

Shropshire Local Access Forum	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
20 October 2011	3	A
10.00 a.m.		

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON 13 JULY 2011 AT 10.00 A.M. AT CRAVEN ARMS COMMUNITY CENTRE, NEWINGTON WAY, CRAVEN ARMS

Present

Mr Richard Cotham, Mr David Cowell, Mrs Jane Ing (Chair), Mr Stuart Morgan, Mrs Alison Parker, Mr Roger Plowden, Ms Sula Rayska, Mrs Zia Robins and Mr Mark Weston (Vice-Chair)

1. Apologies for Absence/ Welcome

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mr Stephen Bell, Dr Jane Morris, Mr Chris Chillingworth, Mr Bob Hill and Mr Mike Owen.

It was also noted that Ms Deb Hughes and Mrs Lyn Stabler were unable to attend the meeting.

Mrs Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer was welcomed to her first meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made by members.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 May 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Arising thereon:

3.1 Public Question Time – Foxholes Farm, Little Ness (Paragraph 5)

The Forum noted that an appeal against the refusal of Shropshire Council to grant planning permission for the erection of five poultry sheds, improvements to existing highway and creation of new access at Foxholes Farm Buildings, Little Ness, had been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate.

3.2 Shropshire Local Transport Plan (paragraph 8) Use of buffer zones for village speed limits/ Local Sustainable Transport Fund

It was reported that Jan Cook had provided the following answer in respect of the question regarding speed limit buffer zones.

'Buffer zones' were used in a minority of circumstances when introducing a new 30 mph speed limit in a village. Each location was considered on its merits and a 40mph buffer zone applied when either there was considerable outlying development on the edge of a village development, (that was not of a density that justified an extension of the 30mph limit, but was not suitable for 60mph), or there were high approach speeds, (this tended to be on higher level A and B roads).

This approach was in line with Department for Transport guidance. It was not considered necessary or appropriate to apply a 40mph buffer in all cases because approach speeds might already be low, or there might be enforcement issues of a 40mph limit where the environment did not help to re-enforce that speed limit (i.e. no development).

A few printed copies off the Shropshire Council website concerning the successful bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund were circulated at the meeting. Shropshire Council had been awarded a grant of £4,990,000 for a package of measures to improve transport, support economic growth and cut carbon emissions. Mr Stabler pointed out that one element of the proposals was walking promotion, which aimed to build on the success of Walking for Health Scheme in Shropshire, and to take this project further, providing encouragement and support for people to increase their walking for everyday journeys. Three key workers based in Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Ludlow, working under the direction of Deb Hughes, would deliver a package of measures to encourage more people to utilise walking as a form of sustainable travel.

4. Public Question Time

No questions or statements were received from members of the public.

5. The Sale of the Public Forest Estate in England

It was reported that the Independent Panel on Forestry were seeking views on forests and woods in England, and what this landscape could and should provide, now and in the future. Background information on the work of the Independent Panel was available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/forestry/panel/>

The Forum considered a report on questions devised by the Forestry Panel entitled a "call for views". The Chair asked LAF Members to send copies of their responses to Mr Stabler, preferably by 15 July. The deadline for submitting views was 31 July 2011.

The “Sale of the Public Forest” LAF Working Group had met and Mr Stabler presented a draft statement. The Forum then reviewed the proposed response on a line by line basis, following which it was

RESOLVED:

a) That the Independent Panel for Forestry be informed that the following actions should be implemented before the selling of any Forestry Commission land:

1. All forestry open access sites should be given higher level access to all non-motorised users under regulations for the dedication of land for public access under section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

2. Car parks must be brought up to a suitable standard and be retained and maintained in perpetuity by the landowner.

3. Existing “lost ways” and claimed routes linked to or in Forestry Commission land need to be recognised, noted and retained until their status is resolved.

4. Where rights of way end at wood edges then a right of way should be dedicated through that wood.

5. Before any sale the strategic and commercial importance to the local community should be investigated and considered.

6. The relevant Local Access Forum should be consulted before any Forestry Commission land is sold or leases closed.

b) A spreadsheet, prepared by Mrs Robins on all known Forestry Commission land in Shropshire showing its current usage, shall be attached with the response.

6. Individual Planning Applications

The Forum noted information set out in the agenda on whether it was appropriate for the Forum to get involved in individual planning applications.

Mr Wise added that there had been considerable controversy over route corridor options put forward by the National Grid for connections to the high voltage electricity transmission network for wind farm developers in Mid Wales, which potentially affected Shropshire. The first phase of public consultations had now ended but planning applications could be submitted in the following year. The Chair stated that she would discuss with Mr Stabler whether this should feature as an agenda item at a future meeting.

7. Away Day: Meres and Mosses

The Chair reported on the Away Day on 9 June, which seven members of the Forum had attended for part or the whole of the day. The weather had been fine, there had been good company, and three interesting presentations, (Jim Stabler on the planned disabled access at Bettisfield, Angela Jones of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust on the Meres and Mosses project and Dr Joan Daniels, Natural England Senior Adviser for the Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses National Nature Reserve, who had given a guided walk round Bettisfield Moss). The Chair hoped that her description of the day's events had enthused everybody and that all the members would be able to participate in the following year's outing.

8. Disabled access proposals at Bettisfield, Whixall

Mr Stabler reported that a little walkway into Fenn's Moss had been built for disabled users but they could not reach it at present. He had been working with Natural England, the British Waterways Board and the Lyneal Trust on proposals to re-grade the towpath to enable wheelchair users to get to the walkway, to provide a jetty on the Shropshire Union Canal for use by the Lyneal Trust and other narrow boat users and a disabled access path to the World's End Car Park near Dobson's Bridge. The total cost was estimated at £15,000.

9. Unclassified County Roads

Mr Richard Knight, Access Maintenance Team Leader, gave a power point presentation on the Review of UCRs and the work achieved to date by the Access Maintenance Team. (A copy of the presentation is on the webpage for the meeting).

RESOLVED : That Richard Knight and his team be congratulated on the superb work which has been undertaken.

10. Natural England

Mr Stabler reported that Natural England staff members were still settling in following a major re-structuring, and roles and responsibilities had been examined. More detailed information would be provided at the next meeting on budgets etc.

11. Natural Environment White Paper and Local Nature Partnerships

It was noted that the Government's White Paper on the Natural Environment entitled: The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature could be viewed at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

An extract from the press release and summaries for citizens, land managers and conservation organisations was received for information. Members noted that despite its importance access was hardly mentioned.

12. LAF Co-ordination

Mr Stabler reported that there would be no LAF co-ordinators in the future, therefore his role as LAF co-ordinator for the West Midlands would cease by the end of the financial year. There was no intention to revive the England Access Forum.

All Local Access Forums would be able to operate a secure file sharing and management system called Huddle. Reporting chains had not been finalised and he hoped to provide more information at the next meeting.

13. Community Infrastructure Levy

Forum members were reminded that representations had been made earlier that year about the draft charging schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Sue Turner of the Planning Inspectorate had been appointed as the Independent Examiner of the Draft Charging Schedule. As part of her examination of the Draft Charging Schedule there would be public hearings, commencing on 27 and 28 July 2011 at the Food Enterprise Centre, Vanguard Way, Shrewsbury.

Mr Mark Blount would be attending the next meeting to explain the operation of the new levy system.

14. Feedback from other Forums and items for noting

The Forum received for information:

Shropshire Cycling Forum minutes of 2 March 2011

Letter from Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries about usage of The Alban Way is an off- road trail between Hatfield and St Albans, Hertfordshire, which had implications for the use of all such routes by horseriders.

Minutes of the meeting of the Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Groups held on 7 February 2011(not 11 February as stated).

RESOLVED: That representations shall be made by the Chair seeking confirmation that Shropshire Council will comply with the sentiments expressed by the Minister over the use of cycle ways by horse riders.

15. Secretary

It was reported that David Wise was taking voluntary early retirement from Shropshire Council at the end of August 2011. The first meeting of the Joint Local Access Forum for Shropshire and the Borough of Telford and Wrekin had been held on 27 June 2003 and David had taken over as Secretary on 30 November 2004.

Mr Richard Thomas, Democratic Services and Elections Manager, had agreed that this role should continue to be provided and he had put forward Mrs Linda Jeavons for appointment.

The Chair thanked Mr Wise for his services and the Forum members showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

RESOLVED : That Mrs Linda Jeavons be appointed Secretary to the Shropshire Local Access Forum.

16. Next meeting

Members were asked to suggest agenda items for the next meeting which would be held on Thursday 20 October 2011.

It was agreed that there should be an update on the structure of the Outdoor Recreation Team by Deb Hughes, a presentation on the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy by Mark Blount and if permissible a discussion of the impact of a route corridor for electricity pylons through the Shropshire countryside at that or a subsequent meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

Signed

Date