

Shropshire Local Access Forum – January 2012

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Forum is to provide advice to the local authority and other organisations on how to make the Countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation and in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.

Other organisations specifically include:

Shropshire Council
Parish and town councils within the Forum area
Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
The Secretary of State
Natural England
The Forestry Commission
English Heritage
Sport England

Although these are the statutory bodies, the Forum may also consider giving advice to other individuals or organisations if it was thought to be beneficial.

The advice from the Forum will be independent, constructive, relative, inclusive, incisive and informed. The advice will take account of a broad range of balanced local interests and take account of social, economic and environmental concerns.

The Aim of the Forum is to:

- Develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside
- Respect local circumstances and different interests whilst operating within national guidance
- Provide advice on issues of principle and good practice which is consistent with national guidance
- Engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible
- Where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of the differing views and suggest how they might be resolved.

In carrying out these functions the Forum will have regard to:

- The needs of land management
- The desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Shropshire including the flora, fauna, geological and physiological features of the area
- Guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State
- Proper liaison with neighbouring authorities'

Members bring a wide range of experience and knowledge, including:-

- Recreational use
- Land Management

- Other interests which could include; nature conservation, heritage, tourism, health, business, trade unions and transport

Working Groups

The Forum may appoint members to working groups to consider any issue within the Forums remit. The groups should be formed from a number of forum members and also representation from, user's forums, other relevant groups or individuals and appointing authority officers. These Forums should make recommendations to the Access Forum on specific issues.

The Forums existing at present include:

Shropshire Cycling Forum

Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Group

Byways Liaison group

The existence of a Walking Forum is currently under review

Priorities

The Shropshire Local Access Forum will prioritise their time by identifying issues which are of special interest or relevance to the area in relation to access and open-air recreation. These are likely to include:-

- Development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people
- Strategic improvements to the rights of way network
- Implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside
- Provide advice on issues of principle and good practice which is consistent with national guidance.

Shropshire Local Access Forum considered in October 2012 that the main priorities during 2012 would be:

1. Shropshire Countryside Access Strategy
2. Getting young people involved in Outdoor Recreation (to include The Shropshire Play Strategy and Playing Field Strategy)
3. Increasing promotion (route leaflets for all interests, electronic guides, geocaching)

The LAF may consider that the three priorities are sufficient but other suggestions included:

- Liaison with Town and Parish Councils
- Car parking provision
- Mountain biking, free cycling and free running
- Access to Common land
- Gating orders
- Planning Applications
- UCR work