

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

First meeting of 2021/22
Remote meeting conducted through MSTeams® due to social distancing rules
Thursday 24th June 2021
2pm – 4pm

AGENDA

2021 (1)

Time	Item number	Item
0950	0	<i>Teams® meeting activated. Please test your connection and video/call settings</i>
10.00	1	Welcome from Secretary and declarations of interest
	2	Confirm annual election/re-election of Chair and Vice-chair (As prior advised)
	3	Confirm the minutes of 18 th November 2020
	4	Matters Arising from minutes and updates (note supplied)
10.20	5	Local Transport & Connectivity Plan - draft policies on Greenways, Green Infrastructure and Equestrians for discussion
11.00	6	Future meetings, plans and agenda – what do members want?
11.10	7	Space for AOB
11.25	8	Confirm date, time and location of future meetings 17 November 2021 18 May 2022 16 November 2022 All 9.45 for 10am location hopefully 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

Date: 24 June 2021
Title: Secretary's report

Introduction

As this meeting is again being conducted and attended remotely this note provides a brief summary of agenda items and updates since the last meeting. As per the current social distancing rules the meeting will be conducted through the secure MS Teams link. As before no public will be able to access the meeting and only limited staff members will join. This is to keep the number of participants manageable.

Agenda item update

Agenda item 2: (re)election Chair and Vice-chair Stuart has had to resign his membership of OCAF including his Chair. Matthew has indicated he is willing to stand as Vice-chair again or step into the Chair for the time being. Members are requested to consider nominating themselves or another willing member to Vice-chair or Chair roles. Stuart will be a loss to the group as he has been a valuable member representing cycling and youth participation interests for a good few years. He has also done a great job as Chair since Troth stepped down.

Agenda item 3: Confirm minutes of 18th November 2020. Draft minutes were circulated, and amendments made. Members to confirm correct.

Agenda item 4: Matters arising. See note attached to this report with some Q&As about traffic regulation orders from Ilse. There is also a note about promoted routes from Gordon Garraway. Members to note and/or provide advice. Officers to provide any update about this or other matters included in the meeting. Any member who attended Monitoring Group is also encouraged to raise any issues here or under AOB.

Agenda item 5: Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP). This is the main business for this meeting. Policies for Greenways, Green Infrastructure (GI) and Equestrians are included for review. Members will have seen early versions of these produced as topic guides. The GI one is new. These draft policies are part of a suite of 30+ policies that will form the draft LTCP for consultation. Members are encouraged to read the papers in advance of the meeting and are invited to make comments and consider formulating advice to be submitted at pre-consultation stage. Alternatively, members may wish to wait for the formal draft LTCP consultation.

Agenda item 6: Future Plans and agendas. This is a space in the agenda for OCAF members to consider how best to make the best use of members time and interests to put together an action plan or future work programme for the group -and think about how this can be achieved.

Agenda item 7: AOB. A short note and website link on the proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Interchange Scheme at Ardley M40 is attached for information at this stage. No other matters have been advised. Questions and items for discussion at the meeting or future ones are encouraged.

Agenda item 9 – dates of next meetings. As per agenda. Wednesdays are proposed, but does the day need to change? It has been suggested that Thursdays work better for more people. Ideas for site visits and/or face to face meetings are invited.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF 2020/21
Wednesday 18 November 2020, Online Zoom® meeting

2020 (2)

Attending: Members

Stuart McGinness (SMG) Chair Mathew Judson (MJ) Vice Chair Dave Cavanagh (DC)
Ilse Lambert (IL) Anne Luttmann-Johnson (ALJ) John Griffin (JG) Sarah Martin (SM)

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:

Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Principal Officer PRoW Access Strategy
Hugh Potter (HP) - Group Manager Area Operations Hub

1. **Welcome.** SMG opened the meeting and welcomed attendees

2. **Apologies and declarations.**

Apologies received from Cllr Constance, Gordon, Philip and Rachel. No declarations

3. **Confirm minutes from meeting 48 – 20th May 2019.** Confirmed as correct

4. **Matters arising**

PH confirmed that the 'how to' guide was circulated to all parishes, but that little feedback had been received. Post-Covid it was likely that this would be resent. MJ noted that he and IL had repeatedly offered volunteers for byway clearance, but this had not been taken up. HP thanked him and his volunteers for their offer and confirmed that this had been passed on and he guaranteed that this would be followed up.

5. **Public rights of way update**

DC asked whether Andy Mawer was joining OCC from the national trails team. HP confirmed that Andy had been recruited to the post of Senior Delivery Officer as had the Delivery Team Officer (Richard McErlain). Both should start in December or January. This left a vacancy in the National Trails Team which the team was pushing to replace soonest. HP outlined that Operations part of countryside access had maintained business as normal over the last six months, apart from volunteer works. Inspections, site visits and maintenance were all being undertaken. There had been an emphasis on bridges to focus spend on emergency and safety measures and around £120,000 had been spent on replacements to replace the ageing bridge stock mainly using contractors.

DC questioned if contractors were used for summer vegetation clearance. HP confirmed that this year nearly 100% of works were undertaken by contractors as there was no in-house capacity. In usual times around 60-70% went out to contract. DC asked whether this had negative impacts on budget and HP responded that although clearance costs had increased this was balanced against almost zero Tasks Team spend so mostly levelled out.

IL asked if there was any more news about the traffic regulation order in Wantage. HP replied that there wasn't anything to report other than the vehicle barrier blocks had been stolen, and so these would need replacing and reinforcing. HP added that there may be a way forward by using some specialist contractor's time for a programme of byway works. It was at the top of his list requiring major investment and time. IL noted that she hoped the best solution could be found. HP added that councillors and locals were all involved and felt it was important so this would be progressed.

PH gave a brief walkthrough summary of his paper. DC noted that the Icknield Greenway works looked good and welcomed the oak over steel construction of the new bridge. He suggested that the next meeting could include a site visit there.

6. Local Transport & Connectivity Plan – Greenways and Equestrians topic guides update

PH introduced the agenda item and showed a small number of slides giving a summary of the LTCP early engagement process which ran from March to May 2020 and the feedback on the Greenways and Equestrians topic guides as part of the wider Active and Healthy Travel Strategy.

ALJ noted the update mentioned users with disabilities and welcomed the statement of needs along with types of need. PH responded that greenways are designed to be as accessible as possible and it was important to make other paths as easy to use as possible. ALJ noted that public transport and other accessible transport were emphasised in the report.

JG stated that an important word was connectivity and for this to apply to all users and including safe journeys. It wasn't about numbers but individuals with different needs. JG highlighted the Slow Ways campaign to join up communities along direct routes in ways other than driving. He added that the campaign was looking for volunteers. SMG noted a new 350km long off road circular cycling route called [King Alfred's Way](#) linking the Ridgeway to Winchester and developed by Cycling UK.

7. Any other business

Promoted Routes

PH explained that the range of promoted routes that OCC had developed, managed, promoted and maintained over the years was now in need of review. He reported that colleagues no longer actively monitored the routes or updated the route information. There were many other suppliers of suggested routes and perhaps it was now time to move to stop promoting these and possibly adopt alternative provision – such as family cycle routes.

DC referred to work he had done with Faringdon Town Council. At the council's request he had gone out to recce the routes and found that the route guides were no longer correct. PH replied that team members used to go and survey the routes to check on condition, get problems resolved and update the walks information – but that this had not happened for at least 5 years. JG noted that quality and accuracy were needed along with maintenance. He asked if these routes could be devolved to communities and volunteers, perhaps with OCC helping by updating maps. He added that if there was no capacity then a rethink was needed but on a route by route basis especially if there are willing volunteers able to do a job properly. SMG noted that cycle rides can be uploaded and hosted using Garmin Connect and this transfers to a council's database.

DC said that Faringdon wanted to promote walking routes which suggested there was a value which could be built on. If there was a will to make improvements, then ways could be found and checks of routes were relatively simple. PH questioned the need for OCC to continue with this work when very few resources were available and so many other providers were out there. DC challenged this saying that OCC promoted routes should be reasonably easy to use and well maintained as examples. HP noted that there were indeed many options and providers. A quick internet search reveals hundreds of routes. Pre-Internet it was understandable that OCC provided the resource. Going forward if locals valued routes they may be encouraged to take them on, but for OCC maintenance of promoted routes has to fit with other demands on the rights of way network and if people download an OCC route then there needs to be confidence in the path on the ground. DC said that the review could start with Faringdon and suggested that all the routes should be checked. JG added that short easy walks could be included and MJ recommended Icknield Greenway is added.

8. Next meeting

Next meeting **Wednesday 19th May**, possibly on site at Icknield Greenway, in an OCC office, or if needs be at an online Zoom® meeting. Secretary to confirm with Chair.

Chair ended the meeting and thank members and staff for contributions. Meeting ended 11.20

Agenda item 4: matters arising (managing vehicles)

Following on from the last meeting of OCAF, the member representing motorcycling interests, Ilse Lambert, asked some follow up questions about permanent and temporary traffic regulation orders (TROs and TTROs) process, notifications and putting on the interactive countryside map, as well as Lost Ways

The lead officers were asked to respond to the points raised and these are included as a Q&A below.

Question 1 TTRO on byways around Wantage - I don't know how the repair plans are going, but maybe it's worth looking into the repairs Wiltshire Council did on the Sugar Hill BOAT (Aldbourne 19). Both the bottom and top field were in an abysmal state (similar to the flat bits on our TTROd byways) and the repairs are keeping up very well.

Answer 1: We have contacted Wiltshire Council about these repairs and if an officer is passing they will go and have a look. As to Wantage byways, the first stage of work on Cornhill Lane was completed last week and in-house work is programmed for Green Lane and identifying works on Hardwell Lane with a contractor. A summer works planning meeting was held recently and the focus will be on minimum intervention – i.e. levelling, rolling, reinstating ditches on short sections and keeping the route closed this summer in order to let the repairs settle on Cornhill/Green lanes. It is expected that a seasonal TRO will be sought on completion of the work but the timing of its introduction is yet to be decided and is dependent on the completion of the planned repair work.

Question 2 Countryside Map and TROs - The Countryside Access Map is getting better day by day! I find the information that has been added to it these last few months really useful. One thing we are missing still, are permanent TROs. Is there any way they could be added to? As, once they are on the map, they do not need adjusting (except for adding any new ones), I would hope this could be achieved without too much effort. I'll keep my fingers crossed. Of course indicating TTROs would be useful too, but as they are of a more fleeting nature, just having them listed somewhere online may make more sense (or be at least easier to adjust)?

Still having both TRO and TTRO information available online in way form or another would be a great help: more and more people, motorised as well as non-motorised, are looking to Council websites to help them plan their countryside day out. It is extremely frustrating then, when you have gone through all the effort of creating a route, checking the County websites, to find out on the day, that the trail you want to follow has been closed for years. In this day and age, we surely can do better, and I would assume this is something OCAF can push for?

Answer 2: It's great to get these comments about the web map [Public Rights of Way - Countryside Access Map \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countryside-access-map). As to getting TROs on the map/website in one place, this is something we are trying hard to achieve. At one level we can't use the One.Network national road closures portal as most rights of way are not recognised in their system unless they are dual status (carriageway and right of way). Getting them onto our web map is possible but we have to sort out mapping and notification issues and there maybe the possibility of providing this

through the CAMs system currently used by the Countryside Access team. As an interim measure we again look to Wiltshire Council which has a very simple online spreadsheet with a link from their countryside access map [Rights of Way Closures \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)

Question 3 information about specific TROs - This has been left out of this note as it is about specific routes and Ilse will get a tailored reply.

Question 4 TRO notifications - Is there any way we could get TRO consultations notified to OCAF members? As LAFs are all about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation, it is very disappointing to see how lanes are getting closed without us being made aware. I understand some Councils do keep their members updated of any TRO consultations - maybe we can do the same?

Ting Tang/Worsham Lane (Brize Norton 143/12 and part 13) is a prime example. Whilst I understand Councils do not HAVE to inform affected user groups (or LAFs) of any proposed TROs, it would have been nice to have been made aware of the plans - especially as the only way to 'discover' Oxfordshire's proposed TROs (as far as I know) is through notification by the track itself (which during these restricted movement times would have been easily missed), or through trailing the OCC websites and local 'gazettes'. If there is any other way I could get notified, please do point me the right direction, I would really appreciate it (still so much to learn...).

Answer 4: For TROs we use the Countryside Records (Definitive Map) consultation list in addition to the 'standard' highways consultation list. The TRF are on that list so as an organisation were consulted on the Ting Tang Lane TRO. If OCAF members want to be formally consulted on all TROs on public rights of way then this can be discussed by members at a future meeting.

Question 5 Lost Ways

The Lost Lanes projects does not directly affect me as a trail rider, but as a walker/cyclist I am happy to help recover lost lanes in any way I can. Now more than ever, do we need to protect our paths (too many new housing estates!). I suppose the amount of DMMO applications will rise. I believe there is a way one can get notified of these, but I'm not sure how. Would you be able to again point me in the right direction?

Answer 5: We do not widely consult but a list of all applications can be seen on our website [DMMO Case List \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Agenda item 4: matters arising (promoted routes)

Following on from the last meeting of OCAF, Gordon Garraway asked some follow up questions about promoted routes. The email, reply and follow-up are included in this note.

From Gordon (February)

I was interested to read item 7 in the minutes about promoted routes and how volunteers might be used to survey and report on cycling and other routes. It did remind me of the discussions and meetings we had in CPRE when the Oxford Green Belt Way was created about how it could be looked after and maintained as a non-promoted OCC route. It was decided to split up the OGBW into nine stages and a volunteer was found who would at least once a year carry out a survey of their stage including minor maintenance, and report any problems that required action by the Countryside Action Team. This arrangement has worked well and the reports I have had from members of the public have been complimentary. Recently, it has attracted the interest of runners to run the OGBW and the latest record is 8hrs 34mins and 43 secs to run non-stop some 50 odd miles!

Since the lockdown last year people have been using the county's rights of way for exercise and no doubt the OGBW as well and its condition has suffered as a result. In view of this, you may be aware that an OGBW Improvement Project has been agreed with Hugh Potter whereby the OGBW volunteers will carry out a more detailed survey of their stage and identify the improvements that are needed, in particular replacing stiles with gates, and the Delivery Team will cost the items and arrange for the improvements to be carried out. The funding for this will be sought by CPRE from various charities including TOE.

Reply from Paul Harris (February)

Good morning Gordon and good to hear from you. Thanks for taking the time to share your thoughts.

You are right – many people are using the network and this increase in use, plus the inclement weather we have had since November, has really served to make many routes harder to use though excessive bogginess and people widening the paths as a result. I was not aware of the programme to survey and improve OGBW but I'd suggest sources other than TOE should be explored as I am not sure it will meet criteria for improved accessibility for more types of user. That said I don't set the rules for TOE. Also note current restrictions on leaving homes also extend to volunteer surveying work not exactly be called exercise!

So, in terms of OCAF I am not sure what discussion you are suggesting for May– as it looks like you have it all covered for the OGBW. The discussion before was made when Oxfordshire was in Tier 3/4 and of course before the national lockdown was imposed. As per my last email to OCAF members, we have withdrawn all our promoted route information for the time being. This is to reduce the risk of people travelling into Oxfordshire to use the PRoW network and also driving to use PRoW. The focus and messaging is very much on local people using nearby paths and open green spaces for exercise as an essential purpose -and nothing else. Before those promoted routes go back on line they will all need to be reviewed – on paper and when allowed, in the field. I plan to contact OCAF members and PPWs to see who will be interested in this – but not before lockdown restrictions are relaxed.

We have tried to have the promoted routes surveyed by volunteers and local communities before but that hasn't worked. I think what is worth discussing in May is what advice OCAF can give on promoted routes, how the group feels sustainability and quality can be maintained, and what 'products' are really needed, or indeed if any OCC input is really necessary as perhaps the focus should be on making all local PRoW (within say 3km of a settlement) easier to use rather than focusing additional resources on specific routes? All of this discussion can feed into RoWIP3 and before then the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

Again, from the last meeting I explained that finding cycle routes with zero or low levels of traffic for family and less experienced or confident users is the biggest gap area – and unlike walking and road cycling routes there seems to be no 'market' provision outside of the national parks. So, I am pretty sure that from my access strategy and development perspective (not OCAF) I will be shifting to finding, promoting and creating more of this kind of provision which will also benefit walkers and wheelchair users.

Let me know what you think and then I can run past OCAF Chair.

From Gordon (May)

I said I would let you have my further thoughts about promoted routes, and after reading the minutes of the November 2020 OCAF meeting on the topic and your email reply to me of 11/02/21, there is clearly not a straightforward answer to this question, but I still very much support promoted routes, as you might expect since CPRE has played a part in the creation of three long distance routes, namely the Oxfordshire Way, the d'Arcy Dalton Way and the Oxford Green Belt Way.

But I understand the points you make in your reply, particularly the way promoted routes need volunteers to regularly monitor them to ensure they don't become neglected and little used as a result, and I accept that one should not/cannot expect the OCC to take on the monitoring role. I know from experience that after the d'Arcy Dalton Way was created little or no monitoring was done with the result that it fell into disrepair until CPRE was able to obtain some of the funds from TOE needed to make improvements including to the signage and stiles.

Yet I believe there is a general public interest in having routes promoted whether for use by walkers, cyclists and families and certainly the coronavirus has led to an increase in these activities which I feel sure will be maintained: for example, the recent interest shown by Faringdon Town Council to have routes recced which was taken up by Dave Cavanagh.

I therefore feel that while the OCC should not take on the monitoring of promoted routes, there is a role for a post to take on working with interested parties who want routes to be established and to encourage the setting up of a body of volunteers to undertake the monitoring of a particular route in a structured way, as, if I may say so, was done for the Oxford Green Belt Way by CPRE. Also, part of the role would be for new and existing the routes to be publicised more, to encourage their use which would bring benefits not just in terms of health and well being but also for Oxfordshire's rural economy. I would like to suggest therefore that when the resources needed for CAT are next being considered the funding for this post (or even half a post) should be included.

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Agenda item 5

Date: 19 May 2021

Title: Emerging countryside policies for Local Transport & Connectivity Plan

Introduction

Following on from the development of topic guides on greenways and equestrians that formed part of the informal first stage consultation for the development of the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP), Paul Harris has refined these two topic guides into draft policy documents and added one for green infrastructure. There are another 30 policies in development as per this table.

OCAF Action

Members are asked to consider the drafts from their interest area and wider perspectives and discuss whether they are supported as they are drafted or suggest ways if and how they could be improved. Any other comments are welcomed.

Greenways Policy

Overview

There are hundreds of kilometres of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) throughout Oxfordshire that have the potential for transformation into high quality multi-user slow speed routes. In addition, there are unsurfaced roads, disused railway and canal corridors, and other tracks that, if better linked, improved and managed with these PRoW, could provide a set of high quality Oxfordshire Greenways for a greater range of residents and visitors to use for active recreation, social use and travel whilst also providing benefits for habitats, landscape character and wildlife.

Why

In line with the aims of previous Local Transport Plans and the Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the development of Oxfordshire Greenways will provide routes for active slow-speed leisure routes. Families with younger children, people with disabilities and those who need easier access, horse riders and carriage drivers, and those people less confident in using bicycles on roads will especially benefit from shared spaces away from the noise, pollution and speed of motor vehicles. This makes healthy, active and more sustainable choices able to be made.

Benefits

- Improved public health and wellbeing - Walkers, cyclists and equestrians are all vulnerable road users and may be affected by vehicle speed, frequency and driver behaviour. Oxfordshire Greenways would be free to use and could play an important role in giving opportunities for outdoor physical and social activity for non-motorised users on routes that are more attractive to inexperienced people or those that need to be assured of a certain standard of accessibility
- Reduced car use - Where there are safe and well-managed alternative routes this can provide choices for short to medium local journeys to work, school and local facilities, and for longer recreational trips when sections are combined. This includes interactions with Strategic Active Travel Network and contributions to creation of a more comprehensive active travel network.
- Support economic sustainability - A network of Greenways can support residents and visitors to explore and enjoy their local areas and be part of the attractions that Oxfordshire offers businesses and tourists as a destination, home and workplace
- Improvements and wherever possible enhance the impacts of transport on the local built and natural environment - Modal shift away from cars helps reduce carbon emissions and provides healthy living benefits. The availability of off-road networks can reduce some conflicts with motorised vehicles and increasing the amount of traffic free routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, especially families, can help build confidence and levels of activity. Greenways can be designed and managed to provide and improve habitats, biodiversity and landscapes

A case study in the Vale of White Horse – The Icknield Greenway

Route 1 of the Science Vale Cycle Network, between Wantage and Harwell was

completed in April 2021. The Icknield Greenway is the first new Greenway for Oxfordshire and provides a leisure commuting focused route using new, upgraded and improved public rights of way and quiet roads that balances cycle, walking and horse-riding needs alongside farming and land-managing on a robust and well-managed path in the setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The route is now being enjoyed by families and cycle commuters of all abilities and types of bike, as well as walkers, runners and equestrians.



Policy XX – Oxfordshire County Council will develop a number of Greenways across the county providing slow-speed leisure commuting routes for cyclists, equestrians and walkers. Priority will be given to routes that benefit communities and that have a deliverable route.

Green Infrastructure Policy

Overview

Green infrastructure (GI) is a network of well-managed and multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits¹.

GI includes parks, open spaces, public rights of way, playing fields, roadside verges, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

Key features and benefits

The key features of GI are that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; and that it is 'multi-functional' – it provides multiple benefits simultaneously.

These benefits can be to:

- support people's mental and physical health
- encourage active travel
- cool urban areas during heat waves
- attract investment
- reduce water run-off during flash flooding
- carbon storage
- provide sustainable drainage
- Improve air and environmental quality

Why?

The protection, maintenance and enhancement of GI is required in Oxfordshire if we are to deliver our vision for air and environmental quality, healthy places and active travel. The GI network is multi-functional and a core part of Oxfordshire's 'living landscape' of attractive and healthier places.

Air and environmental quality are improved by the presence and quality of natural spaces and vegetation as these increase CO₂ and pollutant absorption. Traffic noise and visual impacts are also reduced by growing vegetation and green spaces providing separation and a physical buffer; places where people live, work and travel are similarly positively enhanced. In addition, feelings of wellbeing can be increased by seeing and experiencing green and blue spaces and feeling a connection to the natural world.

Active travel and recreation are enhanced and encouraged where there are high quality and safe areas of green infrastructure. People often prefer to walk and ride on safe paths and areas where there are trees, native planting, towpaths and riverbanks, parks and nature reserves.

Transport is responsible for a large proportion of greenhouse gas emissions and transport also has significant impacts on biodiversity through ecosystem destruction and fragmentation, thereby negatively impacting ecosystem services. Fragmentation of nature networks may be minimised by choosing specific design solutions, e.g.,

1. [What is green infrastructure? | Town and Country Planning Association \(tcpa.org.uk\)](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/what-is-green-infrastructure/)

tunnels, or viaducts which minimise land-take or by allowing watercourses, including natural banks, to continue under the structure. Developing Green Infrastructure adjacent to infrastructure has the potential to deliver many ecosystem services. Road and railway verges and canal banks form important wildlife corridors and play a key part in the tourism appeal of the landscape for many recreational activities. They can be an important food source for wild pollinators. Moreover, vegetation reduces noise levels by hampering or modifying the propagation of sound. Transport infrastructure is vulnerable to extreme weather events and natural disasters, such as floods and landslides which cost lives cause economic damage and GI solutions can help prevent this.

Policy XX – Oxfordshire County Council will embed the protection, maintenance and enhancement of Green Infrastructure (GI) into relevant guidance and decision-making processes in order to improve connectivity of the GI network and its value to communities.

draft

Equestrians Policy

Overview

Oxfordshire has a high number of horse riders and horse owners who use the roads and public rights of way network. These equestrian interests contribute to the local economy through spending on livery and associated goods and services.

In 2011 the government endorsed the Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales. Aim 5 of that strategy is Increasing access to off-road riding and carriage driving. The aim's strategic objectives are:

- I. ensuring a joined up and well-maintained network of equestrian public rights of way (PRoW);
- II. increasing provision of other off-road equestrian routes and of areas with equestrian open access;
- III. continuing safety education for motorists, riders and carriage drivers;
- IV. ensuring urban and suburban riding and carriage driving are promoted and improved as well as rural riding and carriage driving.

In the years since then Oxfordshire PRoW Improvement Plans and Local Transport Plans have included some consideration of equestrian issues, and these strategic objectives are very much still relevant and still require additional action.

Why?

Equestrian interests need to be considered and integrated as part of development planning, transport planning, road safety and road maintenance strategies and work on the ground

Improved safety – equestrians are legitimate, vulnerable road users who are significantly affected by vehicle proximity, speed and noise. Alternatives to road use such as links between PRoW and other off-road routes will improve choices and safety

Minimising risk – increases in traffic volume and speeds should be evaluated and mitigated. Equestrians have the right to use roads between the PRoW network and in their local areas and need to feel confident when doing so, particularly those that are relatively inexperienced.

Being inclusive – equestrians, unlike other recreational and leisure users are not automatically included in the development and transport planning processes and so their needs may not be understood.

Community responsive – engagement with local equestrian users will identify where limited resources could be best targeted and where opportunities could be gained.

What? Key points for considering equestrians

The following points will help ensure more safe access to off-road riding and carriage driving and use of roads and public rights of way

- Development affecting public rights of way need to provide safe and convenient routes at all stages. Where public rights of way for equestrians have to be diverted, they should be routed away from estate roads and other highways

¹: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-the-horse-industry-in-england-and-wales>

- Horse or multi-user crossings on carriageways should be planned in from the start or retrofitted, ensuring that they are maintained to be safe, clearly visible and fit for purpose.
- On a case-by-case basis highway authority powers can be used to provide horse riders with access to cycle paths and grass verges, and maintenance of unclassified and unsurfaced roads could be modified to make use by horses safer

Improvements and New Connections

- Inclusion of equestrians in urban fringe and rural area network assessments can facilitate better connectivity with reduction in the need to box out or mix with road traffic

Management and Maintenance of public rights of way

- Public rights of way maintenance needs to be inclusive of horse interests to ensure a safe, pleasant and easy to use network for more people more of the time. This includes high quality furniture and surfaces and providing signing that encourages understanding and reduces conflicts.

Policy XX – Oxfordshire County Council will consider the needs of equestrian users in roads and highways strategies and planning as well as operations. Oxfordshire County Council will continue to embed Aim 5 of the Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales into relevant guidance and decision-making processes in order to improve safety, network connectivity and network quality for equestrians.

¹: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-the-horse-industry-in-england-and-wales>

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Agenda item 7

Date: 24 June 2021
Title: AOB – Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Infrastructure Scheme at Ardley M40 Junction 10

Introduction

This is a late addition to OCAF meeting agenda under any other business.

A link to the Planning Inspectorate site for the scoping report for the proposed rail freight interchange scheme is here [Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/oxfordshire-strategic-rail-freight-interchange/)

Oxfordshire Railfreight Interchange Limited is to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) together with associated development on land south of the Chiltern Railway line, and west of the B430, east of Upper Heyford Former Airfield, and south of the village of Ardley in Cherwell District, Oxfordshire. The proposed SRFI site is located west of the M40, with Junction 10 of the M40 located nearby to the north-east.

The proposed rail freight interchange (including the warehousing) is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). In general terms, the Proposed Development comprises a rail freight terminal and rail served warehousing located to the south of and adjacent to the Chiltern rail line. The rail freight interchange and warehousing, with associated green infrastructure, will be accessed via new highways infrastructure. It is expected to comprise:

- an improved and reconfigured Junction 10 of the M40 motorway
- a bypass to the east of Ardley linking J10 and the Main Site and providing the Principal Access to the Main Site
- a relief road to the north east of Middleton Stoney between the B430 and B4030
- a Secondary Access to the Main Site from a new Heyford Park Link between the B430 and Heyford Park.

This is a matter of national infrastructure. At this early ‘scoping’ stage, i.e. to consider the matters being considered in the environmental impact assessment, the public rights of way access strategy and development lead officer has made the following comment.

“This development, and its road/rail access corridors will create significant impacts on existing public rights of way (PRoW), minor roads and those new PRoW required under extant s106 agreements. Therefore a comprehensive Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Assessment and Review (WCHAR) needs scoping into the application. It is expected that the WCHAR will consider connected and disconnected PRoW, planned PRoW, road networks used by non-motorised users, and users (walkers, cyclists and horse-riders) within an appropriate distance buffer from the scheme, including potential mitigation measures for crossings, diversions and new PRoW links directly affected by the proposal,

and those mitigation measures in the wider impact area. As this is a significant national infrastructure scheme it is expected that assessment buffer to be at least 10km from the boundary, possibly greater for key connecting or potential routes/users.

Note that the Features Plan and other text/appendices do not include all of the new PRow required under s106 agreements for Ardley ERF and RAF Upper Heyford. This is a major omission. “

At this stage OCAF members are advised to read the information on the Planning Inspectorate’s site and consider if or how it expects to have some involvement in the planning process for this site.

Extract from Scoping Report: Components of proposed development plan

Image of cxd

