

Shropshire Local Access Forum	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
21 October 2010	<b>6</b>	
10.00 a.m.		

**MINUTES OF THE WALKERS FORUM MEETING ON FRIDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2010 AT THE SPORTS VILLAGE, SUNDORNE ROAD, SHREWSBURY**

**PRESENT:** Jim Stabler, Deb Hughes, Kevin Jones (Shropshire Council staff), Alison Parker, Bill Hodges, Peter Carr, Trevor Allison, Michael Johnson, Peter James, Marion Law, Chris Jenkins (all Ramblers)

**APOLOGIES:** Tony Bradfield, Brian Dale Patteson, Gerry Lawson (Shrewsbury 3P), Roger Smith, Bob Alton, Susan Sharp (Ramblers FP Secretaries), Bob Williams (Brown Clee Walkers), Terry Hughes (SC)

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

Agreed as a correct record.

**Matters arising:** Deb Hughes said that Andrew Ventin had left and that there was no specific replacement for him as yet. Shona Lewis was now back from maternity leave and there would be a focus on bringing in income via the public path order work. Alison Parker assured Deb that the Ramblers current campaign to bring ROW work to the notice of councillors was not aimed at the Countryside Access Team, but rather to bring the need for the work to be given the necessary priority in the budgeting process. External funding was available for the Shropshire Way project.

**THE FUTURE OF THE WALKING FORUM**

Deb commented that the future emphasis of the Forum should be on physical activity and walking, rather than specifically on ROWs as at present, there was a need to broaden out the agenda Walking in all forms, whether it be for recreation or for local journeys is the most popular physical activity under taken by the residents and visitors of Shropshire. The importance of walking to health and wellbeing should not be underestimated. The importance of partnership working to make the best use of resources and joint working needs to be more fully explored and realised. A refocus of the existing Walking forum is a key element of this to ensure that this aim is met.

Over 90% of the users of Rights of Way are walkers. This statistic shows the importance of the Walkers Forum and its key position in being a feeder committee to the Local Access Forum.

The membership of the existing Walking Forum will need to be expanded to represent all forms of walking and should concentrate more on the development and promotion of all forms of walking to support health and wellbeing within the County.

The Key elements of work of the Forum should be as well as reporting problems, reporting back to the Local Access Forum on:

- Existing and planned strategy development
- Countryside Access Strategy
- Local Transport Plan
- Walking Strategy should be a key element of the work of the Forum.

For example the Local Transport Plan 3 was out to consultation and this included a walking strategy. The Walking Forum could contribute to the strategy, promoting better urban/rural links.

There should also be broader representation of views on the Forum for example local businesses. Members then also suggested the possibility of chambers of commerce, and advertisers in outdoor activity magazines. All types of walking should be promoted, showing where there are opportunities. The Forum could be an ideal focus for all walking activity and could help develop greater partnership working between all walking interests for the common good.

Specifically Peter James pointed out that there was no transport in some rural areas, and therefore parking places were needed in remote areas (a list is available on [www.shropshireramblers.org.uk](http://www.shropshireramblers.org.uk)). Dual use of bus stops for car parking was a possibility.

It was agreed that the Local Transport Plan should be a future agenda item as there were clearly issues which needed to be addressed outside the remit of the Countryside Access Team.

It was suggested that the minutes should be more widely distributed to publicise the Forum and that maybe there should be a core group of members with a wider email group – people could dip in and out of the Forum from the wider group if there was something of interest on the agenda.

Deb pointed out that one area of work that the Forum could look into as part of a wider group would be to coordinate a 6 monthly leaflet that advertises all guided walking opportunities in the county. This could also be specific to TIC areas to benefit local people and tourists.

Possible publicity for the Walkers Forum through the paper, demonstrating that this is not Council led. Possible annual newsletter or publicity document. It was agreed to change the name to Shropshire Walking Forum to make it more inclusive.

A discussion then took place on standing agenda items for the Forum which included possible update on the Countryside Access Strategy, Active participation in production of, for instance, a guide to walking and Active Oswestry Initiative – leading to an Action Plan.

Bill Hodges was still concerned about policy on FP problems, and it was clarified that the Forum would still have a role in consultation on wider policy issues affecting the Rights of Way network. A sub-group might be needed to discuss more specific or individual problem items. Discussion of individual issues was not appropriate for the Forum, but should be addressed to specific officers.

It was important to get the 3P groups involved, though there were problems where volunteers were resistant to some types of work. Agreed that there should be a Press release, to publicise the Forum, with Trevor Allison as a contact. Possible presentation by Muller about their community work. The Shropshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB were mentioned as future participants, also Forestry and British Waterways. A short label was discussed to be used in conjunction with the Shropshire Walking Forum, emphasising Encourage/Access/Support – this would be agreed by the new Forum members.

### **Rea Valley Shropshire Way route proposals**

Deb mentioned to the Forum the proposed new route of the Shropshire Way into Shrewsbury which would require a creation of a right of way over the golf course and along the Rea Valley. The Forum was fully in favour.

### **PROJECT OFFICER**

Jim said that a Shropshire Way Project Officer, Peter Dunhill, had been appointed.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011, venue to be confirmed.