



Kent countryside
access forum

MINUTES

Meeting Date: **Monday 02 June 2025**

Site Visit: **Wye Crown (AE109)**

Site Visit time: **12pm**

Meeting Time: **2pm to 4pm**

Meeting Venue: **Wye Village Hall, Bridge St, Wye, Ashford TN25 5EA**

Attendees:

Jeremy Boxall (JBox) - Chair

Anne Beecham (AB) - (Vice Chair) Tourism Representative

Anne Rillie (AR) - Equestrian Representative

Robert Peel (RP) - Walking Representative

Graham Rusling (GR) - KCC Public Rights of Way and Access Service – Special Advisor

Apologies:

Charles Tassell – Apologies by email

Theresa Trussell - Apologies by email

Richard Dickenson - Apologies by email

Sarah Barker

Amanda Corp

Minutes:

Jed Mann (JM) - KCC Public Rights of Way and Access Service

Actions from this meeting:

June 2025 Action 1.

GR to approach Mark Robson, Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) Chair, about someone from the TRF joining the Forum as a member.

June 2025 Action 2.

GR to approach Gini Mitchell as a new Health & Wellbeing representative.

June 2025 Action 3.

JBox to approach farmer about hosting the forum in September.

June 2025 Action 4.

ALL - Item for discussion on next meeting agenda – creating a document to advise landowners/farmers of best practice regarding - livestock in field - signage.

1. Welcome and apologies:

JBox opened the meeting and conveyed apologies from members unable to attend.

2. Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting:

Actions from meeting held on **24 March 2025:**

Action 1.

GR to approach Gini Mitchell as a new Health & Wellbeing representative.

Ongoing

Action 2.

GR to approach Mark Robson, Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) Chair, about someone from the TRF joining the Forum as a member.

Ongoing

Action 3.

GR to circulate the National Housing Policy Framework in relation to the 'Amendments to Housing Supply Requirements' section to the Forum members.

Completed

Action 4.

GR to circulate a draft of PROW's 'Design Guidance' to the Forum members.

Completed

3. Membership (*standing item*):

- a) **GR** to approach Mark Robson (TRF, OS surveyor & CAW) involved.

Action 1

- b) **GR** in regard to a replacement Health & Wellbeing representative that he would like to approach Gini Mitchell as a new Forum member, as she is involved in a lot of work with PROW relating to accessibility and specifically disabled users.

Action 2

- c) Perry Cole is no longer an elected Member. **GR** to contact and seek suggestion as a KCC elected member representative.
- d) **AB** raised concern, walking with dogs and dog control orders in Folkestone/Hythe area. Need for a member to head up dog control in general. AB happy to act as such in a temporary capacity.

4. PRow Surface repairs, identification, prioritisation and specification:

- a) **GR** presented an overview of the resurfacing process within PROW, discussing some the history and context around these issues. Unclassified roads fall under highways.
- b) £156m is the modern replacement equivalent value for the 6915km in Kent. To keep it at current condition annually - £3.4m (KCC spend nearer to £1.7m in real terms). Approximately, one third of PROW revenue budget is directed to vegetation clearance.
- c) All issues that get reported through our range of communication channels get logged into CAMS. Additionally, PROW conduct ongoing condition survey of the network.

- d) **GR** posed the question, at what point does a surface become an issue/out of repair? PROW employ an intelligent investment tool to gauge the benefit of schemes (IIT). Surfacing jobs are looked at holistically and on the impact they will have in line with our priorities, also at how feasible improvement works within their context are. There are a range of tools to look at the use of network. People counters are advanced and often able to decipher types of use, e.g. horse riders.
- e) The range of tools give a detailed overview of use; **GR** gave the example of 'activexchange' being used to see the geographic origin of visitors to the Shorne Woods area.
- f) **RP** raised the question of whether data accessed could be used to demonstrate use on DMMO proposals.

5. Development sites (*standing item*):

- a) **Lower Thames Crossing** – It is currently being progressed at risk. GR and David Munn will attend a detailed design meeting. Community events are upcoming.
- b) **Highsted Park** – GR attended the Public Inquiry PROW round table. A strategy for PROW has been agreed with the applicant. It is proposed to consolidate existing PROW to reduce the number of road crossings. PROW still seeking a grade separated crossing of the Southern Strategic Relief Road. Highways evidence is w/c 8th June.
- c) **Solar Farms** – Aldington DCO, decision likely to be August. Sittingbourne, decision in August also likely. Staplehurst, went to committee with recommendation of approval by officers.
- d) **Design Guidance** – **GR** circulated document.
- e) **RD** comments sent in via email:

Just a few notes on Agenda Item 5. Development sites, a) Lower Thames Crossing. The government announced on the 25 March that planning permission for the scheme has been granted. National Highways are saying that construction could start in 2026, and the new road could open in the early 2030's but all this relies on the government finding private finance options for the project. Previous attempts to find such funding over the last 10 years has come to nothing though!

Also, on Agenda Item 5. Development sites, c) Solar Farms. A proposed Solar Farm at Mathurst Farm, Staplehurst has seen many objections including from a neighbouring vineyard – Balfour Winery as they say it may affect their grape production!

[Kent Online – solar farm decision](#)

6. The Cantii Way

[Cantii Way | Cycling UK](#)

- a) **JBox** presented on the Cantii Way. He completed the route on bike. Route opened in 2022 and has since been developed by Cycle UK. Starts in Wye and was majority on quiet lanes with little to no traffic, some off road. The route has an informative Facebook page and a useful guide (though not in a printed version). The route has proved important for rural businesses linked to it too.

7. King Charles III England Coastal Path (*standing item*):

- a) The Secretary of State had approved the remaining report for Iwade to Grain. Unfortunately, this is too late for work to be completed in summer for environmental reasons.
- b) Plough Rd Minster, route identification is a challenge. Natural England need to identify a route that is deliverable and demonstrates a fair balance in respect to impact on landowners.
- c) Isle of Sheppey will be commenced from 24 June 2025.
- d) **RP** will finalise guide from Ramsgate heading West.

8. Correspondence (*standing item*):

Nothing to note this meeting.

9. Any Other Business:

- a) **JBOX** – Witnessed a walker escaping livestock incident. The farmer stated they had never seen their cattle chase a person before.
- b) Item for next meeting agenda – create a document to advise landowners/farmers of best practice regarding - livestock in field - signage.
Action 4
- c) Permissive routes to be included on interactive map and explore Kent. OS maps app has a feature to include notes for all users, e.g. note for a permissive path. OS maps do not communicate or link to KCC systems so not suitable for reporting issues but useful as a means of communicating with other users of the app.
- d) DEFRA Minister has been seeking information concerning the numbers of issues/ obstructions to PRow and their condition. **GR** highlighted the fact not all authorities have the same access to data records as Kent.
- e) **JBox** raised a concern about the effects on PRow surfaces and on other users from cycle/run events, advertised as gravel routes possibly using PRow.
- f) **AB** – Noted that there seemed to be a low level of reinstatement through crops on the Romney Marsh this year.
- g) **RP**. Ramblers holding one of their regular liaison/ development days at Lenham 23 June 2025
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- h) **JBox** – will approach farmer about hosting the forum in September.
Action 3

Next meeting:

Date: **Monday 08 September 2025**

Meeting Time: **2pm to 4pm**

Meeting Venue: **MS Teams**