? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider [briefly] at the next MG meeting |
| Future review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose and the effectiveness of the group will remain under periodic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are many amongst you that believe the group is valid so based on the |

| | | |
|--|--------|---|
| | review | recommendations above we all need to work hard to make it a success. It is therefore sensible to introduce a further review in say autumn 2016 to see how things have changed |
|--|--------|---|

4.0 Summary

The core of this meeting will continue to be the key amenity societies with OCC supplemented by other interests as/when issues affecting them directly arise. The key focus will be network management, principle issues around caseload progress, resources and policy development. If we proceed we need to embrace the suggestions above to broaden understanding/ awareness.

MG cannot be a stand alone group where only those in the know attend and contribute, it should form part of a wider debate on the issues of relevance. There are a lot of good people out there just as passionate as those who attend the meeting but they aren't well informed about what goes on. They might have solutions to the problems we're discussing or access to resources and funding we'd not considered. We see there is as a great opportunity in developing this further.

Thank you for your continued support, we hope these recommendations are useful and we look forward to hearing your views on the proposals above at the next meeting.

Hugh Potter
Countryside & Records Manager
October 2015

Countryside Access Team – Monitoring Group Report - October 2019

Six months on and I didn't think I'd still be sitting here drafting another Monitoring Group report on behalf of the Countryside Access Team. Following three rounds of recruitment the post remains vacant however with colleagues we have ensured the lack of a principal lead for this area has been mitigated as far as possible, but the team needs a permanent manager. Hopefully this vacancy hasn't impacted on the service we provide to the public bar the usual pressures and challenges in this area of work.

The usual programmes of work continue and some examples of this are included within the report.

In the meantime, the wider Countryside Access Officer team come together on a regular basis to provide support and share expertise to ensure consistency in approach to managing the network.

1. Personnel

As reported in the last report James Smith left the team in the spring for pastures new and following a recruitment round Will Saunder stepped up from Assistant to Senior Assistant. The Countryside Tasks Team currently comprises three personnel, Will, Kieran & Matt. We have further recruitment planned to bolster the team which will commence shortly as we need the team back up to full capacity asap.

Katie Walther has recently been appointed as Countryside Access Officer [CAO] for the West area. Katie has been working in support of Sarah Aldous & Beth Rutterford in the north of the county based in Kidlington. She has a background as a Highways Inspector and took the opportunity to move into the support role summer 2018. This brings the inspection team back to full strength and will allow Sarah to increasingly pull away and develop her primary role as Technical Officer.

Structure Charts were requested as an action from the last meeting so please see attached to this report and in summary the current structure and reporting lines area as follows.

Reporting to Area Highways Managers:

Arthur McEwan-James – SW

Jackie Smith – SE

Beth Rutterford – NE

Katie Walther – West

Reporting to Area Operations Hub GM

Principal Officer – Countryside Access - Vacant

Sarah Aldous – Technical Officer [TO] Countryside Access

Matt Ball – Countryside Tasks Supervisor [TO]

Will Saunder – Senior Assistant CTT

Kieran Cope – Assistant CTT

There are currently two additional vacancies in the CTT

I have also attached a revised management area plan showing this detail.

2. Operations

As usual the CTT and contractors have been busy across the network undertaking a variety of projects but primarily focused on delivery of the soft vegetation programme [SVC]. It's becoming increasingly clear that climate change is impacting on this area with the period of SVC extending and conversely contracting the winter period when we can undertake the major clearances or hard vegetation clearance [HVC]. The team were still cutting SVC vegetation on paths as recently as last week prior to embarking on a major clearance – see below. Consequently, the work programme will need to be refined to account for this. Further information on this activity will be in the spring report.

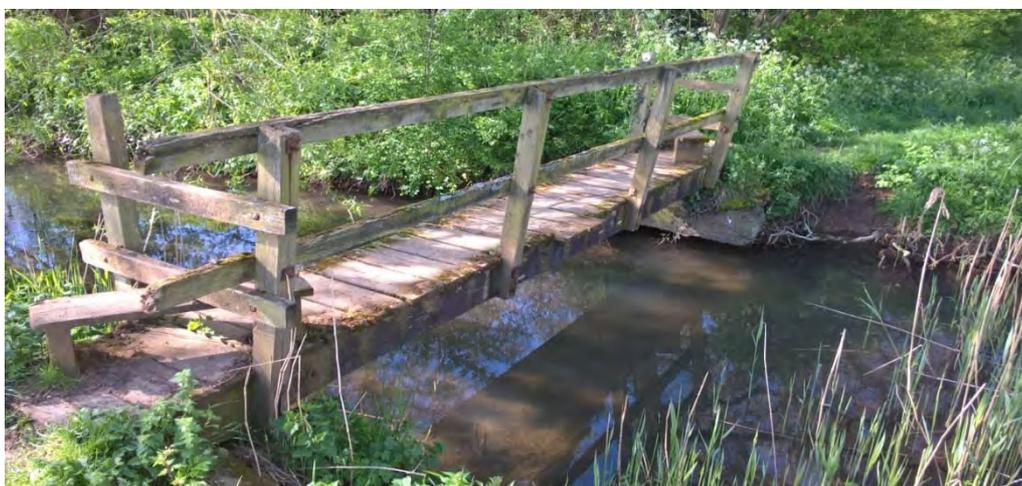
Langford Footbridge

As part of the capital programme we have had a major new bridge installed at Langford see below. The bridge was at the end of its serviceable life and the abutments were failing due to scour meaning the whole bridge was moving towards the river.

Environment Agency consent required the new bridge to be raised above its original level, consequently, you'll see in the picture below the structure is longer and required additional engineering to ensure it meets current standards. In addition, and to avoid the need for steps, ramps have been placed on either end and the stiles have been replaced with gates.

We are now installing structures that have a considerably longer design life and more resilient to higher water levels for longer periods caused by climate change.

This is the first project to be delivered with others at Merton & Kingham currently at various stages of design in preparation for delivery in the next financial year.





The kit bridge programme continues on a demand led basis. So far this year the CTT and Skanska bridge team have fabricated and installed 27 bridges across the network.

Occupation Lane - Bridleway

Following the addition of this route via DMMO to the DM&S a major project is underway to clear the route of vegetation. Stretching from New Yatt near North Leigh to the A4095 just north of Witney and almost 1.5km long this is a major addition to the local bridleway network.

The CTT have been on site in two stints to open the route and further work is planned to install a bridge over a ditch/old culvert following which it will be signposted and opened to the public.





Thames Path – Radcot

In agreement with the landowner the walked route of the Thames Path has been moved back with fencing realigned/removed and a new surface installed. The bank was eroding along this section and without the consent of the landowner very expensive revetment would have been required along the whole stretch.

The project was funded by the Thames Path NT, OCC, local angling club and the Swan Inn and delivered by a local contractor.



These are just a snapshot of activity on the network

3. Partnership Projects

Below are some examples of the many projects that go on across the county led by voluntary groups.

Cotswold Wardens

Stile to Gate project on the Deddington Circular walk. The gate was funded by Cherwell District Council and put in by Cotswold Volunteer Wardens who were bribed out of their normal area by the promise of cake!



Vale Ramblers PPW group working at Wootton & below at Hinton Waldrist



OCC have recently started recording and reporting on volunteer activity as a contribution to delivery of service and quantify the extent of organised activity on the PRow network. I am very grateful to those that are taking the time to record their activities for this purpose but moreover the considerable organisation, time and commitment made by the modest number of folks who arrange & coordinate the volunteers on the ground.

Below is a snapshot of this activity, I have also included as an annex a report on Ramblers PPW activity over the last six months. Thanks especially to Dave Cavanagh & Jim Parke for this, also Steve Feign of the South Chilterns PMVs and Gerry Simper from the Cotswolds Wardens for drawing the other stats together.

Ramblers PPW groups April – October 2019

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Task day hours [on site] | 449 |
| Total volunteer hours ¹ | 1291 |

Work includes 6.2 miles of vegetation clearance across several sites as well as network monitoring through the PPWs across the county

¹ Based on 55% return of PPW volunteers

Cotswold Volunteer Warden Service

April – June 2019 – Task day hours [on site] 447
 July – October 2019 - Task day hours [on site] 364.5
Total 811.5

Work includes, vegetation clearance, stile repairs, gate installations, bridge repairs, surfacing & waymark posts

South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers

April – June 2019 – Task day hours [on site] 473
 July – October – Task day hours [on site] 410
Total 883

Work includes installing wooden/metal kissing & swing gates, waymark posts, vegetation clearance & repairs to existing gates.

But to give an illustration of the further work involved note the following:

| Hours Spent Summary | | April - | | July - |
|--|--|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | | June | | Sept |
| Site and QM Totals | | | 473 | 410 |
| Travelling to Site (Estimate) | | | 118 | 97 |
| Planning and Prep Calculations (part estimate) | | | 192 | 296 |
| Admin Calculation (estimate) | | | 228 | 228 |
| Path Reps | | | 444 | 444 |
| Total Volunteer Hours | | | 1455 | 1475 |

This illustrates that using the Chiltern Society example around a third of the volunteer activity is on-site delivering work, a third is invested in back office planning, travelling, preparing tools, speaking with landowners, and the remainder monitoring the network inspecting reports and liaising with OCC/Parish Councils.

This is a considerable commitment and illustrates the breadth of support and commitment we have across the PRoW network, that people give up their own time to make this work.

I think this more detailed recording is useful and future reports will outline further detail of the work of the voluntary sector assisting OCC in managing the network.

Your willingness to work with us, your hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated.

Hugh Potter
 Group Manager – Area Operations Hub
 October 2018

RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 11th October 2019 at County Hall, Oxford

PRESENT

Members

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Nick Moon | Oxford Fieldpaths Society |
| Elizabeth Adams | Oxford Fieldpaths Society |
| Jim Parke | The Ramblers |
| David Godfrey | The Ramblers/ Oxford Fieldpaths Society |
| Petronella Natrass | British Horse Society |
| Chris Hall | Open Spaces Society |
| Alan Futter | Chiltern Society |
| Stuart McGuinness | OCAF Chair |
| Margaret Burden | Cotswold Wardens |

Oxfordshire County Council Officers

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Hugh Potter | Group Manager – Area Operations Hub (Chair) |
| Beth Rutterford | Countryside Access Officer - North |
| Mike Walker | Principal Officer - Countryside Records |

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and members introduced themselves. Apologies had been received from, Gerry Simper – Cotswold Wardens, Chris Bloomfield – Oxfordshire Trail Riders Fellowship, Rachel Livingstone – British Horse Society, Gordon Garraway – CPRE and Richard Ballard – Vale & South DC

2. Minutes of meeting 5th April 2019

Minutes were agreed with no corrections.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Item 1.2 from October 2018 minutes - JP confirmed John Orchard had stepped down from the group.

3.2 Staffing structure included with papers shows North and South as two different teams but in reality, work as one team with frequent cross over and communication.

3.3 Marston cycleway – Temporary repairs have been done to the bridges and they will be replaced soon. Some of the lights and many of the signs are completely overgrown and the whole route needs to be cut back hard. **Action HP/SA - Pass on report to City Council**

4.0 NM questioned whether there would there be an update of the Definitive Map as since the 2017 Parish Boundary changes in South Oxfordshire the numbering in some instances no longer matches that on the DM&S.

MW confirmed there were no plans to issue a new DM&S due to the capacity in the team to undertake such a large project. He referred NM to the online Countryside Access map which included all legal changes since the last DM&S was published in 2006.

4.0 NM – Should Definitive Map error be reported via CAMs or directly to MW. MW suggested still report via CAMS but urgent issues could also be sent via email.

5.3 HP – Express Way consultation from DfT has not yet happened so no further information at this point.

ACTION HP to send out links to Express Way website where the most up to date information can be found – see below:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway/>

6.0 Management of Motor Vehicles and Use of Traffic Regulation Orders on Public Rights of Way policy [slightly amended] discussed at the last meeting, along with Priority Caseload Approach policy have been considered at Cabinet Advisory Group - now just waiting to be finally endorsed at the next meeting in November DG asked if TROs especially temporary ones [TTROs] are available online. Paul Harris is leading on this, but the implementation has been impacted by a major restructure of the wider Traffic Management/TRO team. NM advised that developers are not always noticing correctly on development sites and alternative routes are often inappropriate or too long. Some close the whole route rather than just the affected section. **ACTION HP ensure PRow Officers are being consulted on TRO applications – raise at next Countryside Access Team Meeting.**

NB. *Post meeting note – this was discussed and mostly there is early & full engagement with PRow Officers by both developers & TTRO team to ensure access is maintained & impacts mitigated wherever possible.*

7.2 Variation Order for diverting the Thames Path is in progress and action currently sits with Natural England. The linking path between Mill Lane & existing riverside footpath is now a PRow.

4.0 Countryside Records - Presented by Mike Walker – Principal Countryside Records Officer

4.1 Staffing – Since the last meeting Tristan Wright and Gavin Pill have left the team and Diana Rust is retiring on 18 October. Two new members of staff, Chris Atkins [Countryside Records Officer] & Shazad Katana [Support Officer] have started recently.

4.2 DMMOs – Progress on the DMMO case list has slowed a little, having been impacted by staff resignations.

However, 56 applications are being worked on this year including a few DM anomalies. NM and DG were pleased by the greater amount of progress being made.

4.3 PPOs – currently 28 applications being dealt with at various stages.

Some of these are proactive but the majority are applications. DG commented that diversion plans for developments are often very unclear due to the lack of or poor quality base mapping. CH commented that some OCC base maps can be very faint. MW suggested this might be the result of the scanning of plans and that if there were specific problems, to contact the case officer. BR - PRow officers have also been experiencing some issues with the base mapping on CAMs.

4.4 No update on Deregulation Act, Stake holder working group currently frozen –

No change is likely until Brexit is sorted.

5.0 Countryside Access – report by Hugh Potter - Group Manager AOH

- 5.1** Personnel update – 1 x vacant posts (Principal Officer, 3 rounds of unsuccessful recruitment). HP has stepped in to support Area Officers as interim measure with the help of SA as Technical Officer. Katie Walther secured Countryside Access Officer Position for the West Area. Number of vacancies in the Tasks Team and due to recruit shortly. Will Saunder gained the position of Senior Assistant in May. Sarah Aldous still the lead for the City.
- 5.2** Capital Bridges – Langford Bridge installed – cost more than planned but higher specification should last a lot longer. EA now require bridges to be lifted above the water course meaning longer structures which has increased costs but should make them more resilient to flooding/water damage.
- 5.3** Occupation Lane – 1.5km DMMO route with bridleway status. Some clearance still in progress and still need to install a bridge/culvert shortly prior to the route being opened to the public.
- 5.4** Thames Path at Radcot – Walked line moved back due to bank erosion and surfaced with permission of land owner.
- 5.5** Volunteer Partnership Projects - lots of great work on the ground but bear in mind 2/3 of time is spent in the background preparation of tasks, there is also probably considerable under recording of time in some areas. Accurate recording is important to recognise the scale & extent of what is going on.
- 5.6** JP - Ramblers report – Error in figures shown in papers provided, 55 (28%) of PPWs recorded hours with on average each PPW doing around 23 hours over a 6-month period
- 5.7** AF – raised that considerable time is spent dealing with landowners especially over gate maintenance & much of this is likely to be unrecorded
- 5.8** CH – Glover report recommended that the Chilterns and Cotswolds are given National Park Status, he enquired whether there had been any discussions regarding this proposal - HP stated that as far as he was aware there have been no discussions on this yet, it was still only a proposal which government need to adopt, but that OCC will engage & comment through official channels when approached to do so.

6.0 National Trails

HP introduced the last Partnership reports for both trails

- a) **Thames Path** – Number of surfacing and revetment projects and most of the volunteer activity on this Trail is in Oxfordshire
 - b) **Ridgeway** – All NTs had received a 5% cut in funding from Natural England this year. This has had a disproportional impact on the smaller trails of which the Ridgeway is one. Sarah Wright is seeking to raise income from several organised sports events on the trail with increasing emphasis on this to balance the budget. Will receive some money from HS2 - £140k over 4 years for a specific project in Bucks near Wendover.
- 6.1** Draft Association of National Trail Trails MOU has been agreed in principle. This will underpin future working as a group to represent the interests of those managing the NTs in representation to government and lobby for a better financial settlement for future years.

6.2 World Heritage Site TRO still under consideration by Wiltshire Council

7.0 OCAF Papers

7.1 Presented by Hugh Potter for info. No questions or queries raised. Next meeting 20th Nov

7.2 PH gave presentation at last OCAF meeting on FlexiPave – A BHS approved material suitable for equestrian use as an alternative to tarmac. It is permeable, so no icing and affords grip for hooves.

PN commented that it has been used in Lancashire and Wokingham where it has received positive feedback from all users especially horse riders and runners. It does cost more than tarmac but has a 7yr guarantee unlike tarmac which only has a guarantee for 1 yr. Some questions over durability as it is a new product and how the surface would cope with leaf fall.

Made from a high percentage of recycled material including 2.25 recycled car tyres per m² x 35mm.

8.0 Any Other Business

8.1 Joint funding from OCC and BHS for equipment for Cotswold Wardens – PN to confirm at next BHS committee meeting [November] and then contact either BR or HP.

8.2 Barbed wire on paths through woodland in South East area – OCC powers are limited unless it is directly affecting PRow with wire on the outside of the fence posts. AF to report to Jackie Smith who will inspect and see if action needs to be taken.

8.3 HP - Attendance has noticeably dropped at these meetings, attendance needs to improve to justify the resources put into running this meeting as well as OCAF. Suggestions for increasing attendance included guest speakers – interest expressed in getting a Landowner or NFU to speak.

ACTION – ALL – Ideas to the Chair for future discussion topics & to all encourage other groups/members to attend on a more regular basis. A further review on the effectiveness and purpose of the meeting will take place in the next 12 months if matters do not improve.

NEXT MEETINGS: 03.04.2020 and 09.10.2020 – both at County Hall, Oxford