

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 15th April 2015 at 1.30pm
at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford**

PRESENT:

Bob Alton (Rambler), Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Anthony Francis Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Marion Law (Ramblers Association), Jim Roberts (Landowner), Peter Holt (Landowner) and Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) and Cllr Liz Clare (Telford & Wrekin Council), Fiona Smith (Disability), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), and Malcolm Morris, (STROWP).

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer), Jayne Clarke (Democratic Services Support Officer), Ann Sharkey (Legal Assistant, Telford & Wrekin Council) and Mike Evans (Group Manager, Highway Control).

LAF-35 MINUTES

The LAF considered the minutes of the meeting 7th January 2015. The following items were highlighted:

- **LAF 26** – Page 3 – Woodhouse Lane, east of Castle Form Lane – “M Law had walked along this cycleway. The Senior Right of Way Officer confirmed that this route was going to be left as it currently stood – non-vehicular. . . .”. This sentence should have read “M Law had walked along this highway. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that this route was going to be left as it currently stood and become non-vehicular. . . .”.
- **LAF 26** – Page 4 – Donkey Field Car Park – “. . . The reserved matters within the planning application had been dealt with and a freely draining rolled stone surface had been agreed. . . .” this sentence should have read “The reserved matters within the planning application were being dealt with and a freely draining rolled stone surface was being looked at. . . .”
- **LAF 26** – Page 5 – Remove the sentence that read “The areas that were open to the public had been very well received and were being well used.” - The route was not officially opened to the public as yet.
- **LAF 33** – Page 9 – Change “Silkin Way” to “Ironbridge”.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum held on 7th January 2015, following the amendments, be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

LAF-36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Paula Doherty (Rights of Way Projects), Bruce Udale (Landowner) and Cllr T Hope.

LAF-37 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

LAF-38 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

The Chair continued to liaise with the Senior Rights of Way Officer and discuss issues raised by LAF Members and the public.

The Chair reported on a number of issues:-

Planning Applications

The Chair continued to look at the Right of Way issues coming forward through Planning Applications.

Bridleway at Gresham Drive (Grazing Cow)

A number of complaints had been received regarding the surface along the bridleway near to the Grazing Cow. The Senior Rights of Way Office informed the LAF that he understood that this work had already been undertaken, but this work would be chased up, if necessary.

The LAF were keen to see that this bridleway was surfaced to a proper standard.

Ironbridge Toll House Access

The Chair reported that the access to the car park at the Toll House was now improved. Concerns were raised with regard to the "step over". It was suggested that this be brought up with the World Heritage Site Strategy Group who were due to hold a meeting on Monday 20th April 2015 as they needed to be made aware of issues and concerns. It was asked if this could be raised by the Shropshire Star as this was an important World Heritage Site.

Issues with access to the Iron Bridge Way, Copper Beach Road, Ketley

The Chair reported that the issues on the cross roads on the Ironbridge Way with regard to the narrow bollards limiting access for prams and buggies etc had now been rectified. This was a positive outcome for the LAF.

Fly Tipping Contact

Fly tipping had been reported on the Dawley Road. This can be removed very quickly if the exact location is known.

A discussion took place around fly tipping including the following:

- The reasons for fly tipping
- The licence for trades using skip sites
- The difficulties in bringing prosecutions
- The cost of commercial waste collections compared to cost of clearing up fly tipping

It was suggested that the LAF write to the Council regarding the problems of fly tipping. It was noted that the Council were trying to get a good prosecution to set an example but that this was difficult to achieve.

Newport Planning Sites

The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that there were Planning Applications on 3 sites within Newport – either side of Station Road and Quarry Green Lane to the North. The Planning Applications did affect the rights of way. The Chair expressed the need to retain the footpaths through these sites.

Further discussion with TWC + LWPC re Opening UK Coal Row New Works

The Chair had telephoned Little Wenlock Parish Council to see what could be done to activate the 5 year restoration plan.

The rights of way were deeply embedded on the ground. The LAF wanted to know how to get the walkers/riders accessing this route back up to the Wrekin. A question was raised whether there was anything that could be done to pre-empt the 5 year plan purely with respect to the rights of way issues. The worry was that this issue could run and run and the access to the Wrekin via the Dawley Road and Lawley Furnaces could be lost.

Walkers were using the route which was not separate to the right of way and there was no reason why the paths could not be accessed.

Jim Roberts asked why a cheque for £12,000 had been given to David Coxill for Telford and Wrekin Council from UK Coal at a meeting that had recently taken place. David Coxill had been trying to get approval for the rights of way on the site but the agreement would not be signed until the Council were happy with the site.

It was felt that following the land agent leaving the site 4 years ago and Dave Ball leaving it was not expected that UK Coal would be in existence at the end of this year. There had been a timescale of 6 years within which UK Coal could have restored the site. If UK Coal were to go bankrupt then someone else would be left to pick up the bill. Jim Roberts confirmed that he would make enquiries as to the current position.

It was suggested that the LAF contact Ken Clarke to enquire whose budget the £12,000 cheque had been paid to. It was believed that the cheque was handed over on the 31st March 2015. It was also suggested that confirmation was sought as to what the cheque was for ie footpaths, styles, gates etc.

Janet Mees-Robinson suggested that maybe an official complaint could be lodged if the rights of way are not opened as there was no reason that the paths could not be used.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that the site needed to be signed off with a single signature and the rights of ways could not be signed off individually, this was managed by David Coxill and Michael Barker. The Chair had spoken to David Coxill regarding breaking up the signatures and seeing if the rights of way could be signed off separately. It was suggested that a letter of complaint be addressed to Michael Barker.

A query was raised regarding whether there was a bond in place. It was confirmed that there was a bond but that there was no money attached to the bond. All the Section 106 money had been spent as this had a time limit attached to it.

The LAF agreed that this project had seemed to have come to a standstill and the lack of a footpath/bridleway was of major concern. It was suggested that the LAF start the complaints procedure to see if this could raise any answers.

Heath Hill Planning Application – Footpath issues

Timber sheds and fences had been erected on this site over the current rights of way. The new planning application not affect this so there was little that could be done, although it was hoped that a right of way may be opened up at the rear of Health Hill.

LAF Annual Review

The Chair had completed the Natural England Questionnaire which demonstrated the work that the LAF had been undertaking.

Leighton Lane – Possibly blocked again?

Janet Mees-Robinson had raised a complaint regarding Leighton Lane being blocked to motorised vehicles and the drains spilling out into the road.

Bob Alton and the team of volunteers had been undertaking some work on the lane and were reasonably satisfied that this was now clear with the Little Wenlock end being opened completely. This surface was now considered suitable for walking and was now passable.

Marion Law suggested that now the route had been cleared of nettles and brambles that the routes be regularly used in order to help keep an eye on the routes and keep them open.

DEFRA – Huddle: OS ITN (Integrated Transport Mapping Network)

The Chair briefed the LAF on the OS ITN which the Government were proposing to introduce.

The LAF raised the question as to whether LAF Members should or could have access to the mapping systems in order to help pick up issues and the status of various routes within the area.

A query was raised that if the system had errors – could these maps be used in a public inquiry?

The GIS system allowed the maps to be layered showing road networks, local roads, adopted highways, adopted routes, and new housing areas.

Bob Alton asked if it was possible to get a copy of the definitive map in order for the Ramblers to look at the paths. The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that he was often asked to provide a copy of the OS Map with rights of way recorded. Bob Alton required the map in order to work from an up-to-date map. A further question was raised with regards to the status of the map. The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that there was no legal status to the map it was just an up-to-date base map and showed legal

orders that had been made. Drafting errors could be present and it couldn't be relied on. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that the Council may not have a licence to reproduce the OS maps.

The Chair commented that Shropshire Council hold their maps on-line in order that the public can see the most up-to-date maps and the latest version of the OS map.

Bob Alton explained that there were 2 issues:

- the availability of the definitive map within Telford & Wrekin
- what information has been passed to the OS digital mapping system and was this the information contained on the definitive map.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that there were no issues around LAF members having access to the maps, but that he needed to ascertain whether the Council had a licence to copy and provide OS maps and this would be looked into.

LAF-39 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

The Senior Rights of Way Officer discussed with the LAF as to whether they wished to broaden the LAF's membership eg

- cyclists
- Homes & Community Agency Partnership (HCA)
- Parish Forum

in order to build up an enhanced Forum.

Adding the Parish Forum may have an impact on how many people attend the Forum meetings and it would be difficult to know if they had an agenda behind attending LAF meetings.

It was suggested that instead the LAF ask for items to be put on the Parish Forum Agenda via the Clerk or the Parish Council. A further suggestion would be to submit items to the Wrekin Area Committee.

The LAF agreed that cyclists would be a welcome addition to the LAF.

Suggested contacts for the Cyclists Groups were:

- Telford Mountain Bike Club
- Wrekin Riders
- T Bugs
- Bikeability

It was suggested that Derek Owen, Parks and Open Spaces or alternatively Dominic Proud/Robyn Wythe may have the contact details for the cycling groups.

Cllr L Clare suggested that the LAF could apply to a scheme for monetary contributions towards cycle stations. The Scheme was asking for sites, maybe a hub, in order for cyclists

to be able to lock up their bikes. The equipment was free, although there were charges for installation and they must be publically accessible and on private ground.

It was suggested that if there was a specific item on the agenda that affected a local Parish Council, then a representative from that particular Parish Council be invited to attend at the LAF for that item of business.

With regard to the suggestion of Membership the Chair had received no reply from the HCA following an invitation to join the LAF. The Cycle Chain in Telford Town Park had not been interested or too busy. Ann Sharkey suggested she would mention Membership of the LAF to David Charmbury, HCA when she next attends a meeting.

LAF-40 RIGHTS OF WAY – TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL UPDATE – PROJECTS

The Senior Rights of Way Officer reported that the LSDF Projects and ground work has now been completed. The cycle route from Donnington to Newport and the Silkin Way to Telford Town Park were part of a 3 year project and due to conclude at the end of March.

With regard to the Nabb and Town Park Deed of Dedication the Senior Rights of Way Officer needed to pass the documentation to Legal. The entry to the Buckatree was presently at the same status and was a little behind due to the Rights of Way being on Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Land.

Trundle Costs

A discussion took place regarding the Trundle spending costs which were circulated prior to the meeting and included:

- 10% of the Trundle Costs being spent on advisors
- The costs of the Trundle rising from £50k to £88K/£89K
- Tendering process – open and transparent
- Use of approved contractors
- Tender advertising procedure
- Requirement to undertake Amec Report
- Cause of overspend from the initial figure due to length of time taken to get project underway – increase in costs

LAF-41 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

Background work had been undertaken regarding Lidbrook Cottage and around Swan Farm Washing Area, Lidbrook Dingle, Sutherland Arms and the Bridge Road.

Janet Mees-Robinson confirmed that these had never been signed because land owners had reneged on other pieces of land. It was suggested that enquiries be made of the Land Registry in order to ascertain the current status of the rights of way as it was believed that there had never been a footpath or bridleway on this land.

Ann Sharkey reported that the 3 tracks on Granville Park were being pulled together as 1 application and published together. With regard to Woodhouse Lane this looped into Shropshire and there was currently a sticking point on Grange Lane.

Bridge Road to the Travellers Joy was to be reinstated.

LAF-42 VOLUNTEER PATH CLEARANCE GROUPS UPDATE

Bob Alton reported to the LAF that the Ramblers Group activity was currently dormant, although Bob Coalbran and Wellington Walkers are Welcome had met several times over the winter and had been actively working on the Wrekin Link, Shropshire Way and Silkin Way. Following 3-4 attempts the routes were now walkable from the style at the north paddock to the railway bridge which has now been opened all the way up through the blackthorn and bramble patch. There was now, however, an issue with the style at the southern end.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that the style needed replacing and that he would work with Tracy Hope to see if a small kissing gate or narrow kissing gate could be installed. He would take some designs over and try and get the issue resolved as quickly as possible.

Bob Coalbran explained that once the issue of the style was resolved that there would be connection to the Silkin Way south of Sunnylands across the centre line of the field. The footbridge needed to be kept clear.

The Chair expressed the view that the field must not be cropped.

Bob Coalbran confirmed that they would keep an eye on the paths and has asked the staff at Wellington Town Council to report anything that needed looking at.

Bob Coalbran suggested that the next project would be the footpath along Granville Road to the Asda Roundabout and up to the Country Park. There were Brambles blocking the path and making it dangerous to walk, but this was light enough for the volunteers to handle.

LAF-43 TELFORD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE APPLICATIONS

The Chair confirmed that there were two or three Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Applications currently in progress and he would keep an eye on these. These were positive applications which protected the status of areas, but that the LAF needed to make sure fences around these areas were not erected.

There were currently applications at Lodge Field, Beech Field and Rough Park

Malcolm Morris reported that the LNRs at Stirchley Park and Stirchley Pit Mound had now been approved. The draft had been sent with regard to Rough Park and Dothill was currently in the preparation stages.

Cadi Price confirmed that the LNR's were usually backed by "friends" or "groups" and Becky Eade was the contact for the "Dothill Friends Group". Bob Coalbran asked if there was likely to be an open meeting regarding Dothill in order that they could offer to help or promote the Walking Schedule. Cadi Price confirmed that there were 4 keen people working on the site clearing up and that the contact would be Craig Baker, Chair of Telford Green Spaces, who would welcome the offer of help.

Other contacts regarding local area green spaces were Telford and Wrekin Officers:

- Becky Eade
- Keith Slater
- Adrian Corney

The LAF was keen to keep green spaces as “green spaces”.

Malcolm Morris confirmed that the basic principle of LNRs was accessibility and to encourage better management of the areas.

Any issues regarding changes to rights of way could come through to the Senior Rights of Way Officer who would consult in the usual way.

LAF-44 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Website

The Public Open Spaces page did not refer to access/walking etc and there were broken links on the website.

Big Paths Watch

Marion Law reported to the LAF that a project was being launched in the latter half of the summer by the Ramblers Association called the “Big Path Watch”. It was hoped to get members of the public to walk lengths of paths during the summer months and to draw member of the public into the project which was an information gathering exercise. It was asked that information be circulated to members of the Forum in order to “spread the word”. The information would all be on line with instructions on the project and how to join in. This would be publicised once the information was known.

LAF-45 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – AGM

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and reminded the LAF that the next meeting would be the AGM and held on Wednesday 8th July 2015 at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College at 1.00pm for 1.30pm start.

The meeting ended at 3.47pm

Chair:

Dated: