

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

First meeting of 2015/16
Meeting Room 1, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1NE
Tuesday 7th April 2015
10am - 12.30pm

A G E N D A

2015 (1)

	Item	<i>Coffee/tea available from 09.45am</i>
10.00	1	Election/Re-election of the Chair and Vice-chair
	2	Welcome, apologies for absence and declarations of interest- to declare any personal or prejudicial interests
	3	Confirm the minutes of 13 th January 2015 (2014/3)
10.10	4	Matters arising
10.20	5	Oxfordshire Rights of Way Management Plan – OCAF’s views on Countryside Access business plan and work to review Issue Prioritisation approach
10.45	6	Review of Oxfordshire Monitoring Group
11.15	7	LAF handbook and OCAF’s terms of reference
11.30	8	Draft OCAF Annual Report
11.45	9	Agree date of time of next meetings: September, January and April, possible summer site visit
12.00	9	Questions from members of public/observers

n.b. all times are indicative only

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum is a Local Access Forum - an independent advisory body, established and administered by Oxfordshire County Council to assist with improving access to Oxfordshire’s countryside under s94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Contact any member via the OCAF Secretariat: Oxfordshire County Council, Countryside Service, Signal Court, Old Station Way, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4TL. Tel 01865 810226, email: countryside@oxfordshire.gov.uk or visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ocaf

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF 2014/15
Tuesday 13 January 2015, Signal Court, Eynsham, Oxfordshire
2014 (3)

Attending:

Members and their interest areas:

Troth Wells, Chair (TW) - User – Horseriding
Stuart McGinness, Vice-chair (SMG) User – Off-road cycling and cycle training
Sarah Martin (SM) – User –Walking and botany, permissive access
Andrew Hawkins (AH) –Landmanaging - Woodland owner
Gordon Garraway (GG) –Other – Green space protection and recreational trails
Nigel Fisher (NF) –Landmanaging – Estate management
Harry St John (HSJ) - Landmanaging – Land and estate advice
Philip Chamberlain (PC) – Landmanaging –Arable farmer and diversified estate
John Griffin (JG) – User – Cycling ,walking and protected areas
Dave Cavanagh (DC) – User– walking and practical voluntary action on paths

Guests and observers

Chris Marriage (CM) Observer - Landowning Interest Member of Mid and West Berks LAF
Angela Hennell (AnH) Natural England Lead Adviser Thames Valley Team
Lisa Gray-Wright (LGW) OCC Rights of Way Officer

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF

Hugh Potter – Countryside & Records Group Manager (HP)
Paul Harris – OCAF Secretary/ Countryside Access Team Leader (interim)(PH)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

TW welcomed all present to the meeting and introductions were made - including new walking interest member Dave Cavanagh . PH informed the group that apologies had been received from Cllr Rodney Rose, Cllr David Nimmo-Smith, Christopher Gowers, Anne Luttmann-Johnson and Clare Mowbray.

TW informed the group of the sad news of Jason Robertson's death which she said was a shock to all. Although members of the group hadn't worked with him much his contributions had been appreciated. PH added that Jason had done much work with GLASS the green lane association and he also did a significant amount for Convoy4Heroes through his passion for Landrovers and using them responsibly in the countryside.

TW also informed the group that Ian Anderson had decide to resign from OCAF due to health issues. Ian was a founder member of OCAF and had only ever missed one meeting. TW agreed to write to Ian on behalf of the group to thank him for his work and contributions over the years and to wish him well for a complete and rapid recovery.

There were no declarations of interest.

Action 1: Troth Wells to write to Ian Anderson on behalf of the group to thank him for his commitment and contribution to the Forum

2. Confirm the minutes of 23RD September 2014

Confirmed with minor typographical errors on pages 1,2 and 4. Amend last sentence of the first paragraph on page 2 to read “TW later added that there were some horse-friendly surfaces that *should be used where relevant and appropriate*”

3. Matters arising

All actions were reported to have been completed.

p1 agenda item 4: last para – JG expressed his concern that David Nimmo-Smith’s comment that the authority did not have a dedicated cycling officer means that cycling issues are not joined up and that it falls between teams. SMG agreed and added that it needed a focal point for knowledge as well as contact by user groups; it might also enable the use of external grant funds such as “Bikeability” which teaches cycling to school children and which Oxfordshire was under-utilising. GG said that a single point of contact was necessary to process problems like cycling on footpaths. JG offered to raise this with Cllr Nimmo-Smith and this offer was accepted. AH pointed out that there was a difference between a cycling officer and an officer for cycling. CM said that there was such a cycling officer in West Berkshire

Action 2: John Griffin to contact Cllr Nimmo-Smith re lack of dedicated cycling officer or an officer responsible for cycling

p3 agenda item 7 Review of procedures for closing PRoW: HP and PH reported that the use of advisory notices had been passed on to countryside access team members. GG later highlighted that the lack of consultation was not answered at the last meeting and it was his understanding that there was a duty to consult. He requested that OCC confirm the requirement to consult. HP agreed to follow this up.

Action 3: PH/HP to follow up the requirements to consult on Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders [post meeting note -Oxfordshire CC guidance is at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/requesting-temporary-traffic-regulation-order-ttro> and there is no requirement to consult for temporary orders.]

For Marcham Bridge which runs over the River Ock, HP informed the group that the landowner’s view remained unchanged for what was a very complex and convoluted issue. He reported that the team had taken legal advice and counsel’s opinion and had taken the step of commissioning a structural survey to identify the nature and extent of necessary works. HP pointed out that this was the reverse of what usually happened on privately owned and maintained bridges with PRoW running across them and this whole situation was unlike anything he had experienced in his many years of access management. Questions were raised about insurance cover and the expenditure by the public purse as well as the potential for listed building action or occupiers liability. HP thanked the group for their contributions and said he would report back to future meetings when more was known.

p4 agenda item 9 National Trails in Oxfordshire GG gave the background to the Ridgeway Forum and said it was good news that the Forum was to be reinstated as the old Forum brought people and organisations together and allowed them to feed in concerns to the Management Group. The Forum had succeeded in many areas especially as it led on the restrictions on 4x4s and motorcycles on the Ridgeway.

JG said that it was important to get the new Ridgeway Officer in post as soon as possible, even if this is just for one year. The Chilterns Conservation Board were keen to help the process as was the North Wessex Downs Office. He said that Oxfordshire County Council did a great job looking after the trails and it was good that it was continuing as lead/host authority. The Chilterns Board was looking forward to even more inclusive approach to bring

in more health and economy as well as local communities. The wider forum was valuable but it was the new Partnership that would drive things forward.

HSJ asked whether other authorities and Natural England contributed to the national trails and whether there was the potential to use external sources of funding such as Leader . AnH said that funding had been recently announced and substantial funds would be available for the Oxfordshire Leader and the project manager outside the AONBs was Amanda Holland. Some of this may be able to fund access projects but they should be linked to developing and supporting the rural economy. She reminded the group of the Paths for Communities scheme which closed early due to demand but demonstrated the need for access funding and the potential benefits for local businesses. *[post meeting note: Leader is a French acronym, standing for 'Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'. Local Action Groups are made up of public and private partners in a particular area. They receive financial assistance to implement local development strategies, by awarding grants to local projects].*

DC asked if or why OCC had not sanctioned the employment of a Ridgeway Officer by the management group. HP stated that OCC supported the group's desire to employ a dedicated officer but he wanted to ensure the availability of funding was secure. This would hopefully be finalised at the meeting on 23rd January and he didn't think that there was any threat against the post. SM and AH said that the Thames Path was a good example to town to countryside access and so no reason why it couldn't be eligible for funding.

PC requested that the county council help to summarise and clarify the different organisations, agencies and acronyms used for national trails etc. PH agreed to do this.

Action 4: PH to produce a concise guide to the terminology used in national trails development information

4. Rights of Way Management Plan – OCAF's views on business planning

PH introduced the document and thanked OCAF for the work that members had done over the various stages of the plan's production. He added that as part of focusing on implementing the plan it would be useful for any suggestions for area of rights of way work needing reviewing to be highlighted. This could well include definitive map as well as rights of way management and improvement.

PC raised the aspirational access maps in the plan and expressed his dissatisfaction with their presentation in that landowners had not been consulted prior to the maps being made available to the public. This could have potential impacts on these landowners as it possibly affecting how they responded to requests for new or improved access. He acknowledged the caveats and cautions that appeared on each map but said it could be perceived that parishes and users were invited to make their suggestions but not landowners. PH responded that due to the time constraints of the plan's production and the scale of some of the maps it wasn't possible to consult with landowners and he apologised to PC if he had been aggrieved by the map or the production process. He added that the maps were put together as a result of development work for the first Improvement Plan plus map based assessments of network connectivity and where there were key breaks in the network. PH suggested that having aspirational access in the plan could benefit some landowners who were minded to try and increase diversification of their farms as it could be used as an evidence base for schemes to be able to benefit from grant funding. PH later confirmed to CM that routes designated as 'multi-user' would be for non-motorised uses.

TW said it was hard to find out who owned the land when it came to trying to make improvements and if this was perhaps something where the OCC Definitive Map Team

could be more proactive. LGW said that the Deregulation Bill when enacted will improve things; for example it would be the Team who would arrange the serving of notices on landowners. TW asked about the existing data that the team had and whether this could be used to identify routes. LGW said that the team have a record of anomalies and this was on the caseload, but at the bottom of the priority list – but this could be something that may be able to be shared with user groups. TW said she would welcome that.

Action 5: LGW to arrange distribution of definitive map anomalies information to TW once it is in a suitable format.

HSJ asked about the budget for access and rights of way and if there was flexibility at upper levels to redirect resources to areas of priority. HP confirmed that team leaders managed their budget areas, including staff, but there may need to be more flexibility in redirecting resources to priority areas. He pointed out that for maintenance the team were just about scraping by so this would be very challenging. TW questioned if a surge on DMMOs would work. LGW responded that it might work but the reality was that Oxfordshire was reasonably privileged with the 10 year waiting list as some authorities had waiting lists/backlogs of over 50 years.

HSJ raised the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and asked if access could be benefit from this or other planning obligations and whether could this help with longer term planning. PH responded that OCC had secured significant amounts from some planning applications and the team tried to mitigate the effects of development on the network – but the effort to try and secure this was great and often the lack of an outcome did not justify the work.

PH thanked members for their contributions and said that OCC was always open to advice from OCAF about what to review or the way it undertook access operations and welcomed this on future agenda items.

TW recorded OCAF's thanks to OCC for the production of such a good Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

5. Rights of Way Management Plan – OCAF's views on guidance notes

PH introduced the paper and the two draft notes and invited comments.

Planning note

JG welcomed the note and said it was good to do but questioned who the intended recipient was. PH said it was for access officers to use when they made their response to the local planning authority - and for those fairly rare occasions where there wasn't enough time to assess the application within the deadline amongst the other priority access work that officers undertook. TW said that it was good to mention rights of way as some applicants were unsure or unaware. GG asked who leads on any diversion of rights of way. PH said it was usually developer and district council as planning authority. He added that the guidance note and the Rights of Way Management Plan stressed that development should try and fit around existing rights of way but paths could be altered and there was a process for that usually undertaken by the district councils. LGW added that OCC was possibly looking at undertaking such order work as a contractor for South Oxfordshire district council. She also mentioned the CON29 local searches form that used to have rights of way as an optional search but the revised version would have this included in standard search.

Vegetation note

GG questioned the relative priority of named routes when it came to the clearance programme rather than if a route was used for commuting. PH clarified that it was more

about the nature and use of a route rather than if it formed part of a named recreation route or not. It was also dependent on how overgrown the route was. The note was intended as some sort of guide to aid parish councils and others to understand the limitation of resources that the team faced and provide a clearer way of showing how the team tries to address this in a more planned way.

TW said that she felt that the amount of obstruction was more important than the type of route – and PH agreed to amend the document.

Action 6: PH to amend the vegetation guidance note to swap around a and b

NF highlighted the Gloucestershire RoWIP which set more of a standard for keeping rights of way usable and expressed his view that ‘reasonable’ was not enough of a statement to show Oxfordshire was meeting its statutory duty. JG said that he would prefer to see ‘usable’ too. PH explained that the section in the note reflected that which was in the newly-adopted Rights of Way Management Plan and that it could not be changed. He assured the group that the team would do all that it could within the resources it had available – but that OCAF were at liberty to give advice to the authority if it was felt necessary. NF offered to write to Cllr Nimmo-Smith to express this view.

Action 7: PH to supply NF with Cllr Nimmo-Smith’s contacts so that he can make representation

AH said that on the two occasions he had contacted the team about fallen trees they had been removed promptly – and this was echoed by other OCAF members. GG said that he wondered whether a programme was necessary as it might lead to work being planned to clear vegetation which could have been cleared anyway from reports dealt with on a fire fighting basis. PH responded that the HVC programme wasn’t about reactive action like fallen trees and that woody vegetation didn’t normally grow up quickly. He added that the development of a programme was about trying to find a balance so that a heavy clear every 3 years or so would enable the route to be kept clear by summer mowing and slow down the regrowth of woody vegetation like blackthorn. HP added that the jobs would be repeated every three years and this would also cut down on reports as well as improving summer mowing.

6. Permissive Paths funded through Agri-environment schemes

TW thanked CM for raising this with the Minister through the West Berks LAF and said that many people were not aware that agreements were coming to an end and that routes could be closed – some of which provided important routes away from hazardous roads and some provided important links or exercise routes.

PC said that his agreements came to an end in 2014 and that all the notices had that information on them. He hadn’t removed the furniture yet and he would have liked to continue but there was no option when he entered Higher Level Stewardship in 2014 and nothing in its replacement. He had had two approaches to keeping the paths open – one very impolite and this underlined some of the problems with giving people additional access to land. Another problem is keeping the route safe as field edge paths also tend to be favoured for rabbit burrows. There was just nothing access related in any agri-environment scheme. NF said that this reflected changes at Natural England where a lot of the goodwill additional work that was provided by landowners previously had disappeared due to the bureaucratic hoops that farmers had to jump through. In fact it was likely that he wouldn’t stay in HLS because of this and the change in approach by Natural England. PC added that access can be a can of worms as there were rules on compliance which could risk a large proportion of the basic farm payment if they were not followed. He said that much of

this was done to maintaining relationships on both sides of the fence and that it wasn't helped by people claiming access on permissive routes or where no access had existed before. AnH said that there were no plans to bring access back into the stewardship scheme and that this was a Defra decision. She added that there may be other schemes to get funding and PH highlighted the success in using the old Access Management Grant Scheme to create permanent access land links at Gatehampton - and how he would like to use that to make the other access links permanent from 2017.

AH said that in his woodland it was only the horseriders who tended to go off the path and into the woods just because they liked seeing the woodland close up. SM added that in her village horses galloping on the footpaths also caused problems – but she wasn't able to identify them.

NF said he thought it was strange that HLS could be the one stop shop for land management issues in the future but not for access and surely it makes more sense for it to be in the natural England remit. AnH said that NE want to increase access for education and families but this may also be affected by the changes to funding rules.

GG asked how the permissive paths get created and PC answered that in his case the routes formed a small part of the overall package of environmental work that fitted in with his other land management. It was also important to complete statutory declarations at the appropriate point. CM said he had identified 77 routes in Oxfordshire and just 17 in West Berkshire and these could form important links for circular routes etc. He thought that perhaps OCC could take on the negotiation for these to remain as permissive routes or funded through another scheme. He thought that some of the routes are quite vital and landowners might need a bit of soft soaping to take the necessary steps. LGW responding to a query about claims for new rights of way, said that permissive access is normally regarded as a break in use so there would need to be substantial evidence of 20 years use before or after the agreement period. She drew the group's attention to the new 20 year validity period form statutory dedications. PH suggested that a potential action could be for OCAF members to look at the list of permissive routes and produce a priority list of those ones out of date and/or of greatest value.

Action 8: SM and JG to look at the online list of permissive routes and identify the highest priority ones for future action

7. LAF Handbook: postponed to a future meeting

8. Next meetings

Confirmed as April 7th 2015 at County Hall. NF offered to arrange a site visit for June. September meeting at Eynsham and January meeting at Oxford dates tbc.

Action 9: NF to arrange field visit for June

9. Questions from members of public/observers or any other business

It was requested that each member's interest area was included in the minutes – agreed

The Cotswolds AONB were now the Local Action Group so would steer the allocation of Leader funding. There had also been a recent Cotswolds access forum

The meeting closed at 12.30pm

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Report

Agenda item 5

Date: 7th April 2015
Title: OCAF's views on initial Rights of Way Issue Prioritisation and caseload management review
Author: Paul Harris, Countryside Access Team Leader (interim)

Introduction

The County Council adopted the Oxfordshire Rights of Way Management Plan 2015-2025 (RoWMP) on 25th November 2014. OCAF played a key role in developing the revised document.

The RoWMP sets out Oxfordshire County Council's assessment, vision and aims for the management and improvement of the public rights of way and countryside access network. The County Council will try to meet its responsibilities and, by working closely with other authorities and organisations, local communities, volunteers and other partners, it is hoped that significant added value and improvements can be achieved

One of the most pressing actions outlined in the document is for the Team to review and improve how it manages its caseload and how issues are prioritised and managed – in the light of statutory responsibilities, increasing public expectations and decreasing resources.

Action

OCAF Members are invited to consider the attached document which briefly outlines the four 'core team tasks' and the time allocated to them – and how issues could be prioritised and managed as part of that. Four questions are included and OCAF's views are welcomed.

Initial Issue Prioritisation and Team Workload management review

The Oxfordshire Rights of Way Management Plan 2015-2025 (RoWMP) states that Oxfordshire County Council's public rights of way statutory duty centres on ensuring that, across the network, rights are not obstructed and routes are maintained in a reasonable condition. The Countryside Access Team has produced a draft 'Business Plan' to guide team and individual work towards achieving the aspirations of the RoWMP and this includes four core team tasks.

It is important to note, that although inspecting and resolving hazards and public safety matters are extremely important, it is important for the team to be able to balance this and undertake regular planned maintenance and survey activities; support community and volunteer activities; work with the planning system to consider large numbers of planning applications and associated processes; provide information and promote access; and keep databases and records in good condition. This is why approximate percentages are put against the core team tasks

- Core Task 1.** *Managing the reported issues and problems that arise on the public rights of way and countryside access network - including planning applications (approx. 45%)*
- Core Task 2.** *Undertaking and commissioning the reactive, cyclical and seasonal repair, maintenance and improvement of public rights of way (approx. 40%)*
- Core Task 3.** *Countryside Access Team supports and enables local communities, volunteer groups, and other interested organisations to manage, use, improve and promote countryside access and public rights of way (approx. 10%)*
- Core Task 4.** *System for recording issues, monitoring, and repairing/replacing authority owned rights of way infrastructure in place and active (approx. 5%)*

Core Task 1 – Managing Issues and problems

In order to make the best use of available resources and give clarity to stakeholders, the Oxfordshire Rights of Way Management Plan included an aspiration to review the approach to how issues on the network are assessed and prioritised, and how this translates into work on the ground in accordance with the resources made available.

In common with many other authorities, Oxfordshire County Council places public safety at the top of the priority list. Public rights of way issues reported to the County Council or identified through inspections will normally be assessed with regard to their level of hazard and potential for harm. This assessment usually forms the main basis for priority setting. The impacts considered important to assess are:

- *Overall level of hazard or risk that the issue represents*
- *The degree of obstruction*
- *The cause and likely duration of problem*
- *The character of the route, its normal traffic and the route's normal state of repair*
- *The impact of the issue looking at the wider network*

Examples of possible higher and lower priority issues assessed through the Issue Impact Assessment stage



highest

- Accident/Incident where injury has occurred
- A matter that poses an immediate and likely high risk to the public e.g. hung up tree, recent subsidence, dangerous animals, failed bridge over deep drop etc
- Planning application affecting a public right of way and with very limited response deadlines
- Path obstructed by natural or man-made factor where no lawful alternative is available, or wilful action that impedes access to a PRoW
- Local issue which generates significant concern/reports
- Additional seasonal vegetation clearance on priority routes
- PRoW infrastructure fault where there is no risk of serious injury
- Path improvement projects, unless the project can resolve higher priority issues

lowest

Highest priority issues normally take precedence and are swiftly acted on - but it is a challenge to provide any sort of guidelines as to when lower priority issues will be inspected and addressed. The vast numbers of planning applications received are examples of other pressures as response times to them are strictly limited. Over the early years of the RoWMP, the Team will have to explore how to manage these more effectively, possibly on a priority caseload basis rather than area field officer based.

To date, OCC Countryside Access Team Officers have managed the caseload within their areas according to an informal priority system. All reports are logged and stored on the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) and all thus contribute to overall 'unresolved' caseload. A decision may be inevitable that classifies some issues on the network as updating data only rather than sitting as reports that currently have an expectation that they will have some kind of action taken on them –as higher priority work always sends these issues further down the caseload. This can have negative impacts on both reportees as well as staff members.

Another possibility, as set out in the ROWMP is combining the Issue Impact Assessment along with some sort of path categorisation from 1-4 that identifies the most well-used/important routes in order to help prioritise action and resources on those paths and allows a focus on improvements as well as issue resolution. Category 1 routes might include key routes to schools or local facilities and that are used by many people for daily commuting journeys; plus routes that provide direct tourism economic benefits (e.g. Thames Path and The Ridgeway National Trails) and the key linking routes that connect the route to villages or facilities). Other categories would cascade down from this.

Questions for OCAF:

- 1. Does the split of overall team time between all four core tasks seem reasonable?**
- 2. Should the Issue prioritisation be solely based on hazard/public safety?**
- 3. How might the path categorisation approach assist in the management of the network?**
- 4. Is it ever acceptable for issues to be treated as network database updates with no expectations that issues will be acted on? E.g. waymarking request, a 'slightly wobbly' stile, a woodland or cross-field path slightly off line, a noisy gate, a suggestion that a path could be improved, paths that are 'muddy' in winter, rabbit holes etc ?**

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Report

Agenda item 6

Date: 7th April 2015
Title: The Future of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group – Discussion paper
Author: Hugh Potter, Group Manager - Countryside & Records

Background

The Rights of Way Monitoring Group [MG] has been in existence for many years both in its present guise and previously as the Rights of Way Clearing House. Its primary purpose is to enable a forum where representatives from a wide variety of user and amenity groups can meet with Officers of the County Council to discuss Public Rights of Way management, priorities, report on progress with caseload and projects and raise the profile of specific issues and seek action to resolve.

Over the years it has been useful in drawing OCC Officers and interest groups together to contribute views to inform policy decisions by the council, press the case for resources and ensure the importance of Public Rights of Way is clearly understood both by the Officers attending but also more senior managers who traditionally chaired these meetings.

Officers have provided regular reports on progress against caseload, and a wide variety of countryside access based activity offering the opportunity for open, constructive and occasionally robust dialogue.

Current situation

In the last few years representation has reduced despite efforts to bolster and widen the body of interest around the table, and its effectiveness as a group is consequently diminishing. Those of you who have attended in the past will recognise that most of those attending come from a walking background, which while still important is of limited use without other views to inform the discussions that take place. OCC Officers consider therefore it is no longer representative of the wider body of interest.

No other Highway Authority in the region has continued to retain such a group after the establishment of Countryside Access Forums in 2003. Although there are differences in their purposes and ways of working, there is considerable overlap in what is the core 'access business' of both OCAF and MG. Experience elsewhere indicates that reporting to a single group which stands independent of the local authority can be beneficial if approached in the right way. Bear in mind also that Monitoring Group is an officer led meeting and the group has no statutory underpinning.

Furthermore in recent years, there has been significant increase in the provision of information about the service, which is now readily available to the public via the OCC website, so reducing the need to report to this group separately.

Budget constraints also mean the service must ensure it is making the best use of officer resources, and avoiding duplication where necessary.

However, it is important is to retain the strong partnership we have forged over many years and ensure there is sufficient opportunity in any changed arrangements for individuals and organisations to continue to have a voice that can be heard and can contribute effectively to any particular issue at point.

Possible changes to reporting arrangements

So we find ourselves in a position where now seems the opportune moment to review the role and effectiveness of the Monitoring Group meeting and OCC welcomes the views of OCAF on the following possible options:

1. OCAF invites Officers to submit more detailed PRow operational and technical updates at meetings once or twice a year with Officers attending to present the paper and take views and answer questions [commonplace in other authorities]
2. Expanding the membership of OCAF to incorporate a broader body of interest. Membership is currently at 14 but could be extended to a maximum of 22 provided potential members meet the entry criteria and bias/balance requirements. Some people already have dual membership– although they may represent their organisation at MG and their organisation's interest at OCAF
3. OCAF to be receptive to receiving items from outside the group either as a written report or oral agenda item where the specific interest is not represented in OCAF membership

OCAF Action

Your views on how MG functions, its role and purpose, how this can be improved or if it should continue would be appreciated. Your views will help inform a paper which will be presented at the next Monitoring Group meeting on Friday 24 April.

In considering this now we seek to bring things up to date and take an objective and realistic view on how to retain the best of what has gone before yet ensure transparency in reporting and enable opportunity to discuss and debate the issues of the day as effectively and thoroughly as possible.

Hugh Potter
Countryside & Records Manager.
March 2015