

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 14th October 2015 at 1.30pm
at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford**

PRESENT:

Cllr Liz Clare (Telford & Wrekin Council), Bob Alton (Ramblers Association), Jane Bonner (Wellington Cycle Club), Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Paula Doherty (Rights of Way Projects), Anthony Francis-Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Marion Law (Ramblers Association), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), Malcolm Morris (STROWP), Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) and Fiona Smith (Disability)

ALSO PRESENT: Ann Sharkey (Legal Assistant, TWC) and Jayne Clarke (Democratic Services Support Officer, TWC).

LAF-12 MINUTES

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Members of the LAF raised an action point from the meeting held on the 8th July, this being that the Right of Way Improvement Plan had not been circulated to LAF members and that this had not been raised as an agenda item at this meeting. A review of this policy document should have been undertaken in 2015 but as there were no further LAF meetings planned for 2015 it was requested that an agenda item regarding the "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" be brought to the January 2016 meeting. A further request was made that the plan be circulated to the LAF prior to the 2016 meeting.

**ACTION - Rights of Way Improvement Plan be circulated by AC
- Agenda item to be brought to 20th January 2016 meeting**

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

LAF-13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer, TWC), Peter Holt (Landowner), Jim Roberts (Landowner) and Angela Smith (Natural England).

LAF-14 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

The Chair continued to liaise with the Senior Rights of Way Officer and act as a general 'clearing house' for issues raised by LAF Members and the public.

The Chair reported on a number of issues/projects:-

Planning Applications

The Chair advised that he continued to monitor planning applications but was currently struggling to look at all applications due to work commitments. The main issue continued to be proposed developments that would be built over footpaths. The Chair submitted comments to the Planning Portal and spoke to officers and the developers on behalf of the LAF. A discussion took place including:

- The flagging up of footpath-related items
- Developers' contributions
- Planning process
- Missed opportunities for compensation payments by developers

Following the discussion it was suggested that the LAF invite officers from both the Planning and Highway Teams in order for the LAF to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the planning process.

ACTION – Officers from Planning/Highways to be invited to 20th January 2016 meeting

Ironbridge Toll House Access

The Chair continued to be concerned about the narrow access point onto the Iron Bridge from the south side of the river by the Toll House. Although wheelchair access was available, at busy times there was often congestion due to the numbers of people using the access point. This was felt unacceptable for visitors to a World Heritage Site. Malcolm Morris confirmed that he had raised this matter and asked for an Agenda item to be raised at the next meeting of the World Heritage Site Strategy Group which was due to be held on the 19th October 2015. This item was not on the Agenda, but Malcolm confirmed that he would ask a member of the Group to raise this as a question at the meeting.

The Chair informed the LAF that he had written to Barbara Taylor.

ACTION – MM to raise this matter at the next meeting of the World Heritage Site Strategy Group.

Fly Tipping Contact

The Chair advised that he had been proactive on the matter of fly tipping and that he had received very positive responses from Telford and Wrekin and had contacted them both directly and by using the 'Everyday Telford' app. Evidence had been passed to the Council which they had taken very seriously and resulted in orders being served on two people who had been ordered to pay costs.

Bob Coalbran asked if this had been reported in the Shropshire Star in order to deter others. It was suggested that the Council "Insight" magazine and the "News For You" newsletter could be approached to see if they would publish these stories in order to deter the public from fly tipping.

ACTION – Contact TWC about the Insight Magazine and News for You.

Greenways, Ketley

The Chair reported that he would re-visit this site in order to establish whether there was still an issue with the parked lorries.

ACTION – AFJ to re-visit Pink Skips Site at Greenways, Ketley.

UK Coal Site

The Chair reported that Jim Roberts had been in touch regularly to report on progress and confirmed that his land had now been dealt with to his satisfaction. Dave Coxill had contacted the Chair to confirm that the UK Coal site had now been “signed off” and that the 5 year after care plan would begin. This would involve items such as renewing hedges, laying grass and reinstating the rights of way. The Chair raised a question as to whether Little Wenlock Parish Council had a programme of work for the aftercare. Bob Coalbran asked why the rights of way could not be opened straight away as these were already in place. Jan Mees-Robinson raised concern that this was the only route from the Town Centre to the Wrekin and it continued to remain blocked. The Chair confirmed that he would raise this with Dave Coxill who had a direct contact at UK Coal.

Cllr Liz Clare reported to the LAF that following her investigations that the £12,000 received from UK Coal was ring-fenced funds. The Chair confirmed that this money could only be used for the site and for the benefit of the surrounding area. Bob Alton queried whether there was a time limit for these funds to be spent. Malcolm Morris confirmed that this was 5 years and if the funds were not spent they would be returned to the developer. The Chair hoped that the funds would be used towards the Steeraway link and the surrounding area.

Wheat Leasowes

Bob Coalbran reported that this footpath had now been diverted although it needed improvement work. This had been reported in both March and July and just 1 week before the Walking Festival it had been flattened. The surface would need to be checked during the winter to see if it remained flat and walkable and would be sufficient for future use.

Public Right of Way Website Update

Following the discussion at the previous meeting of the LAF, Paula Doherty gave an update regarding the problems with the TWC website in relation to the Rights of Way pages.

Bob Coalbran had been in discussions with TWC Officers about improving the named walks/rides whilst Paula had been in discussions with improving the wider information available regarding the rights of way such as those at Staffordshire and Shropshire Councils ie rights and responsibilities when using the RoW network; improving the ability to report a problem; information on how to apply for changes to rights of way; benefits of having an online map and up-to-date LAF information.

A letter was sent from the LAF which set out the inadequacies of the TWC website and a letter was sent to Dominic Proud (Group Manager for Transport, Strategy and Road Safety) who passed this to Robin Wythe to be actioned.

Paula attended a constructive meeting with Robin Wythe and Josh from ICT on 21st August and following this meeting an e-mail was received containing the following achievements:

- The structure of the web pages had been agreed as had the content with Web Services

- The rights and responsibilities section content had been identified
- The how to report a problem area would be modified to enable reporting an obstruction to a right of way but the existing map would be as used
- The documents for Definitive Map Modification Orders had been provided by Andrew Careless and would either be on-line web forms or downloadable
- The tourist information link had been identified
- The register of formal applications would be included
- The problem reporting via Everyday Telford had been asked for but ICT believed that there was not the demand
- The link to the minutes had been resumed
- The link to the agendas needed to be resumed (this would be looked into)
- The content for the role of the Local Access Forum had been provided

The current position was waiting for Web Services to action the work that had been agreed.

A lot had been looked at and identified and promised but implementation was the next step and this depended on Web Services finding the resources to do the work.

Paula suggested that members of the LAF log onto the website from time to time and bring their experiences to the next meeting in order to continue the review and keep the pressure on, if necessary.

Bob Coalbran commented that following his discussions, the page restructure, structure maps, organisations and walks would be included by the end of October.

A discussion took place regarding an interactive map of the Borough which TWC had said was too expensive. It was suggested that a Cabinet Member champion this concept and the production of a definitive map. Bob Coalbran commented that a project was currently running based on the cycling map. Robyn Wythe had sent blown up maps of the Borough which had been developed as walking maps for an area North/North West and once the layout had been finalised this would be rolled out to cover all other areas. This did not address other issues and was only a stepping stone in the production of a map of the Borough and was a paper exercise. A discussion took place including:

- Interactive Map
- Google maps not showing Rights of Way
- Staffordshire Council map
- Working maps were not the definitive map and should be labelled as “illustrative”
- The writing of a business case for an interactive map
- Resources and officer time

Ann Sharkey commented that a web page had been designed to include information such as:

- Register of the Definitive Map
- Village Green information
- Section 31(6) Register
- DMMOs
- Register of Commons

Unfortunately no officer time had yet been allocated to this by Web Services so Ann had asked for training in order that she could action the work herself.

It was suggested that a formal letter be written to the Council to put weight to any business case written by Andrew Careless for a definitive map.

Following a discussion the following motion was drawn up:

The Local Access Forum requests Telford and Wrekin Council to make resources available to produce and publish an up-to-date definitive map of the Borough in accordance with its statutory duty.

The motion was proposed by Marion Law and seconded by Jan Mees-Robinson. A vote was taken and it was:

AGREED unanimously that the motion “The Local Access Forum requests Telford and Wrekin Council to make resources available to produce and publish an up-to-date definitive map of the Borough in accordance with its statutory duty” be sent to Telford and Wrekin Council.

This motion was to be included in the letter being written to Richard Partington, Managing Director of the Council, setting out the LAF’s concerns.

Path Clearance Groups Update

Bob Alton reported that no path clearance had taken place since the last meeting of the LAF. A new co-ordinator was now in place and it was hoped that the Ramblers would be back in action prior to the next meeting in January 2016. The Chair thanked Bob Alton and the Ramblers for their work

Bob Coalbran reported that there were currently 2 sessions a month clearing the Wrekin Link. Work had also been undertaken to tidy up Lawley New Works. The most recent project was assisting the Friends of Dothill LNR to clear and open up the footpaths at Tee Lake. It was envisaged that it would take the working party two or three sessions to get the footpath established.

Jan Mees-Robinson reported that the horse riders had raised funds for a workman with a chainsaw to clear 6 trees on the Ercall and Short Woods and that it was good to see everyone doing their bit to keep the areas clear.

Bob Coalbran gave his thanks to Andrew Careless for being on top of the issues and monitoring the progress at Golf Links Lane which now had a set of steps and the rotting planks had now been replaced. He also thanked Tina Brasenell, Engagement Officer, for her enormous help in getting the footpath opened up to the South of Rushmoor Lane, Bratton which now gave a circular route from Bratton to Allscott to Rushmoor which was now completely open.

The Chair reported that the use of the Customer Quality contact number was a very useful tool and that once logged these issues were actioned by Andrew Careless. Bob Coalbran raised concerns that these issues were being logged as “complaints” and although effective did not want to have these perceived as complaints. It was asked that this be clarified.

ACTION – AFJ - clarification be sought with Customer Quality that any issues logged were not logged as complaints.

Steeraway Farm

The Chair reported that Jim Roberts was now happy with the route currently on his land. Jan Mees-Robinson asked for legal clarification regarding the diversion which had not been started but was showing on the OS map. There was currently a fence and a stream with no bridge. Ann Sharkey confirmed that the diversion did not have to be on the ground before being shown on the map, that this was a separate issue. Following a discussion it was agreed that Ann Sharkey would look into the application to establish the current position and report back to the LAF. The Chair confirmed that Jim Roberts was happy that what was on the OS map was what he wanted over his land and that work had started at the Limekiln Lane end of the route.

ACTION – AS to establish the current position regarding the Steeraway Farm Diversion and the route on the OS Map .

Use of Probation Service for Path Clearance Work

The Chair thanked Malcolm Morris for the information with regard to the Probation Service which would be taken back to Andrew Careless. These services were accessed by TWCs Environmental Maintenance Team and were used by Madeley Parish Council. Bob Coalbran reported that the Probation Service had helped with the clearance of Rushmoor Lane.

Hill Top Road, Wombridge

The Chair reported that this restricted byway was always blocked by cars and that this restricted byway had been gated as a footpath by Network Rail. Network Rail had now admitted that this had been a mistake. Access was required to the fields half way along the drive and it was a safety access for the emergency services. Network Rail were to contact Andrew Careless with a view to getting this re-opened, although the Chair reported that Network Rail were planning to close as many level crossings to the public as they could. The Police were required for an enforcement order. A suggestion was made that a yellow hatch for no parking was requested from the Council.

Local Plan Consultation

Paula Doherty had commented regarding the Definitive Map to the Local Plan consultation. The Chair had found it difficult to understand the Local Plan portal. Consultation had now closed and the next stage was to draw up a plan for Telford and Wrekin until 2031. The Chair was disappointed that Rights of Way were not mentioned within the Local Plan but that Green Spaces were. Cllr Liz Clare confirmed that 100 green spaces had been guaranteed and that the public had been asked to identify a further 50 areas. The Chair and Paula Doherty had logged various comments on the portal, although it was considered that the Local Plan was a long way from completion. The Chair was going to post a further comment regarding the Codes of Best Design and Practice, Manual for Streets 2, and how it did not seem to work in the new Lawley development at Morrisons, but the deadline had passed.

Veolia – ‘Sleeping Beauty Trail’

The Chair reported that Veolia were not happy to dedicate the path from Lawley to New Works Lane and if this land was to be sold the bridleway would be lost. Jan Mees-Robinson reported that Little Wenlock Parish Council were not aware that this was a bridleway and

work on a wooden walkway had started. This route needed an Order as it linked with the Trundle.

Apley Home Farm and Moor Farm Bratton

Bob Coalbran reported the issues surrounding access to this right of way. The owners of Apley Home Farm did not accept that there was a right of way through the property and that this had ceased 20 years previously and this right of way was currently gated at both ends. The walkers were informed that Andrew Careless would have a finger post placed in the pavement and believed that the issues had been resolved. Recently there had been a big branch suspended on a power line over the right of way. Using the Everyday Telford app, this was reported and logged with the utility company and the branch was removed. This branch was then put in front of the inner gate which blocked the access. Bob Coalbran removed the branch and cut it up into small pieces and installed way marking discs. These discs stayed up for 3 weeks but were then removed. The cut branches were then re-stacked inside the gate. Bob Coalbran took photos of the cut branches and reported this to Customer Quality and the blockage was resolved. A date of the 4th December was given by Andrew Careless to liaise with owners and to install the finger posts. Bob was unable to take any further action until after this date. Cllr Liz Clare suggested that a letter be written from Legal Services to the owners of the property. The right of way was the original path which pre-dated the development and was on the original maps. This issue needed to be resolved. It was a criminal offence to take down way markers and the person who had done this had now committed a criminal offence. Jan Mees-Robinson reported that she had now prepared DMMOs, together with supporting evidence, for all of Apley and these had been passed to legal. The Chair confirmed that the LAF needed to keep the pressure on to ensure this right of way was not lost.

Grazing Cow

The Chair reported that this continued to be an issue due to the surface and that this route could not be walked. This was being looked at by Andrew Careless.

Rookery Bridleway Entrance – Blockleys – Castle Hill Way

The Chair reported that this was an area of fantastic bridleways and footpaths but that the quarry gates remained in place. Jan Mees-Robinson confirmed that you could get access around the gates, but that this was dangerous. The Chair confirmed that there were rights of way all through the site and that the job had just not been finished. Fiona Smith reported that she was unable to use the other entrance as this had steps up. The Chair confirmed that this was also very steep.

Granville Site

The Chair reported that at the proposed Solar Farm site at Granville, the developers were intending to use the bridleway and railway line to access the site for its construction. It was their intention to lay a temporary hardened road surface. There was no definite right of way across this land as it was owned by TWC. The developers had confirmed that the site would be returned to its original condition once the farm was in place although the canopy would be taken out. A discussion took place and it was asked if the LAF could get any benefit out of the developers ie S106 monies and the Chair confirmed that this was something he was looking into. Shropshire Wildlife Trust had put in an objection to the development. The Planning Reference was TWC/2015/0804.

LAF-15 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Further to the introduction made to Jane Bonner from Wellington Cycling Club at the last meeting the Chair asked for the LAF to consider Jane becoming a member of the LAF due to a vacancy. Fiona Smith proposed that Jane Bonner become a member of the LAF and this was seconded by Cadi Price.

AGREED – that Jane Bonner become a Member of the LAF representing Wellington Cycling Club.

LAF-16 CURRENT PROJECTS - REVIEW

The Senior Rights of Way Officer had given apologies for the meeting therefore there was nothing to report.

LAF-17 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

Ann Sharkey reported progress that had been made on the modification order application.

The Buckatree – a draft document had been drawn up and this had been approved as a bridleway. Funding was now awaited for the horse access. The Chair asked if there was a timescale for this work and Ann confirmed that she would chase this with Andrew Careless on his return from annual leave.

ACTION – AS to confirm timescale.

Work had now been undertaken to finalise the Dedication Agreement and Maps. The descriptions were now to be checked and signed off within the next 2-3 weeks for the following areas:

- Lees Farm to Meadow Pit
- Court Road to Rough Park
- Halesfield 16
- Cockshutt to St Goerges
- Town Park

Small pockets of HCA Land would be dedicated under separate documentation but these areas could still be walked.

The Chair reported that this had helped to reduce large modification order lists and as they were on Council owned land they were not contentious and covered a huge number of routes. The next area to be looked at would be Dothill. This was an amazing piece of work which gave a lot of new definitive access. The Chair would be reporting to the British Horse Society how the LAF liaises with the Council. This was a good news story that would be delivered at a National Conference and would give Telford and Wrekin Council good press and the opportunity for other LAFs to learn from the work. The Chair thanked Ann Sharkey for all of her hard work.

Paula Doherty raised a question with regard to the position of the rights of way in Edgmond. Ann Sharkey confirmed that extinguishment/diversion orders for the edges of the Parish in Edgmond had been drafted.

Ann Sharkey confirmed that three more diversion orders were being worked on:

- A route within Festival Gardens, Wellington had been blocked
- DMMO Order made at ???? This was likely to go to the Inspector as the developer was expected to object to the order
- Sylvan Close, Lilleshall

Malcolm Morris asked Ann if she had received any applications for Madeley Town Council. Ann said she had been asked to look for these by Andrew Careless but that she had not located any applications.

LAF 18 BENTHALL WOODS

Cadi Price tabled photographs of the damage that had been caused to Benthall Woods by cyclists from Workhouse Coppice to the Severn Valley Way. Some of the destruction included:

- Trees being taken down
- A 1 ½ metre path being created
- Huge rocks being moved leaving large holes in the ground

The cyclists followed the route down Spout Lane to Work House Coppice and then straight down the Severn Valley Way into the path of other cyclists and walkers. Cadi was disappointed to report that the Police did not want to know and that the CSOs were unwilling to help, Natural England had suggested putting up a poster and Telford and Wrekin Council suggested closing the woodland. The Chair asked if these acts were criminal damage. Cadi confirmed that for the first three offences called “ABC” they only receive a “slap on the wrist” and then following being caught a fourth time this may only trigger an ASBO.

The Chair referred to the damage as an “incredible construction” and Cadi Price reported that they had been unable to catch anyone. This site was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and that this had been constructed just during October. Cllr Liz Clare suggested that the people responsible may not see this as “damage”. Cadi was worried that once they cyclists got bored with this area that they would dig on further areas within the woods. This was a multi-user trail and there had been some near misses with cyclists coming straight down onto the Severn Valley Way which could cause an accident. Bob Coalbran reported that this was similar to the issues that had been seen on the Wrekin and the Ercall Wood.

The Chair suggested that there was a need to get people on the ground to try and catch them. Cadi said she just wanted to explain to the people the damage they were causing to the SSSI. A mountain track had been purpose built at Dudmaston, Wenlock Edge.

A discussion around the issues took place and it was suggested that people walk the area and discreetly take photos of any action they see, this was a starting point. Further suggestions were that uniformed CSOs walk in the area as a prevention and that maybe an article be put in the Shropshire Star. If the message was put on Facebook, the Wrekin News could pick this up. Cadi confirmed that a post had been put on You Tube by someone unknown of a cyclist using this route and between the dates of 22nd to 24th September it had received 199 hits. The Police did not consider that the post on You Tube could be classed as evidence. Jane Bonner suggested that she was due to attend a meeting of the Telford Bicycle User Group (BUG) and that she would bring this to their attention.

ACTION – JB to report the damage at Benthall Woods to the Telford BUG.

LAF-19 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Fiona Smith congratulated the Chair on his Access Award from the British Horse Society for the creation of routes for enhanced equestrian access, which would be presented at an Award ceremony in November at the Worshipful Company of Saddlers. The Chair reported that he would use the Award to promote the work of the LAF.

Jan Mees-Robinson asked the Chair if he had completed the Annual Reports. The Chair confirmed that these had all been completed.

LAF-20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and reminded the LAF that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 20th January 2016 at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College at 1.00pm for 1.30pm start.

The meeting ended at 4.12pm

Chair:

Date: