

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 9th January 2013 at 1.30pm
at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford**

PRESENT: Anthony Francis Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Bob Alton (Rambler), Marion Law (Rambler), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), Reg Potter (Telford & Wrekin Bicycle Users Group), Jim Roberts (Landowner), Cllr Arnold England (Telford & Wrekin Council), Cllr Tracy Hope (Telford & Wrekin Council), Peter Holt (Land Owner), Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Marilyn Pietroni (Disability), Bruce Udale (Landowner), Fiona Smith (Disability), Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) and Malcolm Morris (STROWP).

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer), Keith Harris (Interim Service Delivery Manager - Highways & Transport) and Jayne Clarke (Democratic Services Support Officer)

LAF-23 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th October 2012 be agreed.

LAF-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

J Seymour (Association of Parish/Town Councils, Jenny Stretton (Primary Care Trust) and Ian Ross (Solicitor Telford and Wrekin Council).

Maria Schultz (Senior Conveyancer – Telford and Wrekin Council) was currently on maternity leave.

LAF-25 WREKIN TRUNDLE – UPDATE

The Senior Rights of Way Officer gave a brief overview of the Wrekin Trundle. The Huntington Lane Surface Mining Community Liaison Community (HLSMCLC) had allocated, by a decision of the Committee, £74,000 from S106 monies to the LAF for the Wrekin Trundle Project. This money currently sat in an account held by Telford and Wrekin Council. Survey work had been undertaken by Amec on the environment and Fieldfare had also undertaken a survey regarding the disability aspects of the project. No money had been paid out from the Trundle account at the present time as the money for the surveys had come from the Rights of Way budget. The HLSMCLC had lost confidence in the project and, in an e-mail to both the Senior Rights of Way Officer and the Chairman at the end of November 2012, had asked that the LAF return the money to them. A response had been sought from Senior Officers of the Council who had made a decision to retain the money as the project was still feasible and the Council would continue to monitor the project. There was still plenty of time to complete the project and the officers could see no reason why it should not continue at the present time. The money has currently been retained.

The Chairman stated that he had replied to the e-mail by return directly answering all of the questions posed with a positive answer and a report had been circulated to LAF Members.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that that the LAF were Clients of the Council and that a Management Group had been set up to continue the work. Confirmation from Senior Managers had been received to continue to develop the project and tidy up any loose ends

before any money was spent or any groundwork started. A response now needed to be sent by Senior Managers to the HLSMCLC regarding the decision made.

Marilyn Pietroni tabled two reports that she had prepared as overall project leader. (Appendix 1 and 2 attached).

The Amec report had been controversial and had been tailored. The proposed landowner and disabled stakeholder liaison had not taken place. The gradients element had not been carried out. The HLSMCLC had been very disappointed at the quality of this report. LAF members had been excluded from participation within the ground project.

The Fieldfare report was a full report and was delightful to read. It had assessed the gradients on the first section of the route and had said all were accessible except one, although a design solution could be found for this. Birmingham City University had offered to run a competition for its 3rd Year Landscape Architect Students with a prize purse for them to come up with a suitable solution.

A meeting between the Lawley Church, the Senior Rights of Way Officer and Marilyn Pietroni was to be held mid January. Plans would be drawn up and submitted to the meeting showing the trail from the car park with either a designed gap in the listed wall or a gateway. The plans would then need to be passed by the Archdeacon.

The last year had been very difficult especially from the unremittingly negative approach from the HLSMCLC and the Parish Council. Very little progress had been made with the project and the funding had been called in to question on three occasions.

The Wrekin Trundle project was a “bottom up” community led project. The Council had found this to be a difficult model to implement and had not understood that this was LAF led project and that the LAF project manager should always be involved. Over the last few months there had been a more positive feel to the project with improved communication and documentation. Cllr Tracy Hope had been in a difficult position representing the project whilst holding a seat on the Parish Council

A meeting had been organised by Cllr Arnold England, which was due to take place next Friday, involving members of the Council and the LAF.

A discussion took place including:

- LAF Volunteers raising money for projects
- TWC’s recognition of the LAF’s work
- LAF’s funding model

LAF-26 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

The Senior Rights of Way Officer gave an update on the current position with regard to DMMO applications.

Maria Schultz had gone on maternity leave and would not return until approximately October – December 2013. This meant that at the present time there was no dedicated legal officer to undertake DMMO work. It was suggested that the LAF review the list of outstanding DMMOs and identify the key areas that the Rights of Way Team should concentrate on. It may be advantageous for the LAF to choose areas where the DMMOs fell on Council Land as this work could be achieved by dedication and not by review. It was suggested that areas such as The Cockshutt at Wrockwardine Wood and the wooded area at Apley may be

suitable areas as they would achieve significant benefit for both multi-use and pedestrians and both areas were on Council land.

A discussion took place and several further areas were suggested. It was thought that the Wrekin Forest paperwork had been completed and was ready to go. The Coal Board were scheduled to complete their work earlier than expected and it was suggested that the Rights of Way Team ascertain the position with regard to the Wrekin Forest. Further suggestions were the Dairy Pitt, the Golf Course and there were 5 routes in Madeley. It was asked that the LAF identify 2 DMMOs for the Rights of Way Team to take forward during the coming year.

Limekiln Woods at Lilleshall had almost been completed. This was an evidential order and had strong evidence. It was aimed to get this published shortly and wait to see if there were any objections.

The route along the Severn Valley at Benthall Edge was almost complete and the Rights of Way Team had given support and advice to Shropshire Council. The documentation was currently with Asset & Property for them to formerly dedicate the land which would coincide with that of Shropshire in order to open up the whole route at the same time. Severn Gorge Countryside Trust had been granted a 999 year lease.

A question was raised regarding the $\frac{3}{4}$ post funding for Legal Services from s278 monies. Keith Harris would make enquiries with Legal Services regarding the position and report back to the LAF.

It was agreed that the two priority areas would be the Woods at Apley and the Cockshutt.

LAF-27 RIGHTS OF WAY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME DISCUSSION

The Senior Rights of Way officer reported on the Rights of Way budget for next financial year. The historical budget currently stood at £30k. Of this, £10k was required to be put aside for unknown dangers and hazards. This left a capital balance of £20k. The LAF were asked to think, as a group, as to what projects/improvements that the budget could be allocated to. The budget was not to be used for clearance or enforcement issues, but, for example, it would be used for improving furniture, surfaces, better signposting or more information on signposts, style kits or new kissing gates.

A discussion took place including:

- Matching funding / joint funding
- Areas of interest
- Contractors
- Best value
- Cuts to budgets
- Local Sustainable Transport Funding
- s106 funding
- Bidding processes
- P4C Partnerships

It was asked that any suggestions to brought to the next meeting of the LAF.

LAF-28 ENFORCEMENT ISSUES AND SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN

The Senior Rights of Way Officer reported on the issues around areas of concern and enforcement. The current process involved issues being logged through the Customer Quality Team and the reporting processes. Often there were more calls logged than the Rights of Way Team could currently deal with and these issues would sit with the team until such time as they could be actioned.

It was suggested that the members of the LAF bring to the attention of the LAF Meetings the problem areas and that members of the LAF identify which of these issues are specific to Rights of Way. Further discussions then need to take place regarding the order in which the issues would be tackled. It would not be possible to action everything that was brought to the attention of the Rights of Way team but it may help to solve some of the more pressing concerns. This would enable the Rights of Way Team to quickly identify the work it was able/unable to undertake within the current budget.

If issues were not resolved through the LAF, they could still be logged in the usual way with the Customer Quality Team and the reporting processes.

A discussion took place including:

- Encouraging groups to report issues to the LAF member
- Fly Tipping
- Enforcement - a further strain on Legal resources
- Reporting issues to Ward Members

It was agreed that members of the LAF would report any enforcement issues or areas of concern at the next meeting of the LAF.

LAF-29 VOLUNTEER GROUPS - UPDATE

The Ramblers now had a footpath maintenance party in place. Documentation had now been received from the Senior Rights of Way Officer and this was currently being perused by the volunteers. Once approved the forms would be completed. The Ramblers' Central Office had given their approval to Telford and Wrekin Council's documentation. Work parties would shortly be ready to start work and it was hoped that there would be one or two parties tackling clearance and way marking. Future work for consideration would be, for example, furniture repairs ie to styles.

A discussion took place regarding repairs to routes. It was hoped that volunteer groups such as Wellington Walkers are Welcome, STROWP and the Ramblers could co-ordinate their work in order that there was no doubling up or overlapping. There was a possibility that enforcement issues and areas of concern brought to the attention of the LAF meetings may be rectified by the volunteer groups, this may in turn help to reduce the Rights of Way workload and enable any issues to be rectified earlier.

Other areas of discussion included:

- Co-ordination of work
- Sharing documentation templates
- Efficiencies
- Points of Contact
- Other volunteer groups ie Telford Green Spaces Partnership/Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

LAF-30 DONKEY FIELD - UPDATE

The Chairman gave an update on the current position regarding the Donkey Field. Drawings and Plans were on display during the meeting and the project now had Full Planning Permission. Funding was currently being sought and it was hoped that the project would be up and running in the Summer. The project had moved a huge way forward and talks were now taking place with Highways regarding the issues on the roads.

LAF-31 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

DeFRA Scheme – this was now coming to the end of its 10 year programme. LAF Members were unaware of any other scheme that would replace this. A discussion took place and it was suggested that the LAF investigate the position with ie the NFU or Natural England.

Meeting Rooms – A discussion took place regarding the venue for the LAF meetings. Further suggestions for rooms were given:

- Asda Donnington Community Room
- Stirchley & Brookside Parish Council
- Madeley Town Council
- Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

These rooms were available free of charge or for a nominal fee.

Members of the LAF agreed that the meeting room at Wrekin College was a suitable venue and this would be a regular venue for the LAF Meetings. An alternative room would be sourced if the College were unable to accommodate any of the LAF meetings.

Mountain Bike Route – Benthall Woods – Cadi Price reported to the LAF that Severn Gorge Countryside Trust had decided not to support a Mountain Bike Route through Benthall Woods. The National Trust would continue with their route.

GIS Maps – It was requested that the LAF be given access to GIS mapping and in particular the Definitive Map.

LAF-32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting had been advertised on the Agenda as the 25th April. This date was a Thursday and LAF meetings were currently held on Wednesdays.

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 24th April 1pm for 1.30pm start at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College.

Dates of future meetings were discussed and confirmed as:

Wednesday 3rd July 2013 – AGM
Wednesday 9th October 2013
Wednesday 8th January 2014
Wednesday 16th April 2014

The Meeting ended at 3.16pm