

**Draft and unchecked**  
**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM**

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF 2023/24  
Wednesday 17 May 2023, online Teams® meeting

2023 (1)

**Attending:  
Members**

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

**Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:**

Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Principal Officer Access Strategy/Environment & Heritage Manager  
Rebecca McNaught (RM) – Countryside Access Development Officer  
Hugh Potter (HP) - Group Manager Countryside Operations and Volunteer Coordination  
Mike Walker (MW) – Principal Officer Countryside Records  
Laurence Smith (LS) – Countryside Records Officer

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

1. **Apologies** from Gordon Garraway, Philip Chamberlain, John Griffin & Cllr Andrew Coles
2. **Election of Chair & Vice Chair.**

PH took over the meeting and invited nominations for Chair. DC proposed MJ which was seconded by RL. Matthew Judson elected as Chair. MJ accepted but wishes to step down in 2024. PH confirmed to the group that a Vice Chair was not a requirement. It was agreed not to elect a Vice Chair. Members thanked MJ for continuing in the role.

3. **Declarations of Interest** - None
4. **Minutes of 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022** - confirmed

Attending members and officers took time to reflect on the recent loss of founder member, Sarah Martin. She contributed hugely to OCAF, brought enthusiasm and a fresh perspective, and will be very much missed.

5. **Matters Arising**

Action 1 – PH confirmed that he had written to HS2 on behalf of OCAF and their response had been circulated.

ALJ expressed anger at the response in relation to accessibility. She asked for permission to share the response widely. The group all agreed with her. MJ declared HS2 response unacceptable. Group asked PH to draft a response back stating this.

HP added that it wasn't just HS2, but the rail industry, as a whole, that is failing to comply with accessibility laws.

PH wanted to point out that this consultation with OCAF has come very late in the day and they refer to the local authority's role in the discussion of it. PH does not know how much attention has been paid to promoting the needs of users with disabilities. HS2 have lessons to be learned, but there are also lessons to be learned across other bodies.

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### **ACTION 1: PH to draft a letter back to HS2**

Action 3 – North Leigh Kissing Gate – HP reported that a new more accessible kissing gate was being installed shortly, landowner agreement, works order raised.

### **6. Brief updates from members about any significant issues from their interest areas**

RF reported good developments going on around the county, particularly upgrading parts of National Cycle Network Route 5 between Abingdon and Oxford. Working with PH on Path Surveyor app that's going well. Info about new version to be circulated soon.

IL asked who the councillor is responsible for PROW. HP stated Cllr Pete Sudbury is cabinet member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment, although some elements fall to cabinet member for Highways Management, Cllr Andrew Gant.

No other updates given

### **7. TTRO Process & What are ORPAs? Discussion about best ways to promote both types of route – raised by Ilse Lambert & Rachel Livingstone**

RL started the discussion of ORPAs (Other Routes with Public Access) by introducing the topic, explaining what ORPAs are and asking about ways they could be better promoted. One of the problems seems to be that responsibility lies between Countryside Access and Highways.

MW spoke about the historical aspects and the confusion around what is adopted and unadopted in terms of who should maintain them and what rights exist over them. He spoke of the Definitive Map showing what 'rights' exist, and the List of Streets is a list of maintainable highways, with no explanation of what rights exist. It seems that roads that were metalled are thought to have vehicular rights and those that are unmetalled don't. It might be the case that they do but perhaps they weren't thought important enough routes at the time, or the authority ran out of money. He concluded by suggesting that it should/could be possible to create another GIS layer to show them on the Public Access Website map. MW stated that what is known is that these are highways of some description with at least footpath status. He added that the main barrier is financial cost to maintain them where they are not judged to be needed as part of the day-to-day transport network.

IL explained that the TRF indicates ORPAs as 'roads' on the Green Road maps, only where they are considered to be open and suitable for motorcycles and this might involve on-ground assessments and using local knowledge.

RF reported that they struggle with ORPAs when putting them onto OpenStreetMap. He said they don't know what to do with them as they are not permitted to just copy the OS data due to copyright laws. He added there is no signage on the ground. He suggested an openly licensed source of potential ORPAs would be helpful.

MW thought the List of Streets for Oxfordshire was published on the public website. LS circulated a link at the meeting: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/street-maintenance-z/highways-register>. [post meeting note: the public facing version that is available on the website does not show the classification of the highway, it just shows whether it is publicly maintained]

MJ mentioned FindMyStreet website that shows roads that are maintainable at public expense, it doesn't state the rights, but walkers can assume they have access.

MW added that there is lots going on internally and nationally. Street Gazetteer, which was designed for statutory undertakers is being expanded. Internally there is some disfunction between the Definitive Map and the List of Streets because all public rights of way are maintainable at public expense, and it might be considered that these should be included on the List of Streets. There are crossovers where public footpaths have been improved for cycling, for

## Draft and unchecked

example, and are adopted by highways for maintenance purposes – then there is discussion about who maintains what and to what standard.

RL stated there is no one place to find all the information. MW commented this shouldn't be the case. RL added that if the routes are investigated there is a risk that they will be downgraded. She asked if she could send details of the ORPA in North Leigh to IL & RF.

RL continued to report that the ORPA of concern in North Leigh had been obstructed by a fallen tree, but when reported on OCC Fix My street it was accepted as a 'road' and cleared by Highways. MJ suggested it would be aspirational to get ORPAs onto the OCC Public Access map.

**Action 2: PH will take that suggestion [to get ORPAs on Public Access map] away and see if it will work.**

CS asked if ORPAs are normally metalled. MJ said they all differ, adding that the North Leigh one is unsurfaced, and Highways did maintenance on that.

MJ moved the discussion onto TTROs (Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders) by commenting that some just seem to be extended repeatedly each time. RL said she didn't think they all show on Countryside Access map.

IL said that is why she wanted this discussion. The ones in question had now been put on the map (after bringing them to attention of OCC) but it doesn't give enough information about them. RL suggested a link to the actual TTRO might be helpful.

PH agreed that the process is not complete and needs improvement. LS confirmed he has had some tentative discussions with GIS colleagues who do liaise with the team to make the TTRO and we are looking at what the mechanism is for us being notified, so the system can pick everything up. He asked members to notify him if they are aware of any TTRO that's not shown on the system.

RL & MJ discussed what 'temporary' means, as some TTROs seem to just automatically be renewed time after time. HP reported that MJ had raised this at the monitoring group meeting in April. HP stated that Steve Tabbitt and he started discussing last week. He apologised to the group, but it is hoped to see something in the coming weeks and months that will clarify OCC's position on those repeatedly extended/renewed TTROs.

IL also asked if the TTRO she mentioned, which is closed to ALL traffic, could be available for walkers at least.

### 8. Countryside Access Strategy update from Paul Harris

PH talked through his report. MJ thanked PH and suggested that a crossing at Bablock Hythe should be made a priority

RL asked about the new 'Green Routes' and if they are unrecorded routes. PH explained it's about mapping the wider routes and their condition and potential. This potential might include wider routes that could be a green space destination by themselves, where biodiversity interest could be improved alongside improved surfaces, gates, seating and other works to increase accessibility and wildlife.

ALJ highlighted Botley West Solar Farm stating she had an interest as she was a resident and asked what OCC'S view was. She hoped they would not be supporting it due to habitat destruction amongst other things. PH replied that he thought OCC is taking a positive view of large-scale renewable energy production combined with appropriate landscape, habitat and access consideration. MJ urged members to petition MPs, local councillors etc if they had strong views for or against the scheme.

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RF reiterated the need for crossing at Bablock Hythe, suggesting the ferry could be brought back. He also cited Cotswold District projects re-opening up old railway lines as green ways and asked if OCC could potentially link into Gloucestershire work looking at Kingham to Dalesford and Kingham to Chipping Norton. There was also a scheme from West Berkshire into Oxfordshire.

DC asked who PH was talking to about the canal towpath and PH confirmed it was Ken Oliver, at Wiltshire Council. DC asked if OCAF would welcome membership from Wilts Berks Canal. PH replied that anyone was welcome to apply to be on OCAF, but they need to be there for access improvements all across Oxfordshire.

### 9. Face-to-face meeting request

MJ stated that in-person meetings were valuable, but they needed to be for a purpose, maybe a site/case study rather than all just sitting in a meeting room. PH added that hybrid meetings seem to be the way to go to allow people the option, but hybrid spaces are limited at County Hall. DC asked if Sutton Farm was suitable. PH reported that the building was inaccessible due to stairs to offices.

**Action 3: PH to enquire about hybrid meeting options**

### 10. Next meeting dates

MJ stated any Wednesday in November except 29<sup>th</sup> was good for him. PH would confirm date – previously Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November had been suggested. A July site meeting had not been arranged, as nothing had been suggested.

**Action 4: PH will confirm date of next meeting (November)**

Chair ended the meeting and thanked all for participating

Meeting ended 11.19am