

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF 2022/23
Wednesday 15 November 2023, online Teams® meeting

2023 (2)

**Attending:
Members**

Mathew Judson (Chair)	Dave Cavanagh (DC)	Anne Luttmann-Johnson (ALJ)
Richard Fairhurst (RF)	Ilse Lambert (IL)	Rachel Livingstone (RL)
Cllr Dr Pete Sudbury (PS)		

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:

Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Principal Officer Public Rights of Way Access Strategy
Rebecca McNaught (RM) – Countryside Access Development Officer
Hugh Potter (HP) - Group Manager Countryside Operations and Volunteer Coordination

Welcome, and introductions. Chair and Secretary opened the meeting and welcomed existing members and officers.

1. **Apologies** from Philip Chamberlain & John Griffin. **Resignation** of Gordon Garraway. PH confirmed receipt of Gordon Garraway’s retirement letter, stating he had joined OCAF in 2004 a year after it was formed and had contributed a great deal to the work of the group and always championed the countryside, access to it and the vital role of volunteers. The Chair recorded the thanks of the group to Gordon for his service to access.

2. **Minutes of 17th May 2023 were confirmed.**

DC asked if the acronym ORPA (Other Routes with Public Access) could be unabbreviated in its first use. OCC to amend the minutes accordingly.

3. **No Declarations of Interest**

4. **Matters Arising**

Action 1 – PH to follow up the accessibility consideration with HS2. PH apologised as he did not recall the reason for re-writing to HS2 but was reminded by ALJ & MJ. PH to re-visit this

ACTION 1: PH to draft a letter back to HS2.

Action 2 – PH to look at getting ORPA’s on the online map. PH reported that mapping issues had not been followed up for the countryside access map. MJ stated that it is an important access resources to be shown on maps and Oxfordshire could lead the way. PS later endorsed the importance of the public being able to access full information online and encouraged action. Rachel added that Mike Walker is also working with Highways on one map for everything.

ACTION 2: PH to follow this up with Information and Mapping Team.

5. **One-minute updates** from members about any significant issues from their interest areas

Members also briefly reminded the group who they represented, mainly for the benefit of Cllr Sudbury.

DC – representing walkers

DRAFT & unconfirmed

ALJ – explained that she is a wheelchair user – ‘expert by experience’

IL – represent the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) – reported that it is very difficult to get information about the status of routes – whether they are open or have Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) on them.

RF – represents cyclists – he added that he is a volunteer for Sustrans and he is currently doing a survey of all Sustrans routes within his area, so asked for any bug-bears or ideas improvements.

RMc – minute-taker at OCAF and supporting PH with Countryside Access Development in particular s106 funded improvements on the rights of way network – update is on agenda.

RL – local access volunteer for British Horse Society (BHS) and local horse rider – added that she is trying to upgrade routes and get users of roads.

MJ – a motorised vehicle user – like Ilse reported it to be difficult to find information about routes.

PS – a retired medical professional. Member of the Green Party – keen on Active Travel – he started the 20mph campaign and Climate Change is why he is here [as a Councillor]. He raised concerns about why IL & MJ can’t get the route information they need and he appreciates the difficulties shared by the group as he has been trying to get a cycleway at Clifton Hampden without success.

6. Access Strategy Update

PH as Acting Environment and Heritage Group Manager talked through his PowerPoint report, starting with information on the internal restructure within the Environment and Heritage Team, then as Access Strategy & Development Lead ran through s106 funded projects completed since the last OCAF meeting and some in the pipeline. PS offered support with Procurement & Legal problems/hold-ups.

MJ asked if the recruitment of more members of OCAF could be distributed to parish clerks to promote locally. PH will work on something for the New Year and after the current restructure was settled with new staff in place.

ACTION 3 – PH to consider how to engage with local council, and other unrepresented interests regarding recruitment to OCAF or run some kind of access themed event.

ALJ commented that PH had not included anything about the Botley West Solar Farm as it is a huge threat to countryside access and biodiversity. PH responded saying that planning applications aren’t usually considered by the forum, adding that Access Strategy, Landscape, Archaeology and Biodiversity specialist teams are engaging with the application giving technical input.

PS – explained why he was supporting Botley West and that he is meeting with Photovolt and will push hard for Countryside Access & Active Travel.

RF suggested that the way OCAF could get involved is by ensuring we get the best possible outcome for access and biodiversity, e.g. Get a ‘greenway’ all the way through the site to make it an exemplar development. He specifically asked PS to look at a cyclepath from Eynsham to Botley Road (B4044) – suggesting it can go on top of where they bury the cable. PH added that he is looking for offsite contributions for countryside access as well. PS added that ‘local benefit’ was on the agenda. DC agreed with RF that OCAF should aim for best possible outcome if the development goes ahead.

ACTION 4 – PH to send OCAF members an example of standard planning wording that Access Strategy use as the basis for responding to planning applications.

DRAFT & unconfirmed

7. **Oxfordshire Visitor Economy & Vision Destination Management Plan**

PH talked through his PowerPoint that he had adapted from OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership). He highlighted the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified in the plan and what that might mean for access and rights of way.

RF commented that he is a massive fan of King Alfred's Way (Cycling UK) which has become a major tourism 'vehicle' and mainly used existing rights of way. He questioned if there is anything along those lines OCC can do – National Trails, Cotswolds, canal walks....to develop routes and themes and market them.

PH responded that he was working closely with the two national trails and the Chilterns looking at links and improvements, but this was an area that had not been able to have much focus for the last few years, and capacity remained very limited.

RL suggested Witney to Fairford Railway and the whole of Akeman Street, which has a lack of PROW status on much of it.

PS asked OCAF to bear in mind current OCC transport and environment issues including housing growth where transport strategies are trying to reduce vehicles on the roads and where unsustainable tourism could add to the road network pressures. He also highlighted limited affordable housing where holiday accommodation has reduced the availability of housing to some groups,

8. **Proposed in-person meeting May 2024**

RMc explained that Ardley ERF was unavailable in May and that Heyford Park Community Centre might be a better option with all the s106 spend, and other development activity there on Portway to the west of the old airbase. All members were in favour of a face-to-face meeting with a site visit.

ACTION 5 – RMc to 'Doodle Poll' a date and organise.

9. **Forward work planning, next meeting dates and agendas**

PH asked for member led content for future meetings. MJ suggested circular route planning around the county and the crossing at Bablock Hythe. PS suggested looking at Home to School transport planning and HP gave an example of where highways investment had improved an existing route at Childrey and East Challow.

RMc to confirm date of May meeting.

10. **Notices and other issues** – None

11. **Question Time**

RL reported that Mike Walker has been putting in DMMOs, mostly to do with width and asked if this is something Countryside Access/OCAF can look at and get widths listed. PH replied that on new or upgraded routes, or when engaging with planning applications a minimum width is asked for, with additional width to form an access 'corridor'.

Chair ended the meeting and thanked all for participating.

Meeting ended 11.30am