

KCAF Meeting – Monday 7th March 2022
Meeting venue: Microsoft Teams
Meeting started at 2:00pm

Attendees:		
Jeremy Boxall	J Box	Chair
Anne Beecham	AB	Other Interest Representative – Tourism
Richard Dickenson	RD	User representative – Motorised vehicles
Chris Jelly	CJ	Other Interest Representative – Dog Walking
Robert Peel	RP	User representative – Walkers
Anne Rillie	AR	User representative – Equestrian
Charles Tassell	CT	Land Management Representative – CLA
Theresa Trussell	TR	User representative – Multiuser
Advisor		
Graham Rusling	GR	KCC - PROW
Andrew Hutchinson	AH	KCC - PROW
Minutes		
GR		
KCC		
Apologies:		
Sarah Barker	SB	Kent Association of Local Councils
Jenny Bowen	JB	Natural England
David Brazier	DB	KCC – Member
Amanda Corp	AC	Land Management Representative - NFU
Steve Neville	SN	User group – Cycling
Hazel Walters	HW	KCC – Highways
Site visit		
Prior to the meeting a site visit took place to Byway AW288 Gadsby Lane and Unclassified unsealed road - Green Lane at Bethersden.		
Previous Actions		
1. SB to enquire about the levels of and capacity of Parish Councils to undertake maintenance work on PROW.		
Actions		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JBox to approach Health Walks Co-ordinator 2. AB to approach CPRE network representative. 3. Forum to respond to any further consultations on this subject following the response to the Glover review. 4. GR to make further enquiries with Kent Highways as to the length of UUCRs in Kent. 5. GR to invite a member of the Kent Highways Road Safety Team to a future meeting. 6. Forum Members to respond by e-mail to GR on prioritisation and network hierarchy 7. GR to invite a member of the Kent Highways Active Travel Team to attend a future meeting. 		

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the 7 March 2022, were agreed with amendment. Reference to the A247 was corrected to A249.

Matters arising not on agenda

Lower Thames Crossing.

RB notified the Forum that National Highways had launched their Local Refinements Consultation. *This will run until the 20th June:*

<https://ltcconsultation2022.nationalhighways.co.uk/>

AR highlighted some progress in securing links for equestrians although their depiction on plans still required greater clarity.

In response to a question from JBox, GR highlighted the projects for which designated funds were being sought:

- Improvements to PROW linking the England Coast Path (ECP) and North Downs Way (NDW) National Trails.
- Improvements to the Medway Canal and links through to the Tilbury Ferry.
- Link to Cyclopark
- Bridge improvements for equestrians
- A legacy fund for smaller improvement projects in the area.

GR also highlighted the M2 Junction 5 designated funds project for non-motorised users that is progressing.

Membership

No expressions of interest have been received despite regular social media promotion through Explore Kent.

It was agreed that JBox should approach a local health walks co-ordinator with knowledge/experience of disabled access.

AB highlighted the CPRE network meeting. The network shared many of the aims of the KCAF and may wish to volunteer a representative to become a member of the Forum (representing other interests).

Actions JBox to approach Health Walks Co-ordinator
AB to approach CPRE network representative.

Vehicles in the countryside

Highlighting a number of issues relating to the management of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and unclassified unsealed roads (UCCRs), and their use by motor vehicles. This is an area of use and management that is again coming to prominence following the Governments consultation on its response to the Glover review of National Parks and Protected Landscapes. The key points highlighted were:

- Kent's BOAT network extends to 231Km , approximately 3% of the network. The distribution is largely along the Kent Downs and the low weald in Ashford. No precise figure is available for the unsealed unclassified road network although this is under consideration and thought to be similar.
- In 2005 a full survey of BOATs was undertaken highlighting 42 particular issues on the BOAT network.
- These were the focus of the Byways Working Group - later to become a subgroup of the KCAF.

- Many of the issues had been resolved through maintenance/ improvement works or proportionate Traffic Prohibition or a combination of both.
- Underlying geology has a significant impact on the ability of unsealed routes to sustain motor vehicle use.
- The use of TRO's and the impact of CROWA2000 & NERCA2006 condenses use on a smaller network.
- There are differences in management despite BOATS and UCCRs being similar in nature and managed by one authority. Kent Highways operational policy has recently changed to approach UCCRs in a similar way to BOATs. The key remaining difference stems from prioritisation and therefore the likelihood of maintenance or other interventions.

AB asked if there could be a transfer of responsibility for UCCRs.

GR responded that this had previously been discussed with Kent Highways with potentially tarmac surfaced routes passing the other way. This may better reflect the management approaches and skill sets within the teams. The main hurdle had been in defining the lengths of the highways.

JBox asked if the UCCRs could become BOATs. GR indicated that many UCCRs better met the definition of BOATs but it was unlikely they would be recorded as such as should the prevalent use change they would effectively revert to their previous status.

RD highlighted that enforcement is the key where use is unlawful, eg driving off road. He noted the significant reduction in the number of off road policing teams in the county over recent times. Many of the issues relate to neglect of drainage, the maintenance of hedgerows. There is a need for greater maintenance

AB suggested that improvement of surfaces and better maintenance generally would encourage greater lawful use which aids policing.

CJ enquired about the condition of KM219 Lenham Cross prior to the introduction of the access by permit TRO. GR gave a brief summary of that scheme in response indicating that the surface had been damaged with deep ruts and had been repaired prior to the introduction of the TRO. The TRO had proved successful in reducing antisocial behaviour in and around the cross.

JBox enquired about the use of CCTV. GR responded that this may be entirely private and off the highway. In terms of a local authority it may be overt including signage or covert where authority had been secured under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. In both cases there are onerous requirements in terms of the collection, storage and disposal of information.

Further discussion then took place relating to quiet lanes and road safety for vulnerable users. It was agreed to raise this as an agenda item for a future meeting.

Actions. Forum to respond to any further consultations on this subject following the response to the Glover review.

GR to make further enquiries with Kent Highways as to the length of UCCRs in Kent.

Kent

GR to invite a member of the Kent Highways Road Safety Team to a future meeting..

Guidance noted: The requirement for timely maintenance - particularly drainage and vegetation. The importance of enforcement where offences are being committed.

Policy - Report prioritisation and network hierarchy

GR provided a brief overview on the draft report prioritisation and network hierarchy policy on which comments and advice were sought. There was little change in the prioritisation of reports beyond the addition of a ninth category relating to access land and coastal access margin. This is given a low priority as the enforcement powers are limited as is the ability to recover costs if necessary. The policy also indicated greater community involvement/ input in establishing maintenance priorities.

AB highlighted that failure to maintain in a timely manner could and does lead to lower priority work becoming a higher priority. GR Indicated that this was the case although in taking an asset management approach the desire is to undertake the right job at the right time in the right place.

GR stated that the abandonment of A and B paths in favour of a network hierarchy is intended to better reflect community priorities and place greater emphasis on those routes that may deliver greatest benefit. GR indicated that routes added as a result of a successful Definitive Map Modification Order made on the basis of historic evidence should not be given priority but should be assessed along with all other routes in the maintenance/ enforcement backlogs.

AH clarified that decisions often came down to Officer assessment and it was easier to achieve with policy to support the decision-making process that was succinct and not too wordy or imprecise. All decisions involve balancing numerous factors.

Action - Forum Members to respond by e-mail to GR on prioritisation and network hierarchy .

England Coastal Path

GR provided a brief update on the ECP:

- Much of the establishment work was now complete other than where planning permission was awaited. (Faversham and Kings Gate)
- There were still delays with the establishment of the Iwade to Grain and Sheppey stretches where the Planning Inspectors recommendation to the Secretary of State is still awaited.
- A Trail Partnership has been established involving Brighton and Hove Council, East Sussex CC, South Downs National Park, Kent CC , Medway Council and Bexley Council. It is hoped that with the opening of further stretches critical mass will be reached allowing sufficient core grant to employ a Trail Officer.

Definitive Map - 2026 Cut off date.

GR provided a short update on the recent announcement by DEFRA that the 2026 cut off date is to be repealed. Since the announcement there had been further clarification and the majority of the reform package including right to apply is to be implemented. Only those elements directly relating to the cut-off date (eg the savings provisions) are to be revoked. GR expressed a concern that this has significant implications in respect of resources as irrespective of views on the cut off date it did bring down the “guillotine” on historic applications and gave some certainty as to backlogs and the resource required to tackle them.

Projections are being worked through to inform a report to the relevant committees later in the year.

Any Other business

Active Travel. AR stated that active travel policies and guidance included riding not just cycling and walking
GR to invite a member of the Kent Highways Active Travel Team to attend a future meeting.

Future meeting dates, times, and venues

Date:

Time:

Site visit:

Topic:

Monday 5th September 2022

2pm In person - venue to be determined.

Active Travel and vulnerable road users (Tbc)

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Topic:

Monday 5th December 2022

2pm

tbc / virtual?

Electrically assisted cycles and motor powered vehicles

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Topic:

Meeting close 16:15