



Minutes & Information
zoom - Thursday 13 January 2022
Present at the meeting

Forum Members:

Alex Lawson, Paul Fuller, Mike Slater, Mick Lyons, Richard Grogan, John Heather, Tricia Merrifield, Helena Hewston, Cllr John Medland

Others & Observers:

Jennine Gardiner-IWC PROW - LAF Secretary, Cindy Bentley, Dina Jung, Jan Brooks, Lorraine Sheeran, Sheila Weedell, John Truswell & Chloe Walker-Panse (Natural England), Carole Pierce, Trevor Ould

Apologies – Cllr Rodney Downer, Darrel Clarke – IWC Rights of Way Manager, John Hobart & Alana Higginson, Kathy Domaille

Confirmation of the Minutes of previous meeting – Done

England Coast Path (ECP):

Length 1 – East Cowes to Wootton Bridge – (Led by John Truswell)

Length 1 has been delayed as we are continuing negotiations with some large landowners, some of which are registered as park and garden and therefore some areas are subject to excepted land status. More than one meeting and site visits have taken place to explore and identify the issues relevant to them including significant historical assets. English Heritage (EH) for example have lost revenue due to covid and have security concerns and there are many layers both within the EH and NE organisations that will need senior staff consultation and decisions to be made in their respective organisations. Negotiations are taking a long time, but a fair balance has to be made when deciding on ECP alignment choices to balance the aspirations of various stakeholders, landowners and community needs. NE needs to exhaust every avenue – should a route through Osborne be identified, then NE will be in a position to discuss options with other landowners.

John Heather – out of courtesy can you not contact the awaiting landowners whilst awaiting Osborne House? JT did a general letter update last year but will see timescales from EH to see if another letter is appropriate.

Post Meeting Note by JCT – A letter has been sent to update regarding a further delay to Length 1, additionally asking recipients to make contact should they have any questions or need more information.

Q: Last June the IW Ramblers submitted about 30 representations to NE, have any changes to the proposed route, based on the representations, been proposed?

A: Chloe advised there has been a few changes but due to landslips or land management rather than the representations / objections – NE make comment to DEFRA based on the representers' comments but it is DEFRA and the planning inspectorate who make the decisions (as they are independent and will always seek to achieve a fair balance)

Lengths 2 to 10 – (Led by Chloe Walker-Panse)

Still slowly making way through the objections to get to a point where specific lengths can be submitted for approval from DEFRA (should be making a submission on a few of the lengths at end of this month) and also still in ongoing negotiations with other landowners.

Walk the course has been completed on some of the stretches (this is where Chloe and John Brownscombe walk the route to check the required infrastructure additions or improvements).

Signage – The outcome from John Brownscombe's consultation proposed that we should stay with current Coastal Path signage with supplementary ECP signage. John has a mock up made of the proposed draft signage and the leader of the council and cabinet member will take a look and decide. John will take photos to circulate to LAF.

Accessibility - Miles without stiles – Chloe has confirmed that there will be locations where kissing gates will be replaced with normal pedestrian gates (to provide better accessible access) – JT confirmed infrastructure will have accessibility in mind – e.g. wider boardwalks, better signage

Jan Brooks expressed a desire for compacted path surfaces, better for wheelchairs etc, handrails on each sides of bridges.

Any questions? Please get in touch with either Chloe or John Truswell

John Truswell - England Coast Path Senior Adviser (South Hub)

Leading on Length 1 Isle of Wight

Coastal Access South Hub, Natural England, 4th Floor, Eastleigh House, Upper Market Street, Eastleigh, SO59 9YN

07717694247 / 02080267747 John.Truswell@naturalengland.org.uk

And

Chloé Walker-Panse - England Coast Path Lead Adviser- Isle of Wight

07880082048 Chloe.Walker-Panse@naturalengland.org.uk

Accessibility – update after meeting from Chloe

As mentioned in the meeting yesterday, we follow the principles set out in the England Coast Path scheme ‘**by all reasonable means**’

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20150902202211/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/45015> to make the trail as easy to use as we reasonably can for disabled people and others with reduced mobility. We accept that such opportunities will often be constrained by practical limitations, such as the rugged nature of the terrain or the availability of visitor transport and facilities (ingress and egress points). In addition, we have to work with the grain of the land and consider the designations in the area. For example, if the area is designated as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), we may be limited with the type of surface we can install as it has to be in keeping with the local area.

Throughout the trail we avoid creating any unnecessary new barriers to access by choosing the least restrictive infrastructure that is practical in the circumstances e.g. replacing stiles with either appropriate kissing gates or pedestrian gates.

There was mention of improving stretches of the path that are currently grass with a firmer surface. We will always consider improvements where appropriate, however, please note that section 4.3.5 of the scheme does dictate that ‘where we use a new alignment for the trail’, it will typically have a natural surface rather than an artificial one’.

Future LAF meetings? What do the members require? Cllr Medland suggest we do a hybrid meeting – we need to find a venue to hold the hybrid meeting, the members agree with this approach.

LAF working group to consider disability access to the outdoors – Jan has already been working with Chris Ashman and will be presenting a report to the IWC to show how to move things forward. Jan feels the IWC is behind in opening up accessibility to all different types of people.

Paul Fuller proposes the LAF agrees on 5 priorities to try and get grant funding. We will consult with stakeholder groups, Town and Parish Councils and may be get an advert out in the IW observer?

Some ideas the group put forward:

Concerns for pavement parking – if the legislation doesn’t come forward maybe this could be an action point the LAF.

Seating is needed along paths

New Footways (Pavements) a need for the creation of footways in villages to get people off the road.

Volunteers for disabled working group:

Paul Fuller, Jan Brooks, Alana Higginson, Dina Jung, Alec Lawson (or someone from Cyclewright) and Mike Slater proposed David Howarth

Jan Brooks is the CEO for Isle of Access and can be contacted: info@isleaccess.co.uk
Tel: 07522 558999 Website: <https://isleaccess.co.uk/>

Public Rights of Way Update:

Rights of Way are extremely saddened to hear of the loss of Steve Darch. From a working perspective Steve was instrumental as a Local Access Forum member and his approach was very much amicable and sensible. The Rights of Way department are thankful for his support and input on the byway network, which will be missed as he will be as a friendly and kind person. The department offers its sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Closures:

T16 Headon Warren, V99 Binnel Bay, and resolution of Brightstone Holiday Centre permissive - all hoped to be resolved by implementation of the England Coast Path (full update provided by John Brownscombe).

V65a Bonchurch – there may be scope for ROW to carry out works to reopen this in the spring/summer depending on extent of any further slippage this winter and the amount of work required.

V98 Steps (beach access to Woody Bay). Current steps are undermined and unsafe. A scheme for replacement will be included in our 22/23 core capital bid (see below) in anticipation of reopening in early Summer.

West Wight Greenway

Department continues working with and supporting Graham Biss of Natural Enterprise. Graham has been consulting and presenting the proposal far and wide and is receiving good support generally. Heads of Terms have now been signed by some landowners and others are expected to follow shortly.

England Coast Path

Full update to be provided by John Brownscombe.

Staffing and Budgets

Maintenance Team were a man down in October/November following a resignation, but a replacement was appointed quickly.

We are completing our 21/22 capital programme but there have been a number of variations to the original programme due to unexpected events and increased costs. Bids have been put in for a “core” 22/23 capital budget and an additional bid for the reinstatement of important paths which were eroded and damaged during the heavy rain and flooding in August/September, compounded by general winter weather.

Forthcoming larger scheme

Rights of Way are supporting Newchurch Parish Council in their project to install a footbridge alongside the road bridge at Langbridge. Bridge has been built and due to be installed in the near future once the EA have approved a variation to the original plan. RoW will then provide paths leading to the bridge on both sides.

Volunteers

Rights of Way are very grateful for the assistance of the IW Ramblers Association in completing minor trimming work. Since the idea was proposed in September, 11 sites have been worked on. IWRA are wishing to recruit additional members to the volunteer working team. Contact to be provided in the minutes.

IW Bridleways Group – Tricia / Sheila

No update

Cycle Wight – Alec

1. **CYCLE TRACK MAINTENANCE:** In lieu of physical meetings with Island Roads & IWC (Stewart Chandler) we have had responses relating to the eel screen installation, to flooding and maintenance of existing cycle track, to new multi-use track (Mews Lane) and to on-road matters including Fairlee Road shared path pavement. A further issue is barrier removal where the staggered barriers and bollards restrict access to large cycles, large wheelchairs/mobility scooters etc.

Note that Island Roads asks that all issues are reported to info@islandroads.com or via the website. A Highways Safety & Improvements Register (HSIR) is kept to prioritise future bids for capital funding.

2. **WEST WIGHT GREENWAY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:** Cyclewight is in touch with Rights of Way department over changes and upgrades to the network. Where housing developments are considered for planning approval the access network must be part of this at an early stage and with involvement from ramblers & equestrians etc.

3. **Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP):** Town and Parish Councils are aware that they can apply for funding for this purpose. Cyclewight has been in

touch with the IWALC to offer support. The Councils of Cowes, Northwood & Gurnard, as well as Bembridge plus Brading plus St Helens (in co-operation) are consulting the public about possible schemes.

Questions – Jan Brooks – re the chicanes at the entrance of cyclepaths are a problem for the adapted bikes – Alec to contact Jan.

IW Ramblers – Mike

Minor maintenance works, Ramblers are evolving a volunteer scheme with PROW so people can undertake minor jobs such as clearing a few brambles from a gate or stile or realign a signpost. There is a website where the jobs are posted <http://www.mmiwp.co.uk/> if anyone is interested please contact Tim Marshall tim@rookley.net

John Haugh volunteers for the ramblers by checking the weekly planning applications and makes comments on applications which have an impact of public right of way. Where necessary raising concern with the rights of way manager. The weekly planning press list can be found on the IWC website <https://publicaccess.iow.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=weeklyList>

NFU & CLA – John Heather nothing to report & Cindy wishes to be kept in touch with ECP updates as she has a couple of members effected by the ECP.

Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) - nothing to report

IW 4X4 Club – news had been received that Steve Darch has sadly passed away. Steve was a valid member of the LAF and had worked hard not just for the 4x4 but for everyone.

Next meeting: **4pm Thursday's**

Thursday 5th May 2022 via teams