



## Report of the Co-Chairs, June 2022

### Introduction

This year we have decided again to hold the AGM as a Zoom Teleconference. Although a face-to-face meeting would be possible, we felt the best use of our restricted funds would be to hold a members' face-to-face meeting on 7-Jun, and hold the AGM on Zoom allowing widest participation.

The AGM allows the Chair's Report to be presented, and provides an opportunity to ask questions. The past year has continued to be difficult for MNF, but we do see signs of progress and would like the membership to understand the current status, and our thinking for the next steps.

Certain parts of the AGM are mandated by our constitution, and we are following those as required. An opportunity has also been given for any other formal motions to be considered in the agenda. The AGM provides an opportunity to summarise and take stock of the past year. We would like discussion at the MNF AGM to be closely focussed on the agenda topics, and MNF's future role.

### Summary

The key points are given here as bullets, with further explanation in later sections.

- We have not yet achieved Designation, but..
  - Discussion with RBWM on a draft Area Designation proposal has flushed out key issues
  - Expert outside opinion from the "Locality" organisation supports our view of the Area
  - RBWM want further evidence of community support for the Area, but are not against it
  - We are in active dialogue with RBWM planning about Forum Designation requirements
- The forum has been run with "Management Committee only" meetings and 1 full meeting
- We have continued to engage on selected topics via our website and social media
- We now intend to pursue Designation of the Area and of the Forum group in parallel

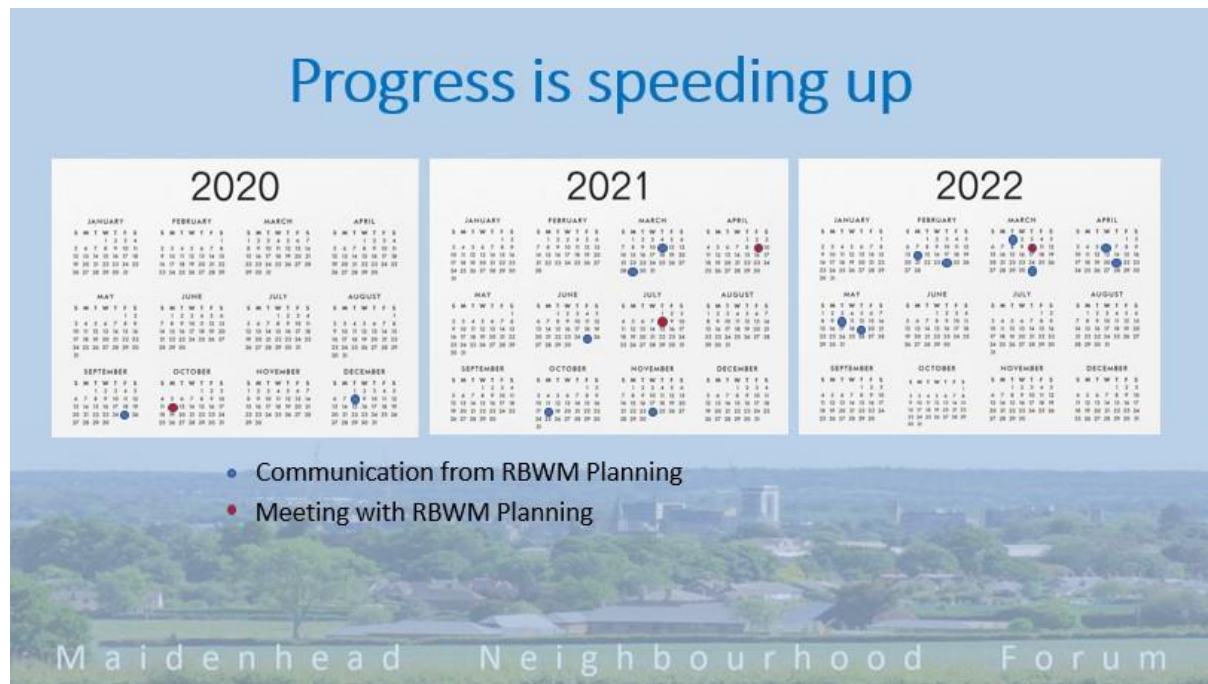
### Designation

MNF's 2019 application to be designated, for both the area (geographic) and the Forum (people), was refused by the then Head of Planning. It was agreed that dialogue was required before re-attempting.

During 2021 dialogue was very hard to achieve, with several-month delays in answering e-mails and obtaining meetings. However, from 2022 RBWM Planning Policy team has been more responsive and helpful, possibly due to additional resource and the adoption of the Borough Local Plan (BLP). In March we had a productive Teleconference on our draft Area Designation proposal, which eventually flushed out the key issues. It was very helpful having the results of our Area survey to hand (thanks to all who

participated) and to have Dave Chetwyn of Locality on the call, who expressed the clear view that splitting a town into several sub-area designations would be bad planning.

This slide from the June 7<sup>th</sup> meeting shows how RBWM responsiveness has improved since 2020.



Maidenhead is unparished and does not have a Town Council, so there is no predefined route to Designation. For us there are two separate but essential parts – Designation of the geographic Area and Designation of the Forum (the group of people who will work on the plan). Although the criteria for each Designation are set out in law, the exact implementation of the criteria is up to the Local Planning Authority, and there is no right of appeal. We therefore need to find out how RBWM will implement the criteria, otherwise we have no idea how to jump the hurdles.

We had intended to apply for Area Designation first, and then the Forum, but it has now become clear that RBWM will apply the full criteria for the Forum even at the Area application stage, because the Forum has to be “capable of being designated” - and in their view the test for “capable of being designated” is the same as the test for a full Forum Designation application.

In the light of this, we now believe that we should apply for the Area Designation and the Forum Designation in parallel – but only after we have established how to meet the Forum Designation criteria. Our current membership is unlikely to be diverse enough or to have sufficient business representation, so we need to reach out further and our 7-Jun meeting was a first step.

We have a face-to-face meeting with RBWM Planning set for 30-Jun.

## Running of the Forum in 2021-2022

From the 2020 AGM and the 2021 AGM we had a clear mandate to pursue re-designation. While the process has been difficult, opaque and slow, we feel we are making progress and without Designation we cannot make a Neighbourhood Plan. As the Management Committee we remain conscious not to waste our MNF members time on activity that may be aborted or become out of scope. This has been especially true while RBWM sought to split the geographic area, which would have required a corresponding split of members and the formation of multiple management committees.

As before, we therefore decided not to ask our membership to engage in policy development work or research, or to recruit further, but rather for the Management committee to focus on designation. We appreciate that once again this has meant that our work has seemed distant or invisible. In 2021 engagement with RBWM was very patchy from the Borough side, and a way forward to designation has only emerged recently – and with much detail as yet unresolved. This has made it very hard to know what to report on progress or timescales. We understand that our communication with MNF members may have seemed lacking, but we hope the 7-Jun meeting was a visible uptick.

The RBWM Borough Local Plan (BLP), within which any Neighbourhood Plan policy must fit, has now been adopted and we have at least a clear baseline of policy space.

Previous work produced an early draft Neighbourhood Plan, last updated in Feb 2019. This is outdated, as it relates to an earlier version of the BLP which has had significant changes since. If we achieve designation, the plan scope and policies will need to be re-evaluated with the Forum’s membership.

## Engagement with Maidenhead

In the absence of any communication from RBWM, our engagement activity struggled to maintain momentum. Since we did not know whether RBWM were minded to reject the seven wards of Maidenhead as an area for Designation, we felt unable to move to the next stage – outreach into the community to drive recruitment and support.

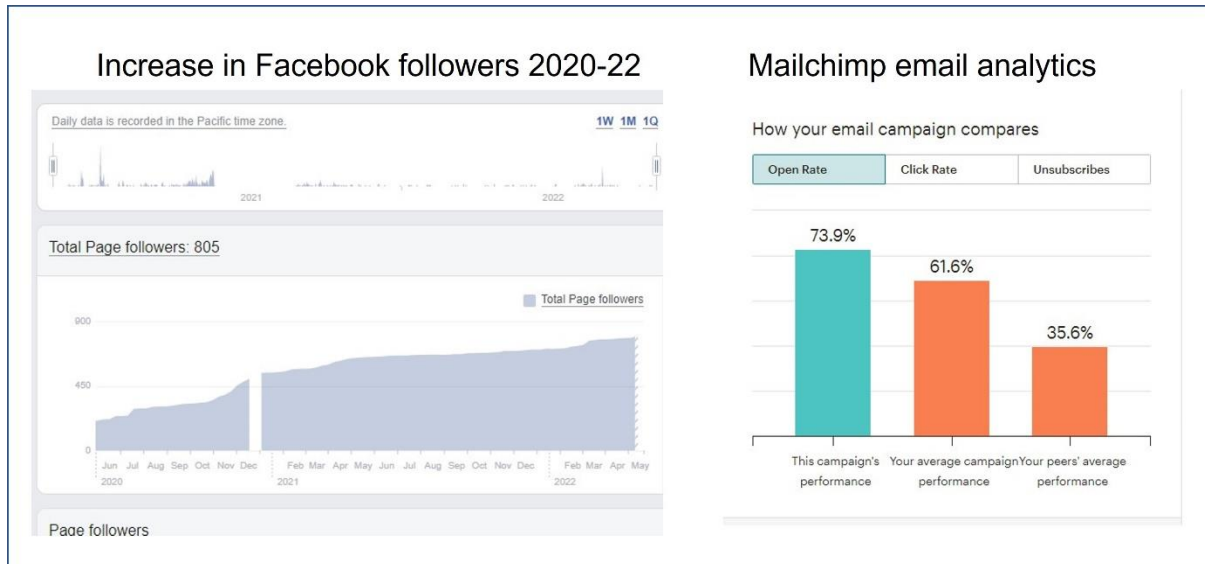
The major publication of 2021-22 was the set of short-form summaries entitled “What about the infrastructure?”. These summarised the content of the RBWM Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to help answer residents’ enduring questions about how the town will support the proposed 40% increase in population.



The other major project of the year was the survey of members, following the November 2021 email from RBWM suggesting that Maidenhead was not a logical or appropriate area for a Neighbourhood

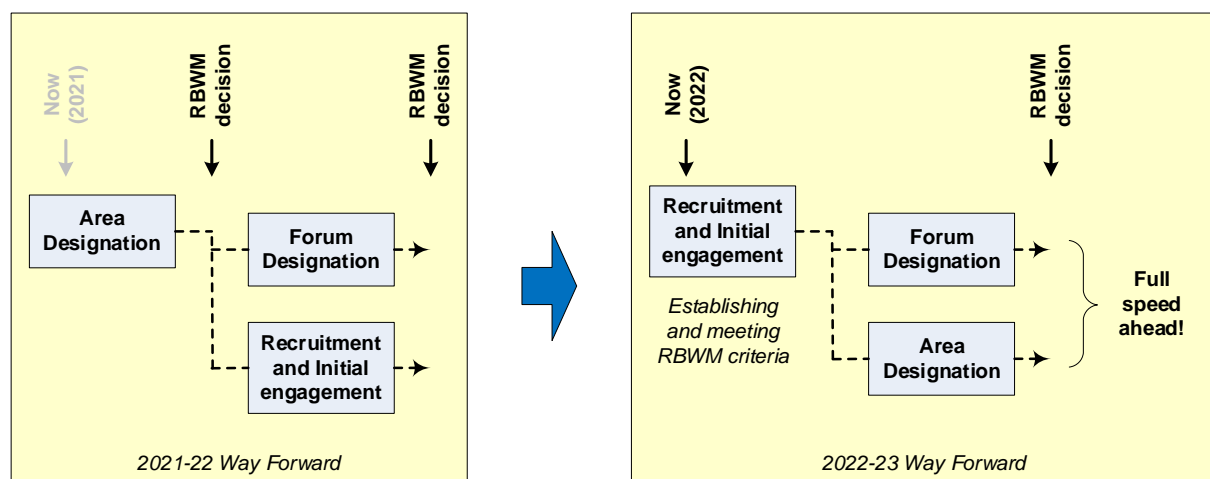
Plan, and suggesting that we propose two or three sub-areas instead. The members overwhelmingly disagreed with this suggestion. That survey also delivered twenty more people who said they would be interested to take an active part in the Forum.

Our main line of communication with our members and supporters is via our email database of around 400-450 people, and it is clear from the MailChimp analytics that our content is valued. Our Facebook following which has gone from about 200 to 800 Followers, mainly driven by the posts we share on the Maidenhead Future discussion group. The overlap between MailChimp and Facebook is unknown.



## Proposed way forward

As explained under “Designation”, we now propose to make the formal requests for Area Designation and Forum Designation in parallel. This is a change from the previous strategy, as shown below:



## Funding & support

Funding in 2021-2022 was from a central government grant administered by its agent, Groundwork UK on behalf of Locality. The grant received and details of the expenditure are given in the accounts. We spent about 2/3 of the grant, mainly on IT-related expenses. A requirement of the grant was that

all unused funding was to be returned to Groundwork UK at the end of the financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March 2022), which has been done.

The Grant has to be administered by an accountable body, which must be incorporated. It turns out that Maidenhead Civic Society, who had kindly administered the grant for us before, is not incorporated. Although Locality accepted this for 2021-2022, they will not do so again. Maidenhead Waterways, which is incorporated, has kindly offered to administer the grant for us in future and we much appreciate their support.

At the time of writing our outgoing treasurer Bob Beauchamp is in the process of applying for a grant from Locality for the 2022-2023. Assuming our request is successful, we don't know when we will receive it, and as we had to return unspent grant by 31-Mar-22 we have no funds available to use in the meantime.

## Management Committee

Over the year 2021-2022 the Management Committee has been:

- Andrew Ingram and Ian Rose (Co-Chairs)
- Sue Ingram (Secretary)
- Bob Beauchamp (Treasurer)
- Martin McNamee
- Mark Fessey
- Andy Woodcock
- Deborah Mason
- Richard Davenport

**Ian Rose and Andrew Ingram**

Co-Chairs

Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum