

TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th January 2015 at 1.30pm
at The Studio, Graham Building, Wrekin College, Sutherland Road, Wellington, Telford**

PRESENT:

Bob Alton (Rambler), Naomi Wrighton (on behalf of Bob Coalbran) (Wellington Walkers are Welcome), Anthony Francis Jones (Telford Bridleways Association), Marion Law (Ramblers Association), Jim Roberts (Landowner), Bruce Udale (Landowner), Cllr T Hope, Peter Holt (Landowner) and Cadi Price (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) and Cllr Liz Clare (Telford & Wrekin Council).

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer), Jayne Clarke (Democratic Services Support Officer), and Dominic Proud (Interim Group Manager - Transport, Strategy and Road Safety – Telford & Wrekin Council)

IN ATTENDANCE: - Janet Clarke

LAF-23 MINUTES

The LAF considered the minutes of the meeting held on 8th October. The following items were highlighted:

- **LAF 16** – Page 2 – 3rd Paragraph – “Information had been received from Dave Coxill, Telford & Wrekin Council, following a meeting he had held with Craig Bull from UK Coal . . .”. This sentence should have read “Information had been received from Dave Coxill, Telford & Wrekin Council, following e-mail correspondence with Craig Ball from UK Coal . . .”.
- **LAF16** – Page 2 – 6th Paragraph – “. . . A digger had been found with barbed wire around it. . .” this sentence should have read “A deer had been found with barbed wire around it”.
- **LAF 21** – Page 7 – Final Paragraph – “Bob Alton” should have read “Bob Coalbran”.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum held on 8th October 2014, following the amendments, be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

LAF-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Paula Doherty (Rights of Way Projects), Fiona Smith (Disability), Janet Mees-Robinson (British Carriage Drivers Association), Ann Sharkey (Legal Assistant, Telford & Wrekin Council) and Bob Coalbran (Wellington Walkers are Welcome).

LAF-25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Little Wenlock Parish Council's Quiet Lanes Application.

This application had not been successful in gaining funds from the Council's Community Pride Fund. The LAF were disappointed with this decision as the speeds around the Wrekin, in particular relating to Shropshire Way and Spout Lane, needed to be reduced. Both the Chair and Marion Law had written to the Council in support of the application.

The Chair asked the Little Wenlock Parish Council representative to comment on the quiet lanes application and asked if there had been any further progress with this.

Quiet lanes around the Wrekin continued to be a priority for Little Wenlock Parish Council and a further application for funding had been submitted regarding a quiet lane along Spout Lane only at this stage. Marion Law asked the Parish Council representative if it would help if the LAF wrote in support of the application and the Parish Council confirmed that they welcomed the support.

Cllr T Hope raised a question as to why the application had been refused. Cllr E Clare confirmed that an Independent Panel of Members had made the decision and that there had been some disappointments as the Council had been unable to fund all of the applications received, but that there may be chance to apply again if the Community Pride Fund was to run a further round of funding.

Jim Roberts confirmed that the Wrekin Forest Committee and the Wildlife Trust were also looking at the issue of quiet lanes.

Little Wenlock Parish Council confirmed that they had the funding for the quiet lane at Spout Lane but there had been some technicalities regarding the highway but it was hoped that these technicalities would be resolved shortly.

LAF-26 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

The Chair, together with some of the LAF Members, continued to have regular conversations with the Senior Rights of Way Officer to discuss issues raised by LAF Members and the public.

The Chair reported on a number of issues:-

Planning Applications

Upon checking the Planning Portal, the Chair had become aware of an application for housing on the northerly car park of the Town Park regarding Randlay/Stirchley Avenue. The Chair had not submitted any objections to the application as there were no rights of way on the planning application.

Car Parking Charges at Dark Lane Car Park

The Chair had become aware that there were now parking charges on the Dark Lane Car Park at the Telford Town Park and that he was unaware there would be charges on this car park. Cllr E Clare confirmed that charging for car parking had been in the Council's budget

last year and although it was not an ideal situation it was something that had to be done. It had also been observed whilst the Dark Lane car park was free that employees within the new Southwater complex were using this to park for work and that visitors to Town Park were unable to get spaces on the car park.

Randlay Woods and Playing Fields south of Queen Elizabeth Avenue

The Telford International Centre had made an application for a lorry park on an area at the Randlay Woods and Playing field as this was an “open field which was no longer used”. Cadi Price had understood that this area was going to form part of the Parish Council’s Local Nature Reserve Application. The Chair would circulate the Planning Application around to members of the LAF who could feed back any thoughts. Any comments received would be logged on the Planning Portal as the LAF but with the Chair’s name on them.

Recently the Chair had found it a more effective method to contact the developers directly to discuss the rights of way issues

The Rambler’s experience with regard to planning applications was that rights of way issues were not taken seriously and that it was difficult to resist developments. The LAF needed to be flexible to agree diversions although these applications cost money. Awareness surrounding rights of way was quite a problem.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer commented that the Council was as integrated as possible with their approach, although occasionally things could be missed. Most planning and development control issues were picked up. It was important to keep connectivity with the rest of the network.

The Chair suggested that all rights of ways become bridleways and not just be footpaths (pavements) to benefit cyclists as not every route needed to be a cycle route. Access was needed for pedestrians, horses and bikes and routes needed to have definitive rights.

It was suggested that the Chair remain the main point of contact for planning applications, but he encouraged all members of the LAF to use the planning portal.

Woodhouse Lane, east of Castle Farm Lane (opposite The Flash)

From the Garden Centre under the motorway to the Motorway Service Station this was an adopted highway and part of the sustrans route and was a cycleway. 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. As this served the northerly to southerly direction this would not become part of the development’s road network.

Gresham Drive to the Grazing Cow

Complaints had been received that the bridleway at Morrisons near Lawley Square had not been completed. The Chair confirmed that this had now been finalised and was now open. Walkers were using the route but unfortunately the surface was appalling and resembled a stone mud bath. There was good communication with the developer who wanted the right of way open and surfaced. The developer was going to grass over this area but it was questioned how this area would then be delineated. The original diversion order had agreed to use “hoggin” (rolled stone) on this route. The Senior Rights of Way Officer agreed to chase this up with the developer.

Hortonwood

The Chair was pleased to inform the LAF that the right of way was now to the full 3 metre breadth. The Senior Rights of Way Officer explained that the reason there was no access to the northwest corner was that it lead to a dead end at Hoo Hall which was in private ownership. All land to the north of the development was in private ownership. Discussions could take place with land owners, but it was unlikely that there would be an exit at the northwest corner as the evidence of use that had been put forward for this route was poor.

Edgmond

The Senior Rights of Way Officer was looking at the diversions within Edgmond. He would draft the Orders in turn and then move on to the next area as quickly as possible.

It was suggested that rights of way issues were looked at on rotation as they did in Shropshire. This was not at option due to staffing levels, the Chair suggested that this as something that Volunteers could undertake as Paula Doherty had done within Edgmond. The Senior Rights of Way Officer explained to the LAF that the legal work with regards to publishing and confirming orders was very time consuming.

Parish Partnerships

The LAF were asked to note that the funding for Parish Partnerships had now come to an end.

Donkey Field Car Park

The Chair announced that the application for funding from the Community Pride Fund had been rejected in its entirety.

Cllr E Clare confirmed to the LAF that there had been a Panel of Independent Members who had considered all of the applications on their merits.

The Chair had not given up on this project. Planning permission was still in place up to December 2015 and there were still other options to consider. The reserved matters within the planning application were being dealt with and a freely draining rolled stone surface was being looked at. This car park was to be on private land and the land was still available for the project. C Price asked if walkers knew of the proposals for the car park? Jim Roberts informed the LAF that following a Wrekin survey that had taken place 75% of people said they would be happy to pay for parking. It would cost in the region of £84,000 for the project and the Chair was considering how to get the project funded ie crowd funding or a fundraising project. Cllr E Clare made a suggestion that Lottery funding may be available. Mr P Holt suggested that new quotes for the work be obtained in readiness for any further funding applications. C Price suggested that the Chair approach Shropshire Wildlife Trust to discuss the project.

Dedications on Council Land

The dedications coming forward did not cover the whole of the Telford area. Apley Castle was the next area to be considered and progressed. The Senior Rights of Way Officer

explained that James Dunn, Service Delivery Manager for Estates and Investments was taking a report to Cabinet in February asking for delegated authority to dedicate the land. The Chair confirmed that following this process the Silkin Way now had a status. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that this work was upgrading the status of routes and had reduced the amount of Modification Order Applications. The work with regard to the Nabb and the route descriptions for the Town Park had been completed and hopefully these would be with Legal before the end of January in order for them to draft the Deed of Dedication. The Chair acknowledged this good news and confirmed that the next area for consideration would be Wellington. The Senior Rights of Way Officer would report back to the next meeting of the LAF.

Town Park

The Chair confirmed that there had been a number of good changes within the Town Park. Members of the LAF had been involved with the work and users of the Park had fed information back to the Chair.

Railway Crossing at Ketley

The Chair informed the LAF that the Bridleway posts were incredibly narrow at the area of the railway crossing opposite Aga, Ketley. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that this was just a bit of material work that needed undertaking and that he would speak to the Engineers and ask them to make this more accessible.

Lawley Development

The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that 3 orders had been published on the football pitch site adjacent to the M54 Rock Road. This area had been under discussion and although not everyone was in agreement with the extinguishment, the orders increased the status of the rights of way parallel to the M54.

With regard to the Lawley Village Development site the new bridleway to Newdale Pools and the new circular route would be tied into the development and would run concurrently.

These route would be bridleway on the definitive map.

There were very successful working relationships with the Developers on the Lawley site.

UK Coal Restoration

The Chair asked the LAF if there had been any progress on the Rights of Way within the UK Coal Restoration site.

A discussion took place around the concerns on this site which included:

- Section from Lawley Church to New Works Lane - signage / furniture on the routes on the ground
- Quotes for the next section of the route
- The LAF requested a breakdown of the costs for the completed part of the route
- The Council's contractors and the limited choice
- The ring fenced funds for the project and how much had been spent

- The considerable length of time it has taken to only complete the first part of the trundle
- The diversion routes through Steeraway Farm – incorrect maps
- Signing off of the routes and concerns involving the loss of the routes to the public
- Health and Safety of public accessing the unopened routes

The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that he would obtain new quotes by the end of January 2015 and that he would supply the financial information requested to the LAF. He also confirmed that the Order would be redrafted and the dedication signed.

LAF-27 CLEARANCE OF LEIGHTON LANE

B Alton reported to the LAF that Leighton Lane was currently overgrown and obstructed people accessing the route which was partly in the Shropshire area and partly in Little Wenlock. This route was classed as an adopted highway rather than a right of way. M Law suggested that she would go and look at the route. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that there was currently an enquiry with the Highways Maintenance Team and it had been passed to the relevant officer.

LAF-28 MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATION: STATION ROAD, NEWPORT

Janet Clarke addressed the LAF regarding the rights of way around Station Road Newport if the proposed developments were to take place. This would involve 2 modification orders to the North and 1 modification order to the South of the site.

With regard to the south side of Station Road, Newport, this currently consisted of fields and open spaces with a number of both informal and formal paths which were loved and valued by local people and was a focal point for dog walkers. This area was also designated as open space in the Wrekin Local Plan. There was no other open space in this area as it consisted of roads and private land.

The history around the development was that approximately 3 ½ years ago an application was put forward for a supermarket and housing on the Station Road site. A subsequent Inquiry by the Secretary of State had failed to be completed due to the death of the Inspector and a further Inquiry would take place in January 2015.

The LAF's substantial representations regarding the footpaths had not been addressed in the Planning Officer's report and the outline planning application was approved.

This application was subsequently withdrawn in October and a development of 120 houses had come forward. A Planning Application had been submitted this month by St Modwens who had given a presentation which Janet Clarke had attended. The existing rights of way may need some modification following the information submitted in March 2013 as a direct result of the report of the Inspector at the Village Green Inquiry who had said there was clear evidence of use of the rights of way of over 20 years and these were on the definitive map. This information had been announced to the public during the inquiry and through the newspaper.

The proposals were that the rights of way at Hutchinson Way be retained and become a pavement which then linked to the housing. The informal paths were not indicated on the current plans and others had completely disappeared.

The purpose of the modification order was to join up with the existing rights of way in a circular route but the current proposals for development threw this into question.

At the presentation the developers did not appear to know anything about the status of the rights of way and it was hoped that they would address the rights of way correctly.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer had not been informed of the exhibition and had not therefore attended. He had been in contact with Legal Services and made it clear that there were modification order applications on this development and the existing footpaths could not be prejudiced by planning applications as these routes already exist. St Modwens were aware of the modification applications and it had been made clear that consultation must take place regarding the rights of way applications. It was likely that the Council would shortly dedicate the footpaths on their land. One modification order was not on the Council's land so they were not in a position to dedicate this land.

It was intended to create rights of way 1 east to west and 2 north to south. Any orders to divert or extinguish the rights of way would be subject to consultation and an objection process so there was no loss of the right to object.

Janet Clarke informed the LAF that the planning application should have shown the definitive route together with the two applications for routes.

The Senior Rights of Way Officer informed the LAF that modification order applications had to be treated as if they exist until they were determined. The rights of way must be left within the development and any development take place around the route. Applications can take approximately 18 months and the developer can request the process be dealt with sooner. A right of way can be dedicated by the landowner and through legal powers (s257 of the Town and Country Planning Act) these rights of way could be extinguished or diverted where necessary. Section 257 Orders are then published and given a 28 day objection period. If any objections are received then these objections are sent to the Secretary of State to be determined.

The Chair confirmed that he had spoken at Planning Committee regarding

- planning gain
- green spaces
- bridleways

It was important that any issues with regards to rights of way were noticed at the planning stage. Keeping the Senior Rights of Way Officers in the loop and talking to developers had a positive impact on preventing the rights of way being built over by accident.

Janet Clarke summed up by saying that the fields around Station Road, Newport were green space. The area continued to be listed as green space in the Newport Neighbourhood Plan and this is what the people of Newport wanted.

A question was raised regarding the Village Green application Status. Janet Clarke confirmed that the village green application had not found in favour due to a technicality but that they clearly endorsed the use of the much valued footpaths and the rights of way were on the definitive map.

The Chair thanked Janet Clarke for her presentation.

LAF-29 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

No membership matters were raised.

LAF-30 CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY

Dominic Proud, the Council's Interim Group Manager for Transport, Strategy and Road Safety spoke to the LAF about the Council's Cycling and Walking Strategy.

The strategy was in its early stages of development and the Council wanted to undertake as much engagement with as many groups as possible and that attending at the LAF meeting was the starting point of this engagement.

The issues were that the Council wanted to increase cycling and walking as a sustainable method of transport although the overall aim was to engage people in walking and cycling for health and leisure within the Borough. It was hoped that this would also be a way of encouraging people to use the Borough's open spaces.

A Community Panel of 1400 residents of varying ages and abilities would be asked if they participated in cycling and walking and, if not, what were the barriers to this. The purpose of the engagement being for as many people as possible to have the opportunity to help form and shape the strategy and for the Borough to have a vision going forward for the next 10-15 years. It was also envisaged that the strategy would help to attract funding schemes and be linked through to development.

Dominic Proud asked the LAF if they could consider the strategy and feed any thoughts and suggestions back to him through the Chair and an update could come back to the LAF at a future date once the engagement and the data collection exercise had been undertaken in order to discuss the progress.

The Chair thought it was important to look over the findings following the consultation.

It was suggested that the consultation information was fed to other Groups within the Borough for their comments and promote the strategy as widely as possible.

A question was raised as to whether there had been any engagement with the Health and Wellbeing Board representative for Leisure. Dominic Proud confirmed that this strategy would be far reaching within the Council and that consultation was already taking place with Leisure and Tourism internally and with tourism boards externally.

The Chair confirmed that the Borough would benefit from joined up, connected, clear, circular off-road routes.

A question was raised as to whether the strategy would have any bearing on developments once it was in place. Dominic Proud confirmed that Shaping Places was the key aspect in determining planning but once the strategy was in place it would be considered and help to join up with the Council's delivery of projects and would hold some weight.

Further discussion took place including:

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- The key priorities of the cycling and walking strategy
- Cyclists on footpaths in The Gorge
- Bridleways
- Improvement and access for horseriders
- Cycling and walking do not always sit together but in most cases it worked with appropriate behaviour
- Separate strategies
- Educating the public on the proper use of routes
- Access for pushchairs and disabled buggies
- Energize Conference - 22nd January

The Chair thanked Dominic Proud for this presentation and asked LAF Members to feedback their comments.

LAF-31 RIGHTS OF WAY – TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL UPDATE - PROJECTS

The rights of way issued had been covered within the Chairman's Matters.

LAF-32 REVIEW OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER APPLICATIONS

Apologies had been received from A Sharkey.

The Chair asked the Senior Rights of Way Officer if there had been any progress with regards to the Wrekin Forest/Ercall. The Senior Rights of Way Officer confirmed that there was now a design for the gate at the Buckatree Entrance. The Shropshire Wildlife Trust would be dedicating the land and this would be formalised and upgraded to bridleway and this would be done as soon as possible.

LAF-33 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

A discussion took place with regard to:

- Ironbridge – Toll House
- Volunteers
- Wrekin Link

LAF-34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and reminded the LAF that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 15th April at The Studio, Wrekin College at 1.00pm for 1.30pm start.

The meeting ended at 4.11pm

Chair:

Dated:

DRAFT