



Committee and Date
Shropshire Local Access Forum
23 January 2012
10.00 am

Item
3A
Public

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2011 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE SHREWSBURY ROOM,
SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY**

10.00 am – 12.30 pm

Responsible Officer Linda Jeavons
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PRESENT:

Mrs Jane Ing (Chair)

Mr Stephen Bell, Mr Gareph Boxley, Mr Chris Chillingworth, Mr Stuart Morgan,
Dr Jane Morris, Mrs Alison Parker, Mr Roger Plowden and Mrs Zia Robins.

OFFICERS:

Mr Mark Blount, Development Manager, Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Service
Ms Deb Hughes, Outdoor Recreation Manager
Mr Jim Stabler, Countryside Access Development Officer
Mrs Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer

Also in Attendance: Janet Mees-Robinson and Paul Wynn (potential new members)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from Mr David Cowell, Mr Bob Hill,
Mr Mike Owen and Mr Mark Weston.

The resignation of Mr Robert Hill was noted.

Members noted the decreasing numbers of members on the Forum, and particularly expressed their dismay at the lack of attendance by Shropshire Councillors.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That a letter of thanks be written to Mr Bob Hill thanking him for his commitment and input during his time on the Forum.
- (ii) That a letter be written to the two Shropshire Councillors expressing the Forum's dismay at their lack of attendance and to request that at least one of them attend each meeting.
- (iii) That an increase in the number of Shropshire Councillors on the Forum be investigated.
- (iii) That a campaign to raise awareness of the Forum and encourage new members, particularly those interest groups least represented, ie cycling, be initiated.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 20 October 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Arising thereon:

3.1 Sustainable Transport / Walking for Health (Paragraph 3.2)

Mr Stabler advised the meeting that the Transport Department had been awarded approximately £305,000 to be spent on improvements to rights of way, and to fund three posts which would amalgamate the existing Walking for Health role with an overall Walking Co-ordinator role. They would have a focus on Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Ludlow and the hinterland around them, and would include all walking co-ordination and walking promotion within the area.

3.2 Disabled Access Proposals at Bettisfield, Whixall (Paragraph 8), and the planned Much Wenlock Disabled Trail

Disabled Access Proposals at Bettisfield, Whixall

Mr Stabler reported that a meeting with British Waterways had been undertaken whereby it had been agreed that Shropshire Council would undertake the land based work with British Waterways taking responsibility for the waterside work. This would mean there were no legal implications and no wayleaves were required for us to enter onto British Waterways land. British Waterways would probably use their barges to transport all necessary materials with work commencing around January / February 2012.

Much Wenlock Disabled Trail

Mr Stabler reported that five walks had been completed. Work had commenced on the easy access trail along the old railway line and was expected to be completed within the next 2/3 weeks. They were currently in the process of building ramps, clearing footpaths and just waiting for rain before spreading the rocks and gravel.

Natural England and Huddle

The meeting received a presentation from Jim Stabler on the on-line communication tool, forum and information/document resource known as “Huddle”, an electronic workspace, which would be used by Local Access Forums nationally, Natural England and DEFRA.

In response to questions, Mr Stabler explained that there was a limit to the number of people who could be on the system at any one time; each LAF would probably have full access for up to four members; access for all members to have read-only access had not been confirmed; and he would look into the possibility of setting up a group workspace for members of the Shropshire Local Access Forum.

A training video for Huddle can be accessed via the following link:

<https://cc.callinfo.com/play?id=ad7v8g>

In response to a suggestion, it was agreed that the Access Development Officer would establish a Shropshire Local Access Forum Facebook site, with a link to the Shropshire Way Facebook site.

3.3 Ramblers' Association – 'light touch survey'

The Forum noted the results of the 'light-touch' countrywide survey undertaken by the Ramblers' Association, which ranked Shropshire Council in 12th position. It was agreed that the Outdoor Recreation Team be congratulated on the excellent work undertaken on the network to date.

3.4 Sale of the Forestry Commission Land

The Forum noted that a response had been forwarded to The Independent Forestry Panel in response to their request for views on forests and woods in England and what this landscape could and should provide, now and in the future.

3.5 Multi-Use Tracks

Members noted that, as yet, no information had been received from Mr M Withington with regard to Forum's request for further information on the new adopted policy on the use of cycleways by equestrians. It was reported that Mr Withington had since left the Authority; and Jim Stabler agreed to pursue a response.

4. Public Question Time

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

5. Community Infrastructure Levy / Play and Playing Field Strategy

Community Infrastructure Levy

Mr Mark Blount was in attendance and gave an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL would provide a fair and transparent means for ensuring that development contributes to the cost of infrastructure required to support development. In Shropshire, 90% of the levy would be spent on local infrastructure priorities that would be identified in partnership with the local town or parish councils, with 10% of the levy being spent on strategic infrastructure. Eligible developments that receive planning consent on or after 1st January 2012, would be subject to this new levy with costs to the developer being £40 per m² for market towns and £80 per m² elsewhere. Place Plans would identify the local priorities and infrastructure requirements for each of Shropshire's communities.

Playing Field Strategy

Mr Mark Blount explained that a review of all playing fields and pitches across the County had been undertaken, and, although Shropshire had sufficient playing fields, they were not all good quality ones. The next course of action would be to identify those most used and develop them over the next few years.

Play Strategy

Mr Mark Blount reported that, following receipt of Government funding, a group was set-up to oversee the Playbuilder programme. This money had now been spent, but this same group would now oversee the formulation of the Play Strategy policy. The main emphasis would be on play spaces and providers of play activities and not outdoor play equipment.

It was suggested that the Playing Field Strategy and Play Strategy be added to the list of priorities for further appraisal.

6. Structure of the Outdoor Recreation Team.

Ms Deb Hughes updated the meeting on the new structure of the Outdoor Recreation team and circulated a contact list to all Members.

7. Outdoor Recreation – Project List

Ms Deb Hughes drew Members' attention to the Countryside Access Strategy, the strategic document which informed the work of the Outdoor Recreation team, and updated the meeting on the actions / aims of the Strategy, work undertaken to date and future plans. One of the aims was to increase knowledge of the infrastructure and maintenance issues on the access network. To date over half of the network had been surveyed. The next step was to look at the condition survey data and formulate a plan of future priorities and action. The number of easy to use ROWs had increased from 32% to 85%. A raft of measures were also in place to improve provision, marketing and promotion of the rights of way network making it easier for those with learning difficulties, mental health problems, sensory impairment, and hard-to-reach groups to participate in countryside activities.

Members emphasised the need for the promotion of multi-user routes, partnership working with bodies such as National Trust and the continuation of the UCR project with Highways.

Mr Jim Stabler reported and updated on projects to date, all of which utilised external funding and were linked to the aims arising out of the Countryside Access Strategy.

With reference to the Countryside Access Strategy, Mr Jim Stabler explained that a review would be underway next year, arising out of this would be a revised Action Plan, which would be presented to a future meeting.

8. Lea Quarry, Much Wenlock

Mr Jim Stabler reported that the purchase of Lea Quarry, Much Wenlock by the National Trust was in abeyance. Shropshire Council had sold Presthoke Caravan Park but the Outdoor Recreation Team had secured rights of way from the tunnel. The aim was to develop walking within the quarry and route the Shropshire Way through the tunnel, and engineers had been appointed to undertake safety checks.

9. Local Access Forum Priorities

Mr Jim Stabler invited Members to identify a list of priorities or projects for future consideration. He drew Members' attention to the Constitution and the purpose of the Forum to provide advice to statutory bodies. The Forum could also consider giving advice to other individuals/organisations if it considered it necessary.

Suggestions:

- Countryside Access Strategy
- Playing Field Strategy
- Play Strategy
- More engagement from Natural England
- Getting young people involved
- Increase the number of route leaflets for all interests, eg cycling, walking
- Car parking provision – as walking becomes more popular verges will fall into disrepair
- Liaison with Town and Parish Councils
- View Ranger – provision of electronic guides through smartphones
- Mountain biking / free cycling / free running
- Geocaching
- Access to Common Land
- Gating Orders
- Planning Applications
- UCR work

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Countryside Access Strategy be considered as a priority.
- (ii) That a list of priorities be presented to the next meeting for consideration.
- (iii) That a letter be written to the appropriate department of Shropshire Council requesting that the Shropshire Local Access Forum be consulted on all Gating Orders.

10. Consultations

National Planning Policy Framework - The meeting noted that a response had been sent and acknowledged (copy attached to the signed minutes).

Red Tape Challenge - Noted.

Natural Environment White Paper -The meeting noted that this was a document for information at this stage. The information had been kept on file for when / if input was needed.

11. Annual Report

RESOLVED: That the Access Development Officer prepare a draft to be emailed to all Members for their comments before forwarding the final version to Natural England.

12. Recruitment to the Local Access Forum / Retirement of Chair

The meeting acknowledged the impending resignation of Jane Ing as Chair and the dwindling number of Members on the Forum. Members noted the decision made earlier in the meeting to initiate a campaign to raise awareness of the Forum.

13. Feedback from other Forums and items for noting

13.1 The Forum received for information:

Shropshire Cycling Forum minutes – 7 June 2011

Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Groups minutes – 6 June 2011

13.2 Gating Orders

Members noted the communication from Bill Hodges (copy attached to the signed minutes). The Forum agreed:

- (i) that Gating Orders should only be used in exceptional circumstances; and
- (ii) that the Local Access Forum be informed of any Gating Orders in the County (as previously discussed and agreed at Minute No. 9)

13.3 Temporary Traffic Orders (ref: page 39 of the Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Groups minutes).

Members noted the correspondence between Zia Robins and Ron Buzzacott, Highways and Transport Manager (copy attached to the signed minutes).

13.4 Long Mynd MTB map

Members expressed concern that some of the cycle routes on the Long Mynd promoted fast speeds on downhill multi-user sections (copy of map attached to the signed minutes).

14. Next meeting

Members were asked to suggest agenda items for the next meeting which would be held on Monday, 23 January 2012.

- List of priorities for future consideration
- Annual Report
- Update on the Countryside Recreation Team
- Countryside Access Strategy
- Definitive List of Highways (for a future meeting)
- Ideas for Away Day
- Wind Farms and the routing of high voltage power pylons through the Shropshire Countryside.

The meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

Signed

Date