



MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 35

7 June 2017, The Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine

Members	
Clive Beckett – Chair (CB)	Tom Chevalier (TC)
Louis Upton (LU)	Tony Welch (TW)
Pauline Hey (PH)	Mario Costa-Sa (MC)
Andy Knight (AK)	David Simkins (DS)
Rosalyn Whisker (RW)	
Secretariat	
Sarah Smalley - Central Bedfordshire Council	
Apologies	
Cllr Budge Wells	Keith Dove
David Leverington	
Observers	
Darren Woodward	Cllr Ian Dalgarno

		ACTION
1	<p><u>Apologies, welcomes & introductions</u></p> <p>Welcome to Darren Woodward of the Marston Vale Trust and Cllr Ian Dalgarno who has recently been appointed as Executive Member for Community Services which covers countryside and Rights of Way (as part of Highways) matters. Round table introductions for the benefit of Cllr Dalgarno.</p> <p>Apologies received from Cllr Budge Wells, David Leverington and Keith Dove.</p> <p>CB explained that the Joint meeting with Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum (BoBLAF) had been cancelled due to lack of items from them and lack of joint items. Our JLAF also had crucial items to discuss. A joint meeting will be arranged for a later date. CB stated that speakers will need to be organised well in advance to ensure their availability.</p>	
2	<p><u>Public Questions</u></p> <p>None</p>	

3	<p><u>Creation of Forest of Marston Vale – Presentation by Darren Woodward</u></p> <p>Darren gave a presentation to the Forum and explained the purpose of the Marston Vale Trust. It is one of 12 Community Forest's set up in the late 80's/early 90's across the country and run by Local Authorities (LA's). It is now run as a private charity.</p> <p>The project area covers 61 square miles and it is split over Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough. Across the portfolio is approximately 575 hectares of land available to the public. This is a mix of open space and surfaced paths.</p> <p>Darren explained that much of the land came from old brick works in the area where the holes left had been restored and turned into forest and country parks. The Trust had also procured some of the sites, although this isn't their ideal way of obtaining land due to associated costs. They are now working with landowners on leases on new land to expand the portfolio.</p> <p>The land started with 3% tree cover and the Trust has now achieved 15% cover. The target set by the Government for Community Forest's is set at 30%.</p> <p>The Trust is now doing outreach work, going into schools and encouraging the public to 'adopt' local woodland to help deliver their objective for social regeneration.</p> <p>In terms of economic regeneration they lobby through the planning system to obtain green space in order to achieve the 30% target. They have set up a Firewood Enterprise to bring in income which helps with management of small woodlands which would be otherwise uneconomical. They also showcase ways of accessing renewable energy with wind turbines and a biomass boiler.</p> <p>They have a Rights of Way Officer in their team and they are involved in many access projects including Sustrans Route 51, Lets go website and they have 33km of accessible surfaced track. Again they actively promote access through planning applications and networking with LA's to deliver aspirations.</p> <p>Questions: TC asked if all woodland is open access. Darren advised that access is designed into the woodland scape having regard to nature conservation and other factors.</p> <p>CB confirmed that the Trust have been integral in getting new routes set up. However the local Highways Authorities have not sorted out the legal agreements in respect of the national cycle route. The forum discussed the fragmented approach from the LA's in respect of development and maintenance of cycle routes which has made it difficult to finalise some agreements.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno acknowledged the above and agreed to discuss Route 51 separately with Darren. He advised he is very keen to support country parks and intends to take an active role.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno asked if there is a target timescale for the Trust to reach 30% tree cover. Darren advised there is not, the only timescale they are working to is up to 2030 which is when the Planning Policy support is agreed until.</p> <p>CB commended the Trust on achieving 15% cover as many other Community</p>	

	<p>Forest's have not been able to manage this, even when funded by LA's so to do so through their own funding is a great achievement. He asked if the JLAF could help the Trust and Darren confirmed support would be appreciated to give them a louder voice to help deliver their plan.</p> <p>TC said that Let's Go website had not been developed in the past few years. Funding from LA's had been dropped, although David Leverington had agreed to provide some funding last year, it is in need of a refresh. Agreed as an agenda item for a Joint meeting.</p>	
4	<p><u>CBC Rights of Way function following restructure</u></p> <p>DL presented the new Highways structure at the last meeting and reassured the forum that the ROW function would continue with DL as a strategic point of contact. Since that meeting DL has tendered his resignation. CB advised this raised concerns regarding input in the forum as DL had been a focal point with organising and bringing items to the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno advised he met with Marcel Coiffait (Director of Community Services) following news of DL's resignation to discuss the new structure with a view to changing the structure rather than losing a good officer. He stated his function is to set policy and monitor outputs, rather than advise how to run and manage the teams, however, Marcel has agreed to review and report back.</p> <p>CB has a meeting arranged with Marcel on 11 July and advised any Forum member is welcome to attend. AK volunteered to come along. CB intends to discuss the function of the forum and obtain assurances as to how CBC can support the forum and help deliver its objectives. He is also looking for a clearer idea about the co-ordination of the Countryside and Rights of Way functions. He is concerned that without DL the joined up approach of the Countryside, Definitive Map and Rights of Way work could be lost. Cllr Dalgarno acknowledged the JLAF's statutory function and agreed that its voice should be heard.</p> <p>TC stated that as the Highways function had only recently been bought back in house it was still very new to Officers. Cllr Dalgarno advised that as the new contract had been in place for 1 year he expected to be seeing better outcomes by now.</p> <p>TC also expressed concern that the remaining managers in the Highways structure all have a Highways background and that DL will be a great loss for providing ROW advice to Officers and there could also be a loss of 'vision' work in creating new access routes.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno stated that he would like to see a reduction to the 64 sites that are managed by CBC to free up officer time to concentrate on obtaining new sites in areas that are currently lacking. He confirmed that a consultation is due to start shortly on a refreshed Leisure Strategy. SS to check with Lisa White that the JLAF are on the consultation list.</p>	JLAF Secretary
5	<p><u>Recreational Strategy</u></p> <p>CB advised a meeting was held with Howard Griffin, Paul Burgess and David Leverington of CBC. RW, TC, LU & CB attended and raised the issue that no feedback is issued on comments made on major consultations. They also asked to</p>	

	<p>be consulted on other plans in CBC. CB felt that HG and PB took on board their concerns. CB would like to look over action points with SS and Cllr Dalgarno has asked for a copy of the minutes.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno advised that next week the Local Development Framework documents will be published. They will go to the Executive Committee for approval of the consultation period before being made public for consultation.</p> <p>Although the document will not be too specific it would be good for the Forum to get in early at this stage with comments regarding green infrastructure.</p>	<p>CB & JLAF Secretary</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><u>Bridleway (BW) No 7 Studham (Procedure, responsibility and resources available)</u></p> <p>RW explained that the matter had arisen as a result of horse riders being verbally abused when riding what is shown on the OS map as a BW through Whipsnade Golf Course. She investigated and discovered that the route was shown on the Definitive Map (DM) as a footpath (FP), although it was shown on a previous copy of the DM as a BW. Other evidence obtained is an Act of Parliament confirming it is a BW, the owner of the golf course acknowledged it was, and also signage indicating a BW.</p> <p>When RW approached CBC to have the DM amended she was advised that a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) would be required. RW and others disagreed that this should be needed as the evidence is clear and a previous DM showed the route as a BW.</p> <p>CB explained that the DM they are referring to was actually a working copy that was sent out in error and therefore does not constitute an actual DM. LU queried what would have happened for the BW to be removed from the working copy of the map and not made it on the final version. CB explained that this working copy originates from the 80's when the process for updating the DM was different. He suspects that the map was a 1st draft. The DMMO process took out the need for a draft map and is now the process to be followed to make amendments to the DM.</p> <p>MCS asked whether the BW was shown on the first DM from 1952, CB advised that this was also a draft map and the first DM produced for the area was mid 60's. CB also stated that the current DM is a legal document and shows the route as a FP. MCS asked how it could have been changed from BW to FP without a stopping up order or similar and CB reiterated that the map they are referring to was only a working copy.</p> <p>A discussion ensued as to the best way forward and it was agreed that a DMMO would be a long process and is not guaranteed to result in upgrading the path and also that proceeding to judicial review would most likely cause animosity. It was agreed that a meeting with CBC in the first instance to discuss the matter would be the best course of action, and then proceed to discussion with the landowner with mediation from CBC. RW to approach Adam Maciejewski to arrange a meeting. Cllr Dalgarno asked to be included in the meeting.</p>	<p>RW</p>
<p>7</p>	<p><u>Houghton Regis Framework Plan</u></p> <p>The Forum believe that the plan that is showing on CBC website and that was brought to the meeting is out of date. SS to speak with planning to obtain an up to date version.</p>	<p>JLAF Secretary</p>

8	<p><u>Any other notified business</u></p> <p>AK confirmed he had joined the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership board as a representative for access.</p> <p>TC felt that the P3 groups set up some years ago were now diminishing. The Ramblers had some volunteers that are co-ordinated by Rights of Way officers that are filling some of the gaps but he felt that P3 could be invigorated.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno confirmed volunteering was discussed in a meeting he had yesterday and he had delegated this to Cllr Maudlin who is a champion for volunteering and will take this forward. CB also confirmed that Steve Halton's role had now changed and he was back to solely working with volunteer groups which should also help. TC had concerns that with Steve Halton's position now within leisure that his focus would be primarily on countryside sites rather than Rights of Way and Cllr Dalgarno agreed that the two areas needed to be pulled together. He also advised that there is a new contract with the Greensand Trust to work on volunteering and that they are investing in this area.</p> <p>Cllr Dalgarno finished by reiterating he is keen to support countryside and rights of way and would try to attend as many JLAF meetings as possible.</p>	
13	<p><u>Dates of future meetings</u></p> <p>Wednesday 20 September 2017 –Houghton Hall Park subject to completion</p>	