

Plymouth Local Access Forum

Wednesday 4 March 2020

PRESENT:

Mr Curno, in the Chair.

Mr Abraham, Mr Attrill, Mr Harvey, Mr Pawley, Mr Skinner and Councillor Brian Vincent.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Morris and Councillor Wheeler.

Also present: Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) and Helen Prendergast (Democratic Adviser).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.25 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

11. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interests were made in accordance with the code of conduct -

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mr Curno	Plymouth Open Spaces Network	Member of Plymouth Open Spaces Network	Personal
Mr Pawley	South West Coast Path	Representative for the South West Coast Path Association	Personal
Mr Abraham	Plymouth Cycling Campaign	Member of the Plymouth Cycling Campaign	Personal

12. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2018 are confirmed as a correct record (as per minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019).

The Forum agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 subject to the following amendments –

- (1) with regard to minute 4(a) – ‘people were having to use the road to Staddiscombe, in order to regain access to the coastal path’;
- (2) with regard to minute 6(b) – ‘there were two sections currently under review, Cremyll to Kingswear (CKWI was the section of path through Plymouth)’.

Mr Curno (Chair) advised that the Chair of the Collings Park Trust was currently unavailable and he had therefore been able to discuss the footpath along the side of Collings Park with him (once he was available he would liaise with him).

Mr Skinner sought clarification as to whether Plymouth City Council had made the Definitive Map Modification Order for Estover Close to Elizabeth Cottage.

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) advised that as an objection had been received from the owners of the Cottage, the Modification Order had been submitted to the Secretary of State for a decision. The owners of the Cottage had been unaware of the footpath when they had purchased the property. The owners had submitted an objection on the grounds of crime. There was also a proposal from the National Trust to 'block-off' its land in this area due the need to manage its biodiversity. A brief discussion took place regarding the issues relating to this area.

The Forum agreed to receive an update on the Modification Order at its next meeting.

13. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

14. **Derriford Community Park Progress Update**

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) provided an update on the progress on the Community Park which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) planning permission had been sought, since the last meeting of the Forum; following the consultation period one objection had been received relating to access concerns to the green space;
- (b) the estimated costs for this scheme would be available within the next three weeks;
- (c) it was anticipated that the work on the scheme would commence in Summer 2020.

The following responses were provided to questions raised by Forum members –

- (d) the path to higher Bircham would not be progressed due to a number of issues (including the gradient of hill and the unacceptable level of trees that would need to be lost); volunteers would assist in the construction of a compounded aggregate path which would go around the trees; the installation of the bridge would be a separate project;
- (e) currently there were no works planned for the north of the farm;
- (f) the secondary paths would be 2m wide and would not be lit (as this was deemed to be too intrusive for the wildlife);

- (g) Poole Farm would form the heart of the Derriford Community Park and would have a new visitor and education centre;

volunteers had contributed 12000 hours working at the farm on various projects; the farm offered a wide range of activities for educational visits and also worked with Duchy College under graduate students;

- (h) currently there was no date for the introduction of the beavers; a significant amount of grounds work would be required, in order to secure the area (which would include the construction of two bridges across the river and a perimeter fence).

Mr Curno (Chair) advised that currently there were issues with Duchy College working with Poole Farm due to access difficulties, as a result of the construction works for the Forder Valley link road. Councillor Vincent considered that it would be disappointing should Duchy College not wish to continue to work with Poole Farm, as this arrangement was very beneficial to its students.

15. **The English Coast Path - Update**

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) provided an update regarding the English Coast Path which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) a site visit had been held to look at the section of coast path that ran through Plymouth which formed part of the CKWI Cremyll to Kingswear coast path;
- (b) Plymouth City Council would be submitting a report prior to close of the consultation period (11 March 2020).

A discussion took place regarding the issues surrounding the proposed coast path (which included the planning application for the extension of the RLNI building in Custom House Lane).

The following responses were provided to questions raised by Forum members –

- (c) with regard to the path at Jennycliff -
- a purchase order had been placed for the fencing at Jennycliff; the steps would be fenced off and signs erected to prevent people from accessing the beach; (robust fencing had been ordered to prevent people from breaking through and accessing the site);
 - no further information was available regarding whether restrictions would be placed on the road, such as, one lane restrictions, prevention of use by buses and lorries and closure of the road;

- substantial remedial works would be required to address this issue; this was likely to be a lengthy process due to the significant funding that would be required;
 - regular updates from the Highways Department were received regarding this issue;
 - finger posts would be erected to direct people to use the diversion;
- (d) South Hams District Council was responsible for the provision of the cricket pitch, as part of the Sherford development (this was not the responsibility of Plymouth City Council).

Mr Curno (Chair) advised that -

- (a) part of the beach at Mount Batten had been closed again due to the high level of asbestos being found, following the bad weather in October 2019;
- (b) Ralph Bint (Facilities Manager, Plymouth City Council) had advised that the asbestos could be as a result of a number of buildings being demolished in this area, or it could emanate from the sea;
- (c) regular monthly checks of the beach were undertaken, as well as, checks after each storm;
- (d) the slipways and the pontoons could still be accessed.

Mr Harvey reported that the owner of Redlap House at Dartmouth had been denying access to the coast path and considered that Devon County Council needed to take a stronger approach, in order to resolve this issue. Mr Skinner provided a detailed history into the history surrounding the path at Redlap House.

Mr Abraham advised that there was a proposal to turn Victoria House, Cattedown into a heliport and raised concerns of the potential impact on the South West coast path, if there was an increase in traffic using the road to access the heliport.

16. **Terms of Reference**

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) advised that following the meeting held on 27 November 2019, the Forum had recommended that the quorum be changed from seven to three members be considered at this meeting.

The following issues were raised by Forum Members –

- (a) whether -

- Plymouth City Council was actively trying to recruit new members to the Forum (whether the Forum could engage with the Future Parks Accelerator Programme);
- it would be possible to raise the profile of the Forum both within the City Council and external organisations; (in raising the profile of the Forum, this could benefit organisations such as Natural England and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as the Forum could assist in representing their views).

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) advised that various methods of recruitment had been undertaken which included details of the Forum being incorporated within Plymouth City Council's Plymotion leaflets (14,000 leaflets had been produced). However, no responses had been received. Robin Pearce further advised that he would welcome innovative suggestions for future recruitment advertising.

Following a discussion on raising the Forum's profile, Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) at Plymouth City Council would be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss the Forum's aspirations and how it wished to work in the future.

The Forum agreed that the quorum change from seven members to three and that the Terms of Reference be amended to reflect this change.

17. **Central Park Improvements**

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) advised that the Plymouth City Council officer that had been invited to attend the meeting to discuss this item was unable to attend due to illness.

An overarching masterplan for Central Park had been developed in 2013. In 2017 Plymouth City Council committed £6m towards delivery the aspirations set out in the plan to create an outstanding park for residents and visitors.

Mr Curno (Chair) gave a brief overview of the improvement works being undertaken as part of the Central Park masterplan which included –

- an extension to the skate park;
- a large new play area;
- a new grass roof café;
- all weather events field with water and electricity;
- a new sports plateau for rugby and football;
- a community sports hub;
- access improvements including path resurfacing;
- benches and signage;
- a volunteer and events programme to engage the local community in ongoing nature and wildlife improvements;
- drainage scheme.

Mr Curno (Chair) advised that the Friends of Central Park had raised concerns that the three ponds within the Park acted as the sustainable drainage system and not the lake (which formed part of the original proposal in the masterplan). This issue would need to be addressed prior to a planning decision.

18. **Work Programme Items**

The Forum agreed to include the following items on its work programme –

- Central Park improvements;
- English Coastal Path;
- Derriford Community Park;
- National Marine Park;
- Future Parks Accelerator Programme.

Mr Curno (Chair) advised that a report which had recently been published by the National Trust had praised Plymouth City Council for the way in which it organised and managed its parks and open spaces. However, there were areas of concern regarding communication issues, such as local groups and the wider public not being aware of work being undertaken and the Council's financial visibility/transparency with regard to the monies spent on green spaces.

Robin Pearce (Public Rights of Way Officer) advised that responsibility for the finances for parks and open spaces had recently transferred to his department (Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) and that an update would be provided by Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning, Plymouth City Council) at a future meeting of the Forum.

Mr Harvey provided an update on the hedgerows leaflet that had been produced by the South Hams Society which included –

- (a) the leaflet had been commended by Neil Parish MP for Tiverton and Honiton, as well as the National Farmers' Union; the leaflet had been produced to encourage people to 'Rate Your Hedges';
- (b) the importance of letting trees grow in hedgerows, in order to help reduce carbon emissions; this would negate the cost of buying the trees/plastic tubes, planting and maintaining them, the land required to plant the trees and the time taken to grow saplings;
- (c) it was hoped that the initiative would encourage farmers to grow trees in hedgerows and on a rotational basis sell the wood for fuel;
- (d) based on rough calculations there could be approximately two million trees growing in hedgerows in Devon.

Other issues raised by Forum Members included –

- (e) whether trees should be planted near to drains on new housing developments such as Sherford;
- (f) there was a large amount of ash die back in Plymouth (500 trees had been surveyed of which 57% had shown signs of the disease); nurseries were experiencing difficulties in supplying trees due to seed shortages and increased demand;
- (g) as part of the Mayflower 400 celebrations birch trees had been planted around Marsh Mills.

With regard to (e) above, if the trees were planted to British Standards they should not pose a problem to drainage systems (trees were also planted in cubes).

19. **Future Meeting Dates**

The Forum agreed the future meeting dates as follows –

- Monday, 5 October 2020;
- Monday, 1 March 2021.

(The meetings would be held at Poole Farm, Plymouth and commence at 10am).