

Shropshire Local Access Forum	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
13 July 2011	14	G
10.00 a.m.		

SHROPSHIRE RIDING AND CARRIAGE DRIVING GROUPS (SRC DG)

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 11th February 2011, at 7.30pm, Shirehall, Shrewsbury.

1. Attendance:

Angela Williams, BHS CABO & Ellesmere, Chair. John Gibson, British Driving Society, Vice Chair. Zia Robins, Shrewsbury & District RC A&BWO, Nesscliffe Hills & Dist. BWA, Joint Secretary. Dorothy Billings, Carriage Driving, Bridgnorth. Judy Dickenson, Church Preen & District. Ann Durnell & Idonia Pickering Bridgnorth BWA. Gaynor Evans & Elaine Newton, Broseley BWA. Pam Evans, Nesscliffe Hills & Dist. BWA. Sue Evans, Beckbury, Ryton & Badger BWG. Gill Eyre, BHS South Shropshire East, South Shropshire. Andrew Kelly, Vyrnwy & Dist. BWA. Elaine Thomas & Jan Mees-Robinson, Telford Bridleways. Shona Lewis, Shropshire Council.

Apologies:

Linda Russell, South West Shrewsbury BWG, Joint Secretary. Jan Baldwin, Broseley BWA. Anne Roberts, Vyrnwy & Dist. BWA. Mark Weston BHS. Rosemary Pattenden, Worthen & Dist. BWG. Carol Williams, Long Mynd & Dist. BWA.

2. Election of Chair, Vice Chair, and Officers

There being no other nominations, and Angela Williams, John Gibson, Linda Russell and Zia Robins being willing to stand for the coming year, they were unanimously re-elected.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2010 were adopted and signed by the Chair.

It was agreed that Shona Lewis would take the Agenda items on which she could input first, but that these would be minuted in Agenda order. Specific problems should be raised with the Shropshire Council Countryside Officer responsible; any other issues should be raised with Shona prior to a meeting, so she can bring a response. She left the meeting at 8.19 pm.

4. Matters Arising

(a) Helicopters

The date for the next meeting at RAF Shawbury of Thursday 12th May 2011, at 13.30 hours was confirmed. Angela Williams, John Gibson, Zia Robins, Sue Evans and Gill Eyre confirmed they will attend. Zia to check if Linda Russell and Rosemary Pattenden can attend, and who will be representing Shropshire Council. As there are to be no new Stewardship permissive Bridleways, it is not known if a representative from Natural England will wish to attend. It is agreed that it is important to continue with these meetings as personnel at Shawbury change.

(b) Telford & Wrekin LAF

The minutes of 7th September 2010 are noted. Zia has obtained them from the Internet. Minutes for the meeting, planned to be held, on Wednesday 1st December 2010 are not available yet. Jan confirmed that she only received minutes a couple of days before meetings.

(c) Cycling

Shona reported that the National Cycle Network Route 45 from Coalport to Stanley Lane is, she understands, open to horse riders. The formal opening date of Sunday 27th March 2011 is noted. Shona confirmed that Shropshire Council policy is that all new cycle route agreements should include horse riders, and that Bridleway rights had been confirmed on the part of Route 45 that goes through the Willey Estate, but we would need to double check with Alison Kennedy on other sections such as Apley, as she did the agreements, but all routes should have access for horse riders as this was Council policy now. Sue Evans and Shona would follow up on this. Gaynor reported that there are horse-walking boxes up to Apley. She had heard that there was talk of re-opening the railway from Bridgnorth to Ironbridge. Shona agreed to check and come back on the Honeypot route, which, it was said, had been agreed with Lady Forrester sometime ago. Evidence had been withdrawn on another route with a line issue in order for this to go ahead. Zia has spoken to David Cowell about the concern over the waymarking for the mountain bike routes on the Long Mynd using a number in a bridleway way mark, when our Ride Shropshire routes, on the same line, have a different number. He thought they were going to use a bike roundel waymark. Peter Carty had been dealing with this. Zia will follow up again on this.

(d) Local Transport Plan

It is noted that the LTP and Quiet Lanes will be on the agenda for the next LAF meeting at the Shirehall on 13th May 2011. Zia stated that at the January LAF meeting, she had raised the point made by Ms Cook (LAF mins. last para. item 3 on p.21 of Agenda papers) that “horseriding would be mentioned in the Transport Plan, but it was not seen as a priority, as it was a leisure pursuit, not an everyday transport element”. Zia pointed out to LAF that much use of highways in the countryside by walkers and cyclists was leisure use, and they are considered as road users, so horse riders should be given equal consideration as legal users of the highways. It was raised that due to Highway rules, Quiet Lanes were refused in Little Wenlock because too many cars used them. Enforcement is also a problem. Zia read from the June 2010 Natural England guidelines for Quiet lanes. It is important to get Quiet Lanes whilst they are still quiet, as it is too late when they are used as rat runs.

(e) Budgetary Pressures

Shona reported that there was not good news. They had a meeting this morning, when they were told by Neil Wilcox, who heads their service, that it was extremely unlikely that they would be getting any capital money next year. This is devastating news, bearing in mind that quite a few of their staff, who do physical work on the ground, are funded through the capital money and it is used to do surfacing work and work on bridges and is part of their working budget. On top of that they have been told to expect cuts, and the Council are looking to merge Countryside Access with the Parks and Countryside Team. Staff are in a quandary at present, but, hopefully, people are fighting behind the scenes to get some capital money. The report will be going back to Cabinet with amendments on the 14th February, but it is looking unlikely that they will get any capital funding. They were asking for £250,000 for their whole service including Parks & Countryside, which is £100,000 less than they had this year, as they were trying to be realistic. Until they know what the structure above them is to be, it is difficult to work out anything, but there will ultimately be redundancies, and what they will be left with they don't know. **It was agreed that Zia would attend the Cabinet meeting and put forward the Groups' concerns.** Zia said that the Countryside Service had achieved a fantastic amount over recent years and these cuts would be disastrous. Shona said that over 18 years ago there were about 4 staff members, and they now have a team of 29 who achieve a fantastic amount and the Orders they deal with far outstrip their neighbouring authorities. The team on the ground have built up skills and know the landowners involved, and all this expertise could be lost. Zia pointed out that Parish Paths Groups relied on support from Officers and could not operate without ROW furniture. It was also pointed out how important ROW are to tourism, which is one of Shropshire's main sources of income, and to health, with walking for health routes needing safe ROW. Shona pointed out that they get a lot of matched funding to carry out projects such as the Ride Shropshire routes and the improvements to the Jack Mytton Way, and that the Shropshire Way would not have been improved and extended

if they had not got capital money to provide the matched funding. Members asked who they should write to and it was suggested the Chief Executive. Lots of organisations rely on the ROW network. Shona said that they would have to try and find some existing revenue to carry out Statutory work and works on the ground, but all is uncertain at present until they know what their structure is to be. It was pointed out that many Groups rely on rights of way in order to carry out their activities and training.

(f) Chinese Lanterns

It is noted that any reports of incidents in Shropshire involving equestrians, or on equestrian property should be sent to Mark.Weston@bhs.org.uk. Some members have already done this. Wires have been found inside horses, and they can get chopped up in hay and eaten. The new bamboo ones can still cause damage. They are also a fire risk. There have been incidents in the Church Pulverbatch area. 53 were picked up from fields near Adcote. Judy Dickenson said that the NFU want to get them banned, and have asked that MP's be informed of any incidents.

(g) Natural England Consultation

Zia's response, on behalf of Groups, to Natural England's discussion document "An invitation to shape the Nature of England" is noted. Groups agreed it was a good response. Copies of Zia's response to the 'Grassroots Engagement' follow on consultation were handed out. The consultation deadline gave no time to hold a meeting, so Zia had responded using Shropshire as the chosen "place", and had received a response.

(h) Any other matters arising not on the Agenda – there were no other matters arising.

5. Shropshire Council

(a) Shropshire Riding website

Shona reported that Pippa Murphy, who is the person who deals with the updates to the website, is currently on maternity leave, and that there is no replacement in her absence. Jim Stabler is currently responsible for updating, and any information should be sent to him. On the Ride Shropshire website the number of hits had been 683 October – December, 1,287 July-Sept. and 1,222 April-June. It was felt this was due to seasonal demand, and the fact that not all riders had transport. The number of hits could also be due to the fact that the site is not updated. Jim has been working on improving the walking site, which now has interactive mapping, with information available by clicking on a place. If this trial works this could be rolled out to the other sites. Zia asked if funding would be available. It was felt that information on closed or obstructed routes would be very helpful; and also where to park. It was pointed out that there is an 'unloading' section on the site, but it had no information on it. It was suggested that members could feed this information in for their area, together with any information they felt could be useful. Local permissive routes, open, available and well signposted could be added. Sue pointed out that the base map was not up to date, as routes had been added in their area. Shona confirmed that the information on Shropmap should be up to date. There are plans to update Shropmap.

(b) Countryside Access Implementation Team

Shona reported that Richard Knight's team is getting on well with the Ride Shropshire routes and they had all been surveyed with the waymarking checked as they went, and it is hoped to get all work finished by the end of this financial year. Sue asked about the bridge in the Wyre Forest. Shona said this was ongoing and that the County boundary is in the centre of the bridge. Zia reported on the Condition Survey being carried out by Richard's Team: she read out the notes she had typed up on the presentation Richard gave to LAF. It is a two-year project, being carried out by two people and is being fitted in with the Parish Access Project. Data collected is fed into SC's CAMS, then the position of ROW furniture, obstructions, line issues etc. are logged by GPS, and photos are taken. Condition, importance, and development potential etc. of the route is also noted. The results will be extremely useful in future planning etc., especially the line issues. Shona reported that they had 900 anomalies on the Rights of Way network before the project started;

these included buildings on routes, change of status along routes, and dead ends. Only legally recorded routes are being surveyed. Details of routes currently being reviewed would already be known. Gaps in the riding network would have a high priority to be resolved. Shona confirmed that the project is also capital funded. If funding is cut it may not be completed. The definitive map is being updated from the original Sept. 1965 acetate copy to a digitised one, and they hope to consolidate this soon. Shona confirmed that they are aware of ridden routes that are not on the definitive map as these had been logged for the Discovering Lost Ways project. Zia asked if the Lost Ways results were available. Shona confirmed that these could be obtained from Natural England for north Shropshire. Zia will follow this up.

6. Public Inquiries and Definitive Map Issues

The Public Inquiry into objections to the modification to the Order to upgrade FP50 to BW Craignant, to be held at Quinta Hall, Weston Rhyn on Wednesday/Thursday 27/28 April 2011 is noted.

Shona reported that the majority of the work her team has done in the last six months was public path orders, diversions, extinguishments etc., as they brought in income, so review work has suffered a bit.

Bentall Edge, Barrow - Bridleway addition, footpath upgrade. It is hoped to get this via a creation order. The paper work is all in place, but they are awaiting the outcome of the Barrow and Broseley Review issues at the Inquiry. This is a very important link route.

Llanyblodwell Review – This would be part confirmed, and routes with objections would then be sent to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.

Barrow & Broseley – The objection period ended on 21st January. 17 objections had been received to Old Park Farm, Chapel Lane; 2 objections to the FP65 Barrow upgrade to bridleway. When an Inspector modifies an order this then opens it all up again, which is very confusing for the public. Some objections may not be relevant, or may have already been dealt with at an Inquiry. Only new evidence can be dealt with.

There are currently 11 orders waiting to go to the Planning Inspectorate, but Shropshire Council do not have the staff to deal with them.

These include Old Moors Lane, St. Martins Parish; Frodesley Lodge, and Bentley Ford Farm, Frodesley Parish; Sutton Mill Lane, Hilton, Worfield Parish; and Badger Dingle FP upgrade to BW. There was concern that witnesses are dying or moving away. Shona has 15 issues, some complex, and only 2 ½ officers to deal with them. What next year will hold is not known. When orders are sent off they are given very tight deadlines, so they have to prioritise. It was emphasised the importance of getting a statutory declaration/affidavit on evidence of use from elderly people. A signed letter giving good information showing knowledge of the route, recollections, people they rode the route with, etc. is important, and any updates. Inspectors give more weight to evidence given by attendees at an Inquiry. There are currently nearly 80 applications on the books, so they have to prioritise. This is on top of the review work.

Shrewsbury Review – FP108 upgrade to Bridleway and the old railway line at Sutton Farm bridleway claim – work is still ongoing on these dedications.

Tugford and Stiperstones diversions – these are still ongoing. Tugford is due to be published soon. Stiperstones is still being consulted on.

BW 1 Petton – Shona confirmed that this will be opened up as a through route.

Group members thanked Shona and her team for the fantastic job they did.

7. DEFRA

(a) Response to the British Horse Society

The response on behalf of Richard Benyon MP to Graham Cory, Chief Executive BHS is noted. Groups were asked to note that the contents were pointing to horse riders having to help themselves, and were perhaps a forewarning of the cuts to Stewardship and other cuts to come.

(b) Natural England Stewardship Access Schemes

The letter from the Chair of LAF to the Right Hon. Caroline Spelman MP and the response by Defra customer contact unit on behalf of the Secretary of State are noted. Zia said that she understood that no funding for Access came from the EU, and that matched funding had to be found from the Exchequer. No existing agreements would be renewed by Defra, but landowners can continue them if they wish, and furniture will still be provided for access. Judy said that landowners had to leave 6ft from the centre of the hedge and if they wanted to leave more it was up to them. Zia said that landowner could give permission to use their land unless it had specific wildlife restrictions. This had been dealt with at a previous meeting. Unfortunately the paper work for Lea Hall Farm, Whitchurch, an excellent Stewardship scheme which we had been told last year would be renewed, did not get submitted in time, so will not now be renewed. Rednal Farm near West Felton was completed on time so is renewed for 10 years. Zia listed the schemes that would be ending in the next few years. 2011: Rowley Farm near Westbury, Pansons Farm, Hanwood. 2012: Hatton Grange Estate near Shifnal, Lushcott Farm near Much Wenlock, which connects to the Jack Mytton Way, Patton House Farm near Much Wenlock. 2013: Acton Scott Hall near Church Stretton, Lower Elcott Farm A near Much Wenlock, Lower Netley Farm near Dorrington, Tong Park Farm near Shifnal, Wheathall Farm near Dorrington, Burlington Farm near Shifnal, Little Wytheford near Shrewsbury. 2014 x 7, 2016 x 4, 2017 x 1, 2018 x 1, 2019 x 5. 2020 x 1. It is thought that Patton House Farm land has been sold.

8. List of Streets and UCR's

The minutes of the Byways Liaison Group Meeting held on 16th September 2010 are noted. Zia reported that the next meeting is to be held at 10-12am on 10th March 2011 at Craven Arms. John Gibson has offered to attend these meetings on behalf of our Group. This was unanimously agreed. John asked for members to contact him by phone or e-mail if there were any issues they wanted him to raise at the Byways meetings. John and Zia had been members of the LAF Sub-Committee that had looked into UCR's and other Highway matters. Andrew Kelly raised Richard Knight's report in the Byways Minutes that the highways management team are not able to give written assurance that all UCR's have vehicle rights. He said that this is a national issue and his Group are taking it on. He updated on his Group. They have a meeting this Friday and three things they are actively looking at are producing a definitive list of evidence to submit when you look into the status of UCR's. The format of the list of streets, as these vary throughout the country; a format of how they should look; and lastly, but most importantly, is the process to amend the list of streets. The definitive map has a formal process and they are trying to set something similar. Andy Savage attends the meeting on behalf of Shropshire Council. Zia said that when she checked the Highway maps she found that all the ORPA's (Other roads with public access) that she checked were public roads shown on Highway's maps from 1929 onwards. The Highways Representative had confirmed to the Sub-Committee that 1929 Handover Map routes are public roads, and they all had vehicular status, and this had been minuted. John confirmed this. Shona said that this could have been Andy Gough or Chris Edwards. Andy Savage was now leading for Highways on these matters.

Shona confirmed that they were successful in obtaining money from Highways to do work on UCR'S, signposting, opening up, and surface work. About a kilometre of surfacing has been done on Cwms Lane, Cardington, as well as work at Winstanstown, and surface and drainage work at Newcastle-on-Clun, and they intend to do work on routes on the Long Mynd, including Coates to the Shooting Box, Boiling Well area to Medlicott Cottage, and Medlicott to Adstone which involves drainage and surfacing. There is money for this work to continue next year. Shona would check up on the current situation with Salt Lane, Golding. The owner has stated that this is an old Roman Road. It may need to be claimed if this has not already been done.

9. Sale of Public Forest Estate in England

The Report to the January 2011 LAF, and the petition against sales of Forestry, on www.38degrees.org.uk, supported by the BHS, are noted. Zia handed out copies of a letter she has

written to her MP Daniel Kawczynski. Members thought it was a very good letter. Zia followed the debate in parliament and said it was very worrying as access and parking could be lost if Forestry is sold, and even open access can be closed on certain days, and land can be exempted. A lot of our promoted Ride Shropshire routes go through forestry on permissive routes. Horse riders currently have free access to Forestry Commission woodland in Shropshire. If other organisations like the Woodland Trust take over woodland they may not want equestrian access. It is understood that it is not possible to claim routes on Forestry Commission land. Jan commented that the consultation was 64 pages long and who was going to do it? There was only one question on access! Zia said that it is important that everyone writes to their MP and to Helen Spelman, asking that equestrian access and car parking be secured for the future. If everyone writes, and also signs the petition, it might make a difference. Only one Conservative MP voted against the sales.

10. Minutes and Feedback from LAFs and other Forums

The Minutes of the Local Access Forum Meeting on 21st October 2010 are noted. Zia did a verbal update on the previous 15th July LAF meeting at our last meeting. Zia stated that all relevant Agenda items and attachments from the LAF meeting held on 24th January 2011, have been included in today's Agenda, apart from 'Sustainable Tourism Strategy in the Shropshire Hills' which is covered by the Long Mynd & District Bridleways Group. Shona confirmed that there is no news at present from Bardon Aggregates on the proposals for Wenlock Quarry, nor on the section of the old railway line into Much Wenlock. The dates for the next LAF meetings are now 13th May at the Shirehall, AGM on 13th July at Craven Arms, and meetings on 20th October, 23rd January 2012 and 1st May 2012 all at the Shirehall. All the meetings start at 10am. The Walking Forum minutes show the new set up for this Forum.

11. Other Matters to Note

The British Horse Society new website www.horseaccidents.org.uk for reporting Equestrians incidents involving dog attacks, fireworks, gates, low flying aircraft, road accidents, slippery road surfaces and wind farms, and the advice given, is noted. Zia advised that the website currently has no provision to report incidents involving Chinese Lanterns or Bird Scarers. She has written to Mark Weston asking if these categories could be added to the website.

Noted – That the BHS Access week is from 20th–30th May 2011 and that the BHS are asking that people hold a 'Ride for Access' to raise money for the BHS Access Fighting Fund.

12. Any Other Business

Gill Eyre read a letter on behalf of the Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association, asking that the Group support the new route round the north of the Stiperstones alongside the Black Ditch. It was confirmed that this had been dealt with at a previous meeting, and Zia and Angela had looked at the new route on behalf of the Groups and agreed that with a few width and surface problems resolved it would be a good route for riders. Gill asked that the new route is not opposed. It was confirmed that The Groups fully supported the dedication of this new link route, as a bridleway. The Groups had also discussed the downgrade of the route to the top of the Stiperstones. It was felt then that as this route is used by only a very few horse riders they could not be responsible for the wear that is occurring, so there is really no reason to deny access to those few riders who do wish to ride up for the views. It was felt that as routes have been dedicated for walkers that the link route should be dedicated without conditions.

Dates of the Next Meetings - The confirmed date of the next meeting on **6th June 2011** is noted. The date of the following meeting of **3rd October 2011** is confirmed. The meetings to be held in the Shirehall at 7.30 pm.