

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 9th July 2014 at 1.30pm
at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford**

PRESENT:

Bob Alton (Rambler), Cllr Liz Clare (Telford & Wrekin Council), Paula Doherty (Rights of Way Projects), Anthony Francis Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Peter Holt (Land Owner), Cllr Tracy Hope (Telford & Wrekin Council), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust), Jim Roberts (Landowner) and Fiona Smith (Disability)

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

LAF-1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

The Chair advised that he had not received any proposals or representations for the position of Chair and if the Members were supportive, he was happy to continue in the role.

RESOLVED – that Anthony Francis-Jones be elected as Chair of the Local Access Forum for 2014/15.

LAF-2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair advised that he had not received any proposals or representations for the position of Vice-Chair and if the Members were supportive, he wished to propose that Fiona Smith continue in the role.

RESOLVED – that Fiona Smith be appointed Vice-Chair of the Local Access Forum for 2014/15.

LAF-3 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum held on 6 April 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to amendment as follows:-

- (a) The title of the minutes should be amended to remove reference to the Annual General Meeting
- (b) Peter Holt's apologies to be recorded
- (c) Minute LAF-38 Chairman's Matters – under the heading Public Path Orders - bullet point 2 be amended to read that "UK Coal had released a restoration plan but that the LAF had not received any information".
- (d) Minute LAF-45 Review of the DMMO's – The sentence "This would link the Ercall Golf Course with the Cockshutt." should be removed.

LAF-4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Helen Cork (NFU), Sarah Faulkner (NFU), Marion Law (Ramblers Association), Malcolm Morris (STROWP), Reg Potter (BUGS), Angela Smith (Natural England) and Bruce Udale (Landowner)

LAF-5 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

The Chair reported on a number of issues:-

Liaison - The Chair continued to meet regularly with the Senior Rights of Way Officer who kept him fully briefed on matters.

Planning Applications - The Chair continued to make comments on Planning Applications via the e-Planning system. He had now looked at 500+ planning applications. He provided an update on the planning application for the site of the former Sugar Beet Factory at Allscott, noting that Network Rail had made an objection.

Public Path Orders -The Chair thanked Ann Sharkey for her work on Public Path Orders. There had been no contentious issues on the solar plant at Wheat Leasows.

Gresham Drive (Grazing Cow) – The bridleway diversion and construction was not complete.

UK Coal Restoration site – Janet Mees-Robinson advised that no notifications had been received but paths were down. Jim Roberts reported significant difficulties with green laners. The Chair commented that it would need to be ascertained if Kent Carriage Gaps would be utilised. The Senior Rights of Way Officer indicated that the Council's Condition Monitoring Officer would need to sign off the restoration conditions before the site was vacated but he did not think the restoration plan gave significant details. Mr Roberts stated that a meeting had been arranged for himself and Mr Beanland to meet with the Senior Rights of Way Officer and the Council's Group Solicitor (Ian Ross) to discuss the plans for works required on their land. With regard to the Steeraway, it was understood that a Diversion Order was in place but unfortunately the new route was obstructed; the Senior Rights of Way Officer clarified the process for making a diversion.

Trundle – The Senior Rights of Way Officer advised that the Engineer had indicated that the section from Top Field to the Church was complete and he would be attending a site visit to view the works. Ideas and feedback regarding appropriate signage was welcomed. The Senior Rights of Way Officer reported on works to the landing stages and gradient, which he understood had been significantly lowered. The Senior Rights of Way Officer would determine at the site visit whether a handrail was required. It was suggested that Fiona Smith should attend the meeting to provide advice on accessibility and it was agreed that the Senior Rights of Way Officer would advise her when the visit was due to take place. It was anticipated that the second section would cost approx. £35-40K. Janet Mees Robinson gave a vote of thanks for the work that had been put into this project and the Chairman also commented on the good work by the Rights of Way team; the work had been very well received.

Edgmond Diversion Orders – Paula Doherty provided an update. RoW had suffered from numerous obstacles and poor signage. A diversion of the route was required due to flooding and a private garden. The Senior Rights of Way Officer advised on the work which had taken place to make the network usable which had involved two landowners purchasing adjacent agricultural field so that the RoW could be diverted away from their homes. Thanks were given to the landowners, the Senior Rights of Way Officer and the Council's Group Solicitor (Ian Ross) and it was noted that the LAF had raised the profile of the project. The Senior Rights of Way Officer also commented on the co-operative approach taken to reach solutions when RoWs had been inadvertently been built over as it was felt this was more productive

than prosecution and he cited the recent successful diversion at Hadley Park House Hotel as an example. Paula Doherty and the Senior Rights of Way Officer would continue to work together on this project.

LAF Survey for Natural England – The Chair had submitted a response but he had found that surveys were often a one-way process.

Shaping Places Consultation – The Chair had made comments on behalf of the LAF.

Public Inquiry – Badger Dingle and Muckley Cross - The Chair gave a short slideshow presentation of photographs to show improvements and asked the group to think about how publicity could be created to show what had been won at Inquiry. He often wrote reviews of bridleway routes and submitted them as widely as possible. Fiona Smith suggested that Able Magazine could also be included on the circulation and there were numerous free magazines which could be approached.

Wrekin Forest timber extraction - Timber extraction was proposed on the Raby Estate. The Chair advised that a public meeting was taking place on 24 July 2014, 4-6pm at the Wroxeter and Uppington Cricket Club. It was noted that the site fell within the boundaries of Shropshire but the Chair felt a presence from the LAF was appropriate.

Town Park – The Chair reported on the improvements made. Fiona Smith commented upon her advisory role in the replacement of kissing gates; a solution was being sought as it was understood replacement was required on a like-for-like basis and the proposed gates were too narrow. The Senior Rights of Way Officer advised that there was not a limitation in this regard as long as the solution was not more restrictive than the original access.

In and Around magazine – The Chair reported on a bridleways review which he had submitted.

LAF-6 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

The Chair reported that Reg Potter had tendered his resignation following relocation to Ireland. Discussion took place on replacing Mr Potter with a new representative from bicycle user groups and it was suggested that Sustrans and LA21 could be approached to gauge interest or provide guidance as to an appropriate cycling body.

LAF-7 CURRENT PROJECTS – REVIEW

Aside from projects already detailed by the Chairman, the Senior Rights of Way Officer reported on works taking place at Legges Way in Blists Hill which would see the width of the Silkin Way extended to 3m; this would be followed by works at Severn Valley Way near to the Maws Craft Centre.

Works to create a cycle route from Stafford to Telford Central Railway Station had also progressed well and the Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed details of the new route. The LAF was advised that Jill Henderson (jill.henderson@telford.gov.uk) held promotional materials for the route and members could contact her for copies.

LAF-8 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

Ann Sharkey gave a brief overview of the work she was doing and indicated that the LAF had previously had been advised that four Council owned routes were being reviewed and this had now increased to six. Reports were scheduled to be presented to the Council's Cabinet on 24 July. The routes were Court Road, Rough Park Way, a network of routes at the Cockshutt, a network of routes at the Town Park, and Copperfield Drive. The Senior Rights of Way Officer was working towards finalising the routes for the Cockshutt and the Town Park.

In addition, some changes to the Council's Constitution were being proposed which would delegate authority for the making of Orders to the Highways Development Control Engineer (Mike Evans) rather than Planning Committee and it was hoped that this would speed up the process.

Regarding routes at the Ercall, the Chair indicated that he had received comments regarding the possibility of bridging the stream near to Golf Links Lane beyond the motorway bridge and he felt it might be worth opening dialogue with Shropshire Wildlife Trust in this regard.

LAF-9 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

A number of issues were raised:-

- Janet Mees-Robinson asked if the borough's Parishes belonged to a Parish Paths Partnership (P3). The Senior Rights of Way Officer indicated that the borough did not operate a P3 Scheme although some Parishes did offer their support. Mrs Mees-Robinson felt that further work could be undertaken to encourage parishes in this regard. It was noted that Shropshire Council ran a successful P3 Scheme but that this was supported by a dedicated officer. Discussion took place on the constraints faced by Telford & Wrekin Council with regard to officer time and the organisation of volunteers and permissions. Cadi Price suggested that the Telford Greenspace Partnership, which was supported by Becky Eade (the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Manager), may be able to assist. Cllr Clare suggested that the Parish Forum could be approached to canvass interest. **It was agreed that this issue would be added to the next agenda for further discussion.**
- Janet Mees-Robinson also highlighted recent press reports regarding funding secured by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and suggested that the LAF might wish to seek an invitation to join the LEP.
- The Chair expressed concern regarding access to the Ironbridge from the Toll House and was advised by Cadi Price that Mike Vout (the Council's Planning Team) intended to attend to this issue by the end of July in time for the school summer holidays. Drawings would be available from him.
- Cadi Price also advised on funding secured for improvements to access into the Gorge, including £10k from Veolia and a £3K anonymous donation. Teams of volunteers of young people were being sought to take part in works in October and the LAF Members were encouraged to spread this message.
- Paula Doherty considered that it would be helpful to establish priority routes for maintenance of footpaths which became obscured by lush growth at regular times each year.

- Jim Roberts advised that a planning application had been entered by Gladmans for 110 houses in Muxton which would affect a number of rights of way. The Chair indicated he would receive details shortly and would make a response in the usual way.

LAF-10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and reminded the LAF that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 8 October 2014 at The Studio, Wrekin College at 1.00pm for 1.30pm start.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm

Chair:

Dated: