**Medway Local Access Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 2 December 2020 at 4.00pm**

**Virtual Zoom meeting**

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| **Item** | **Main Meeting** | **Action** |
| 1 | Simon Curry Chair  Annmarie Behn (AB) Paths and Promotions Manager (MC)  Chris Morris (CM) Medway Towns Footpath Group  Ian Gray (IG) User representative (CCG)  Fiona Leadley Principal Greenspaces Officer (MC)  Sue Saunders Vice Chair ( BHS)  Adam Taylor(AT) Rivers & Paths Manager (MC)  David Palmer (DP) Public Health  Marion Phillips (MP) Partnerships Officer MC  Graham Jenkinson Ramblers  Cllr Griffin Medway Council |  |
|  | Welcome to guests, members and officers SC welcomed everyone to the December meeting, then explained the protocol of Zoom meetings. Introductions were made around the table. |  |
| 2 | Apologies Karen Beer (NFU), Darren Taylor (Cycling) |  |
| 3 | Minutes of last meeting (5th December 2019) The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed. |  |
| 4 | Round the Table (RTT) British Horse Society - SS Not been up to much but keeps in touch with Medway riders and aware of the issues with the Hoo bridleway RS112. Understands there is not much money or time available to MC at the moment. |  |
| 5 | (RTT) Medway Ramblers - GJ Walks have restarted on Sundays and Wednesdays. Groups are of 12 which are legally permitted as they are classified as a sporting activity. Walks must be booked in advance. Membership has crept up this year.  GJ mentioned that the Ramblers have a document they carry to show that they can have more than 6 walkers which might be helpful to others and is on the Ramblers website.  Will forward walk list to AB for publication on the website. | **GJ** |
| 6 | (RTT) Cuxton countryside Group - IG Have been trying to dispose of 50 tyres creatively and have used some of them to segregate the new cycle track on the recreation ground. FL will speak to Norse to see if they can help dispose of them.  Currently reinstating the land that Balfour Beatty disturbed.  Have received 400 trees and are looking to plant them next week along the verge of a footpath.  Awaiting the result of the application to DfT to improve the RS206 between Cuxton and Strood  Lots of people seem to be walking where they should not be, across farmland. IG would like to explore the idea of a permissive path and would like MC’s help with this. IG to speak to AB. | **FL**  **IG** |
| 7 | (RTT) MEDWAY TOWNS FOOTPATH GROUP - CM The group have been walking -were allowed up to 30 participants but found that the public were giving them strange looks as they did not know the rules allowed them to walk in a group of that number as long as they were socially distanced.  Group went on walks in October and November and were careful to use wide footpaths to reassure other users.  MTFG have undertook PRoW work since July but only half the volunteers retuned to work. This has meant they are very busy and there is still lots of work to be done.  Have spent the last two weeks waymarking in Hoo and re-opening closed paths.  CM agreed with IG that lots of people are out walking, but it is clear that many of them are roaming where they shouldn’t and don’t have maps to help them. MTFG are spending lots of time waymarking to help guide the public as to where they can walk. |  |
| 8 | (RTT) Group discussion on litter problem There was a group discussion on the problem of littering that has come about since lockdown started. It was understood that this seemed to be a result of more people being outside and a lack of volunteers to clear up because of restrictions.  It was suggested that more leaflets should be dropped to schools to educate the youngsters. |  |
| 9 | Reports from Officers (RFO) – AB Creating an action plan for the ROWIP that was approved in the summer. Very pleased that when writing the plan that lots of action points are actively progressing this year. Hopes to have the plan ready to show to the LAF at the next meeting.  A GIS network is being undertaken as part of the ROWIP looking at the path conditions, the furniture and the line of PRoW’s in relation to the GISMO, the OS maps and the legal Definitive Map of PRoW. An incredible amount of data is being produced that is useful for flagging any health and safety issues that could be considered urgent.  The PRoW website is now updated and legally accessible to all and there is now a link to the new LAF website from there.  Lots of work has been done on the LAF website and logo which SC will touch upon later in the meeting.  The PRoW website now also has a link to Confirm for reporting problems on the network. Although it Is good to directly receive enquiries, there is now an issue where the public are reporting non-ProW issues on the ProW codes meaning lots of officer time is being spent reallocating the enquiries.  Local Neighbourhood plans are being created by the parishes of High Halstow, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods and Hoo and Chattenden.  We are actively commenting on the plans and it is heartening to see that they value the PRoW network and wish to work together to retain and improve it where possible. | **AB** |
| 10 | RFO – AT Reported on the issues of the RS112 bridleway at Hoo where developers have discharged water into the ditch which has subsequently flooded the bridleway and field making it unusable. The developer then built an earth bund to stop this happening but infringed on the line of the bridleway. They have subsequently removed the bund, but the machinery used to do this has made the surface very muddy and unusable again. Works to level the bridleway are being considered but cannot be undertaken until the spring when the weather improves. It has been noticed that local residents have ben dumping garden waste in the ditch effectively blocking it and contributing towards these problems. Unfortunately, the ditch is a structure owned and not maintained by the landowner.    Also dealing with a similar issue on the RS108 bridleway in Hoo.  AT understood the frustration of the equestrians in Hoo and reassured SS that focus will be directed back to the limited bridleways in Medway once the England Coastal Park (ECP) was finished.  AT showed photos of improvements made as part of the ECP works including replacing stiles with gates on the sea wall and waymarking of the trail.  There are 2 sections of the path. Cliffe to Grain is under construction now and Grain to Rainham is yet to be approved for works. The paperwork and technical works involved in making this happen is extraordinary, as is the paperwork related to the grants available to fund it. There is a deadline to get the works done by the end of March 2021, but this may be extended because of Covid.  GJ queried some intimidating signs in Grain. AT advised they belong to the MOD and that they relate to land where you shouldn’t walk. AT will speak to MOD to see if they will remove the signs to remove ambiguity. | **AT** |
| 11 | RFO – DP DP reported that all programmes have been put on hold since lockdown because of people’s views on what they were doing. Have produced lots of self-guided walks instead, amounting to 11 in Medway.  An exit pathway for health walkers is the Ramblers and it has been noticed that walkers are migrating to Ramblers which is pleasing.  Cycling has increased since lockdown, with an overall increase of 23% logged by the cycle counters. 26 people have been taught how to ride a bike.  Nordic Walking has expanded outside of Medway. Are being cautious with numbers due to the public views on the numbers of people in a group.  A segregated cycle route has been removed between Bowater roundabout and Pump Lane.  DP has a contact for mountain bikers and will ask them to come and give feedback and open links to this active group. | **DP** |
| 12 | RFO – FL Lots of play area refurbishments this year in Medway.  Improvements to the Horsted valley with a new surfaced path and interpretation boards to be erected.  The Cookham Community Park is being developed in Hoo as part of HIF with a planning application being submitted soon. It will be a community parkland which means there will not be visitor facilities and will be a larger public engagement this month.  There is a new tree strategy with 10,000 trees to be planted but need volunteers to plant the trees.  Improvements are being made at Berengrave including the boardwalk and also improvements are being made on local football pitches. | **TC** |
| 13 | **RFO – MP**  Medway achieved 8 Green Flag Parks this year, the new one being Ranscombe Farm.  A public consultation is being undertaken for Riverside Country Park and closed this week received over 750 responses.  Volunteering has been suspended during the lockdowns and awaiting advice as to their return. Four new groups have been formed this year with another on the way.  SC mentioned the investment in biodiversity in Medway and that MUGS have put forward a small team to start recording information in the area on wildlife and botany**.** He explained how easy it was to survey and record and will put something on the website.  It is good to see all of the hard work being done by everyone in all areas. | **SC** |
| 14 | **Website and newsletter**  SC thanked AB, IG and JH for the development of the website and logo and said that it now needs investment from members for population with news from all areas of representation.  The newsletters that have gone out have been well received, not just from LAF members but from the wider distribution of the update. Will do more newsletters in the year but yet to decide on frequency as they are a lot of work for officers.  AB asked that groups send her updates and links for the website and newsletters to make it attractive and informative for all like-minded access groups. | **ALL** |

**Any other Business**

SC queried the proposed housing development at Rainham and potential impact on PRoW in that area. AB advised that representation had been made on the original application about access and advised that the planning application had been refused and was now being appealed.

CM asked if AT had received his emails about the work completed and AT confirmed so and will look at them and call CM back on Friday.

SC has been pursuing new membership from the Medway Neurological Network and checked everyone was happy to admit the new member at the next meeting. SC also asked members to think about representation from dog walkers and if they knew of anyone who may be interested.

SC mentioned the Heritage Action Zone area at Rochester Riverside and the desire of riverside access in that area once it is regenerated.

AT thanked IG and CM for their hard work volunteering over this difficult year.

Next meeting is Thursday 4th March 2021,