

Shropshire Local Access Forum	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
17 July 2009	<b>12</b>	<b>J</b>
10.00 am		

## MINUTES OF THE WALKERS' FORUM MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009 AT SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY

**PRESENT: Ramblers members:** Alison Parker, Marion Law, Trevor Allison, Bill Hodges, Michael Johnson, Bob Alton, Gerry Lawson, Dennis Nisbet, Brian Dale Patteson

**Countryside Service staff:** Kevin Jones, Terry Hughes, Phil Betts, Peter Higgins

**Others:** Anne Holland, Ludlow Tourist Information Centre

**APOLOGIES:** Susan Sharp, Richard Walker, Chris Tibbits, Ron Bond, Roger Smith, Chris Chillingworth, John Evans, Peter James, Geoff Kynaston, Deb Hughes

1. The **minutes of the last meeting on 1st October** were agreed as a true record.

### 2. MATTERS ARISING

**Access Strategy:** Kevin Jones had no information about further funding to advance the Access Strategy.

Dennis Nisbet added that funding of £250,000 had been allocated to the 22 parishes not yet worked on by the Parish Access Project, plus £200,000 for capital projects including bridges.

**Ploughing and cropping:** Kevin reported that the scheme had just started and the Council was ready to proceed as necessary.

Potato crops constituted an obstruction when ridged.

He said that there was some leeway if a landholder had made an effort to keep a right of way open even if it was not to the standard width of one metre and provided the crop when grown did not impinge on the path. If the path was not on the definitive line "words of advice" might be appropriate. It was not acceptable to use a field edge to replace the definitive line.

**Admin support:** Peter Higgins's post had been extended and one additional admin assistant appointed.

**Current staffing:** Karen Wilson had left and Phil Betts had been appointed to manage the 3P scheme. One enforcement officer was to be appointed. Only Kevin and Terry Hughes were currently in post as enforcement officers and Kevin asked for reports of problems to be realistic about their importance.

**Unitary authority:** Bill Hodges confirmed that there were to be five, not three, regulatory bodies, replacing the five district councils.

### 3. PATH OBSTRUCTIONS

Alison Parker raised concerns about the increased use of plastic sheeting potentially obstructing paths. Terry Hughes and Kevin confirmed that there was much more of this in evidence this year and they were seeking advice about how to deal with it if it became obvious that it was causing obstruction to rights of way.

### 4. UPDATE ON SHROPSHIRE WAY

John Newnham reported that the northern section was more in need of updating than the southern part. Route planning was underway, and he, with Bob Alton and Michael Johnson, had met Andrew Careless, Rights of Way Officer at Telford & Wrekin Council, to plan an alternative route from the Wrekin, over the Ercall to Wellington, then via Haughmond Hill to Shrewsbury. He had also met the Group FP Secretaries covering the northern sections to plan possible circular routes based on the Shropshire Way. However, it was not yet clear where the necessary funding was to come from.

Gerry Lawson said that the route at Vinnals south of Shrewsbury was still in a very bad state. It seemed likely that the drainage of this area would require capital funding and there was a danger that this section would be forgotten, leaving it unwalkable. Alison would raise this at the next Liaison meeting with Jim Stabler and try to ensure that the problem remained "on the table" until resolved.

Anne Holland, manager of the Ludlow TIC, reported that information about the route was now available.

The OS map needed updating and publicity was needed for the website. Marion Law suggested that the old route should remain waymarked for the benefit of people using the current OS Explorer map. It might be possible to put up diversion signs where the new route diverged from the old.

## **5. PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP**

Phil Betts was to replace Chris Bagley, starting probably in June.

Bill Hodges reported that John Evans would retire from managing the Shrewsbury Group 3P team and a replacement was being sought. Richard Knight would write to thank John.

## **6. PARISH PATH WARDENS**

Kevin reported that 22 parish wardens had been recruited where 3P groups were not involved. Each had been asked to survey 25% of the parish paths. They were proving especially useful in identifying landowners. Phil Betts would be responsible for the wardens and hoped to compile a list. Dennis thought it was important for volunteers to have contact with both the wardens and the 3P groups.

## **7. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS STRATEGY**

Kevin had no information on priorities for 2009-10. Alison reported that there had been some concerns at Ramblers recent General Council that few local authorities had started work on their access strategies.

## **8. ACCESS TEAM PERSONNEL**

Kevin reported that interviews would be held shortly to fill vacancies. The Maintenance Team was still in place, but the Parish Access Project had only three staff.

Kevin said that unsatisfactory work carried out by contractors should be reported to Paul Daly.

Phil Betts reported that work was being planned for one year ahead, but Dennis said that he understood that funding was available for three years.

## **9. PATH DIVERSIONS**

Bill Hodges was concerned that, under the new unitary authority, there was no way to identify planning applications affecting rights of way.

Kevin said that there was no guidance yet available but Ian Kilby of the Planning department was the person to contact and John Newnham offered to write to him.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Alison mentioned the provisional capital budget of £120,000 and £200,000 for capital expenditure. Kevin had no information on how this money would be allocated.

Bill Hodges asked about delegated powers, which Kevin said was under discussion.

Anne Holland reported that the TIC gets reports of obstructed paths. Kevin advised that these be passed to the Council via the Customer Service so that they would get priority attention.

## **11. DATES OF MEETINGS**

Kevin apologised that the date of this meeting was too soon after Easter to be convenient to many people. It was agreed to try to avoid the October half term for the next meeting.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Sent DH and KJ 23.4.09 for inclusion in Access Forum papers for 30.4.09**

**Sent AP 23.4.09**

**Sent PJ 11.6.09**

