

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 8th January 2014 at 1.30pm at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford

PRESENT: Anthony Francis Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Marion Law (Rambler), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), Jim Roberts (Landowner), Cllr Liz Clare (Telford & Wrekin Council), Cllr Tracy Hope (Telford & Wrekin Council), Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust), Paula Doherty, Bob Alton (Rambler), Malcolm Morris (STROWP), Bruce Udale (Landowner) and Helen Cork (NFU).

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer), Ann Sharkey (Legal Assistant, Telford & Wrekin Council), Jayne Clarke (Democratic Services Support Officer)

LAF-26 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th October 2013 be agreed.

LAF-27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Fiona Smith (Disability), Reg Potter (BUGS), Peter Holt (Land Owner)

LAF-28 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A discussion took place about the current membership of the LAF. The Terms of Reference states that the Membership of the LAF should be between 12 and 20 Members. The LAF Membership currently stood at 18 Members. No new applications for Membership had been received by the Chair. It was suggested that representation from group involving off-road biking, British Waterways and off-road vehicle drivers could benefit the LAF.

LAF-29 RIGHTS OF WAY – TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL UPDATE – PROJECTS

Local Sustainable Transport Fund Projects

The Senior Rights of Way Officer gave an update on 2 of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund projects which were currently ongoing. The Grants for funding were on two routes:

- Silkin Way from the Cooling Towers to the South of the Park
- Severn Valley Way

The work on the A41 had been completed on the railway although more work was required from Audley Avenue to the middle of Newport and the link with the Staffordshire border. This route was an important sustainable transport link which was 3m wide, reasonably well drained, rolled stone surface and had no barriers.

A question was raised regarding the styles/gates and the difficulty in accessing the track. The Senior Rights of Way Officer explained that the route had been opened up approximately 2 months previously and there was now a wide path up the verge and straight onto the route towards the bridge.

A discussion took place regarding Information Boards on the site in order to inform and promote the project to the public.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that the Red House would be the next area of work. This would be the A518 section off-road and would improve the area past the bus shelter.

Silkin Way now had improved street lighting around the Madeley area. There had been a lot of work on the Severn Valley Way at Preens Head Picnic Site and it was hoped that this work had held up after the recent poor weather.

The stabilisation scheme in Jackfield had now begun and the Severn Valley Way would be reinstated following the works. There would be a new road put in and the wooden track would be retained along the Severn Valley Way but this would be placed more off-road. The new road would be closer to the river and the wooden track would be non-vehicular.

Along the Section of the Severn Valley Way from Ironbridge to the Cooling Towers was having the vegetation cut back and the surface drained as it was currently under water. The barriers near to the Cooling Towers would be removed in order for horse use following agreement by Shropshire Council. The route would then be tidied up towards the Town Park.

A discussion took place around the status of the Silkin Way. There were three categories along the Silkin Way route:

- Public Footpath
- Adopted (to the North)
- No Status but Council Owned (up to Bratton)

There were some further small pockets of land which were not owned by the Council and did not have a status, ie along Silkin Way across the railway bridge and along the side of Alidi and Wicks Stores. This land was owned by the Home & Communities Agency (HCA). As these areas of land were not in the Council's ownership they were not protected.

Sections of the Silkin Way were owned by Hark Apollo and it was hoped that the Box Road Scheme would address the location of the Silkin Way on the revised location plan. It was suggested that there should be an overall strategic management plan for the Silkin Way in order that maintenance and standards could be regularised, ie definitive status applied for. It was further suggested that maybe this was something that the LAF could undertake. The Chair informed the LAF that Janet Mees-Robinson had submitted modification orders and these were waiting to be confirmed. Signposting was not clear though this area and needed to be addressed. Silkin Way was a multi-use route and it was difficult to find an alternative route as this would include the bridges across the railway/motorway. Highways could not agree to these routes for equestrian use due to head height restrictions. It was hoped that the work which was currently being undertaken on the Severn Valley Way from the Cooling Towers to the Telford Town Park would help to regularise the standard of the routes.

Wrekin Trundle

The work on the Trundle had now begun on the area from the Church to the end of the field with the second section to New Works Lane being undertaken shortly.

Some of the LAF Members had visited the area and commented that the work that had been undertaken was very good but that there was currently no signage. It was suggested that as it was a community project which had used money from the community that it was promoted and that the public were made aware what the route was for. The Senior Rights of Way Officer commented that only a small section had been completed so far and once the area to New Works Lane had been completed then signage and promotion would take place at that stage. It was further suggested that in the meantime that promotional material could be put on the gate posts showing the public that although the route was currently under construction what it would look like once completed. The Senior Rights of Way Officer had wanted to get the project started on the ground and had not considered promotion and signage of the route, but would now give this some thought.

The route from the gate to New Works Lane had already been drawn up and the LAF were welcome to look at the designs. The clearance work had already been undertaken on this area.

There were some disability issues on the second section of the route but that this would largely follow the design from Jacobs. There had always be difficulties with one small section of the route which was a 1 in 5 gradient. Zig zagging the route would resolve the issue as there was not enough width to the path to allow for this. The route would therefore go straight from the bottom to top with a platform in the middle.

A question was raised as to whether other slighter gradient routes had been considered and explored. The Senior Rights of Way Officer explained that the route crossed 3rd party land and it was not been easy to get agreement from UK Coal and the Harworth Estate and this had impeded the project. The Harworth Estate wanted to stick to the original right of way in order that there was not the original route and a second route through their land.

Members of the LAF were in agreement that most wheelchair users would be able to access the route which was the original intention of the Trundle to be a route for all types of disability. The LAF also agreed that it had been a difficult job and Janet Mees-Robinson congratulated the Senior Rights of Way Officer for his work.

Jim Roberts explained to the LAF that there were still some old pit lanes on the second section of the route and that these were hard roads but just covered over. It would save a lot of time and effort is these hard road were used. It was suggested that the roads were looked at as soon as possible as the hedges were currently being laid.

Further discussions took place which included:

- Signage on the Millennium route A41 and Silkin Way and way marking
- LAF Funding Bids
- Re-surfacing work at Ironbridge Way, Lawley
- Re-surfaced bridleway at the Railway Line south of Ketley Railway Station

It was suggested that the Chair of the LAF write to the Managing Director of the Council in order to see if there was any possibility of funding the signage of the Silkin Way as this is the flagship of the transport routes for tourists. It was also suggested that the route was promoted by Telford and Wrekin as it came under their responsibility.

AGREED – that the Chair of the LAF would write to the Managing Director to ask for the signage of the Silkin Way to be undertaken from the Council’s Capital Programme.

LAF-30 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

The Chairman gave a brief overview on the work that was being undertaken by the LAF in close liaison with the Senior Rights of Way Officer, which included:

- Liaison with Senior Rights of Way Officer
- General 'clearing house' for public Rights of Way concerns – path clearance etc – writing to Customer Quality with concerns
- Looked at 1030 Planning Applications – 15 Reports had been written although the Chair only commented where gain was expected.
- Planning Applications in Newport – There was a lot going on in Newport and concerns that footpaths would be built over
- Public Path Orders
- Building encroachment over Rights of Way – There were big issues within the Gorge, especially at The Lloyds, the Chair would continue to monitor these issues. Cadi Price was also working on the Dale Coppice area of Ironbridge through the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust with gardens being extended into the woods and fly tipping.
- Gresham Drive (Grazing Cow) – The route was now being put back on the ground. The Developers had agreed what had been mapped
- Running Races in Town Park – The Chair had been in communication with the Telford Town Park Management regarding issues caused by the running races – this was currently being looked into by the Town Park Management
- UK Coal Restoration Site – The restoration plans had now been brought to the LAF. The Senior Rights of Way Officer would speak to Legal in order to approach UK Coal. There was currently work being undertaken to remove excess water from the site and some hedge laying was taking place – officially no work was being undertaken
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Access to the Wrekin – There had been a delay with regards to the barriers and kissing gate on the access to the ErCALL near to the Buckatree due to the site being of "special scientific interest". Ann Sharkey had been trying to contact Natural England since September but had receive no reply up to this point. The modification order could not continue until Natural England had been in touch. It was intended to update the bridleway and horse access to the right of the gate with a horse step-over. Materials for the site needed to be red rock from the quarry due to the nature of the site and again this lay with Natural England. Shropshire Wildlife Trust had agreed the changes when the route was walked back in August 2013 and there had been no issues raised with regards to horse riders.
- Gating Order – Cordingley Way – Consultation had taken place in regard to opening the route for pedestrians. This had previously been closed due to anti-social behaviour problems. The paperwork had been reviewed in August 2013. It was thought that the Police would not want the route re-opening due to the anti-social

behaviour. An access through to Park Road may allay some of the issues around this issue.

LAF-31 SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Paula Doherty presented a report which is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

A discussion took place including:

- Keeping the pressure on Web Services in order that LAF issues did not slip
- Bob Coalbran had links with Shropshire Walking Forum and had started to attend their meetings
- Invite Rebecca Gutierrez (Leisure Services Manager for TWC) or a member of her team to the LAF
- The need to provide information for those who do not have access to technology for find it difficult to use
- App access and QR Codes
- Ironbridge should be the only approach to tourism in Telford
- Promotion of Rights of Way
- Need for a Borough-wide event
- The need of Rights of Way to be associated with Leisure and Neighbourhood services / Countryside and Open Spaces rather than Highways

LAF-32 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

Ann Sharkey gave a brief overview of where the Modification Orders currently stood and the work that she had been undertaking.

No 3 Golf Links Lane to Ercall Lane – this had previously been discussed. Shropshire Wildlife Trust (the owner) was agreed on the route and discussions were taking place with regards to the horse access designs.

No 4 Sylvan Close, Lilleshall – this was a piece of unregistered land. A report had been prepared for Planning Committee and it was hoped that it would be heard at the 5th February 2014 meeting.

No 6 – Route around The Wrekin – Shropshire Council are not prioritising this route. They will allow Telford and Wrekin Council to investigate but it will be at their own cost. Telford and Wrekin Council will not be prioritising this route.

No 12 and 13 – Grange Lane – consultation is ongoing. The work was currently concentrating on Grange Lane which had 7 different owners to give their view to the upgrade. No contact had been forthcoming within the last 2 months from HCA. The Chair commented that the HCA had been invited to attend at a LAF meeting but he had received no communication from them. The lack of communication would not delay taking the reports to the Planning Committee and it was hoped that this would be on the Agenda on the 5th February 2014.

With regard to Council owned routes No's 14, 16, 23, 62 and 34. Report were ready for Planning Committee and again it was hoped that these would be heard at Planning Committee on 5th February 2014. There was shared ownership on 34 and 62 with the Home & Communities Agency (HCA) and they had been contacted regarding the re-dedication of

the route, a reply was currently awaited. This would not prevent the report going before Planning Committee.

LAF-33 REVIEW OF PUBLIC PATH ORDERS

A discussion of Public Path Orders took place including:

- Published Orders and the process
- Definitive Map
- Legal Event Modification Orders
- Saving money on path clearance by asking Landowners to do their own clearance or by using the Volunteer Groups

LAF-34 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Charitable Status

Cllr Tracy Hope suggested that the LAF look to gain Charitable Status and raise money through the LAF to support Rights of Way Projects.

Janet Mees-Robinson had got all of the paperwork prepared and was happy to open a bank account with a small sum of £5 in order to get started.

It was thought that this work would open doors for the LAF and that funding bids could be submitted in areas that the Council could not apply.

Enforcement at Sidlington

It was reported that a letter of enforcement would be sent to Sidlington before the 14th January 2014.

LAF-35 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the LAF was to be held on 16th April 2014.

The Meeting ended at 3.57pm

Chair:

Dated: