



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Shropshire Local Access Forum
1 May 2012
10.00 am

<u>Item</u>
3
Public

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2012 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE SHREWSBURY ROOM, SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY

10.00 am – 12.20 pm

Responsible Officer Linda Jeavons

Email: Linda.jeavons@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 01743 252738

PRESENT:

Mrs Jane Ing (Chair)

Mr Stephen Bell, Mr Peter Carr, Mr David Cowell, Councillor Mrs Pauline Dee, Mrs Margaret Markland, Mrs Janet Mees-Robinson, Mr Stuart Morgan, Dr Jane Morris, Mrs Alison Parker, Mr Roger Plowden, Mrs Zia Robins, Mr Mark Weston and Mr Paul Wynn.

OFFICERS:

Mr Jim Stabler, Countryside Access Development Officer

Mr Tim King, Tourism Officer

Mrs Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the new members on the Forum, and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Gareth Boxley, Mr Chris Chillingworth, and Councillor Mrs Madge Shingleton.

Apologies were also received from Deb Hughes, Outdoor Recreation Manager.

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 Membership (Paragraph 1)

Mr Stabler reported and welcomed the two new Unitary Councillors, Mesdames Pauline Dee and Madge Shingleton, and explained they had a keen interest in the work and aims of the Forum. He welcomed the other newcomers to the Forum, and urged everyone to encourage new members, particularly younger people.

3.2 Sustainable Transport (Paragraph 3.1)

Mr Stabler explained that money from the Sustainable Transport Fund was now available. Some of this money would fund three Walking Co-Ordinators (previously Walking for Health Officers) for the next three years. The Walking Co-Ordinators would be based in Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Ludlow, and would continue the walking for health programme, but would also look at ways to promote and increase the opportunities to get people out walking.

Mr Stabler further explained that there may also be an opportunity to offer small grants from any remaining funding, and he was currently putting together a list of potential projects, ie updating of walking leaflets/guides, which would be presented to the next meeting for consideration.

With reference to the Walking Forum, one of the bodies that reported to the Shropshire Local Access Forum, Mr Stabler suggested that three Walking Forums covering the respective area of each Walking Co-Ordinator may be the way forward rather than the one Walking Forum as at present, and asked Members to forward to him any views they may have on this. In response to questions, Mr Stabler suggested that membership could potentially include anyone with an interest in walking, including P3 groups, rambles, scouts, and/or schools, and, again asked Members for any suggestions. Promotion of the Walking Fora would be undertaken and he requested Members to forward any potential contacts. He agreed to distribute a map detailing the boundaries of the three areas.

3.3 Huddle / Yammer (Paragraph 3.2)

Huddle / Yammer

Mr Jim Stabler explained that after next March when his role as the Area Co-Ordinator for the West Midlands ceased, Huddle would be the only method available to disseminate information to all the individual Forums in the area. He was currently the only Member of the Shropshire Local Access Forum registered to use the site, and each Local Access Forum could nominate up to three people to use the system. Any information on Huddle would be passed on to others through Yammer or email. Some members were experiencing problems getting information through Yammer.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) that the Chair and a Unitary Councillor also be registered to use Huddle.
- (ii) that Jim Stabler provide 1-2-1 training for any Member who wished to receive further training on Yammer.

3.4 Multi-Use Tracks (Paragraph 3.5)

Members noted that, as Mr M Withington had left the Authority, the letter requesting further information on the operation of the policy for use of cycleways by equestrians, had been forwarded to Mr Ron Buzzacott, and a response was awaited.

3.5 Annual Report (Paragraph 11 / Appendix 3B)

Members noted the Annual Report as detailed at Appendix '3B'. Mr Jim Stabler informed the meeting that amendments could still be made to the Annual Report, and in response to this, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (i) That, in relation to the examples given detailing difficulties encountered (see page 2 of the Annual Report), an update be provided to Natural England detailing and explaining the mechanisms that had been put in place by this Forum to overcome these difficulties.
- (ii) That the list of priorities (see page 3 of the Annual Report) be amended to reflect decisions made during this meeting relating to item 5 on the agenda "Local Access Forum Priorities".

3.6 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - (Paragraph 5)

The Chair updated the meeting on the CIL, which had come into force on 1st January 2012. She reiterated that those communities with a Parish Plan could update it to include priorities covered by the CIL. Further information could be found on the Shropshire Council website via the following link:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/PlanningPolicy.nsf/open/63C27CBEAE1E06AF80257922004CC8E3>

3.7 Structure of the Outdoor Recreation Team (Paragraph 6)

Jim Stabler updated the meeting on the position to date and indicated that there was still one vacant position, which would now be advertised externally; and work was currently being undertaken to finalise the position of staff in relation to the north/south/central groupings.

4. Public Question Time

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

5. Local Access Forum Priorities

Mr Jim Stabler introduced the report and referred the meeting to the paper distributed by email prior to the meeting entitled “Shropshire Local Access Forum – January 2012”, which outlined the purpose of Local Access Forums. He drew attention to the priorities, and, in particular, the three suggested priorities for consideration by this Forum during 2012:

- (i) The Shropshire Countryside Access Strategy** – this Strategy informed the work of the Outdoor Recreation service and would do so for the next five years.
- (ii) Getting young people involved in the Outdoor Recreation** – He commented that young people were the key walkers of the future and this Forum needed to look at what it could do to get young people out walking, and also to give consideration to what organisations, eg ramblers, scouts/guides could contribute.
- (iii) Increased promotion (route leaflets for all interests, electronic guides, geocaching)** – the intention was to utilise some of the Sustainable Transport Fund monies to promote activities. He suggested that local events could be ‘piggybacked’ alongside national promotions, eg Olympics.

With reference to publicity, Members were directed to the Association of Local Councils, specifically the 'Parish Pump' publication, which went to every Town and Parish Council in the area; and a Scouts and Guides event which would take place from 21st – 26th July on the West Midlands Showground and an ideal event to help publicise outdoor recreation and encourage young people.

During the extensive debate, the following points were raised:

- Priorities should reflect best value for the Council, Council Tax payers and users;
- Access should be made available to all users not just some;
- Access to common land was a great and untapped resource;
- Input into large planning applications was crucial, particularly in respect of where it would be possible to create better links and more rights of way;
- Clarification of access on unclassified county roads which in turn would provide benefits to businesses in the countryside;
- Liaison with Town and Parish Councils was essential;
- Those using the walking routes were partly indigenous, but also Shropshire was a walking destination so clarification was needed as to where our market lay. Do we continue to promote Shropshire as a walking destination, which would tie in with tourism and the arising economic benefits;
- More work was needed to encourage the elderly, disabled and multi-use groups;
- Equestrianism should be added to the list of route leaflets (priority 3)

In response to a suggestion, Mr Jim Stabler explained that it would be possible to include a link on the walking website, directing users to a list of local outdoor Instructors. He also suggested that the walking website should provide information on the walks around Shropshire and how they could possibly fit in and benefit the work of such schemes as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a working group to consider the priorities be arranged for 10.00 am on Wednesday, 1st February 2012 at Astley Village Hall.
- (ii) That any member who could not attend the working group on the 1st February, forward their views to Jim Stabler prior to this date.
- (iii) That the outcome of this working group be put to members at the next meeting for approval.

6. Away Day – Visit to Plowden Hall

Members considered and welcomed an invitation to Plowden Hall, which would provide an insight into the management of a relatively large farm and estate, including woodlands, operating under an Environmental Stewardship Scheme. It would also provide an opportunity to touch on the history and appreciation of the work involved to run the countryside and how access impinged on running an estate. As the road network was not suitable to accommodate larger vehicles, it was agreed that Members would adopt a car-share approach.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That an Away Day to Plowden Hall take place on Thursday, 14th June.
- (ii) That a presentation on “How Shropshire supports and promotes tourism in the area” be arranged by Tom King, Tourism Officer, and presented during the visit to Plowden Hall.

7. Outdoor Recreation User Survey

The meeting noted the Outdoor Recreation User Survey, which would be available until 31st March 2012. In response to questions, Mr Jim Stabler explained that over 460 returns had been received so far; the results would help to identify key areas for development and maintenance; identify reasons why people did not go out; and would provide mapping information relating to post code, parish, age, gender etc. He urged everyone to fill it in, and agreed to send a pdf version to Zia Robins.

With reference to the Survey, Members suggested that at point 3 reference should be made to circular and the length of walks rather than just linear walks (A to B).

In response to concerns that people would not be aware of the survey, he confirmed that the link had been circulated to all ramblers, P3 groups and the People’s Panel. The People’s Panel was a voluntary consultation forum run by Shropshire Council. Membership was indicative of the local population, and helped to identify what people expected from local public services. An on-line application form was available via the following link for anybody who wished to apply:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/customerservice.nsf/open/EB6CE26D44B496B0802578A100536509>

8. National Local Access Forum Conferences

Members noted that only one representative from each Local Access Forum would be permitted to attend. Jim Stabler would also be attending as a facilitator. He invited any Member to forward any comments or questions to him prior to the Conference.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Pauline Dee be nominated as the representative to attend the National Local Access Forum Conference on 6th March 2012 in Bristol.

9. Shropshire Partnership – Standing Conference – 1st December 2011

Dr Jane Morris attended the Standing Conference organised by the Shropshire Partnership and provided an oral report. Approx. 150 people had attended the event chaired by Robert Thompson (Chair of the Shropshire Partnership). The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board had made a commitment to ensure that the work of the Board included engagement with a wide range of stakeholders; and the event aimed to design the mechanisms for engagement with key stakeholders in order to create a Stakeholder Alliance owned by its members. Dr Jane Morris drew the meetings attention to the Marmot Challenge (a review of health inequalities in England) and its objectives. In conclusion, she considered that the Forum's remit would fall under the category of Walking for Health and explained that the next meeting would be a virtual one.

The proceedings and feedback report of this Conference can be found via the following link:

<http://www.2shrop.net/2shropnet/AToZOfMini-sites/S/ShropshirePartnership/StandingConference>

The Chair thanked Jane for her attendance at this Conference.

10. Regional Local Access Forum Conference - Worcester

The Chair, Jane Ing, attended the Regional Local Access Forum Conference and provided an oral report. She explained that the West Midlands Region covered 10 Local Access Forums, seven of which attended the Conference. The role of Regional Co-Ordinators would cease at the end of March, and Huddle would become the mechanism for disseminating information. Jenny Parsons would be this Forum's link with Natural England, and her remit was to proffer advice and attend meetings, and be the mouth-piece between this LAF and Defra. All LAF's were adamant that the taking away of Natural England Permissive Access would be detrimental, and they were concerned with the

support for National Trails. Herefordshire also sent their MP the annual report and an invitation to their meetings.

Mr Jim Stabler updated the meeting on the “Paths for Communities”, an initiative, developed by Natural England, which would provide money for community based schemes to improve the local path network, establish new walking groups, and provide guidebooks.

The meeting noted the aim of the scheme, namely:

- To encourage and enable local communities to work with landowners to develop and enhance local paths in ways that deliver wider benefit and enhance local paths in ways that deliver wider benefit to all users; and
- To offer a network with more appeal to visitors and tourists, contributing to the rural economy through better support for local services such as shops, pubs, hotel, bed and breakfasts and equestrian businesses.

Further information could be found via the following link:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/rightsofway/default.aspx>

11. Feedback from other Forums and items for noting

11.1 The Forum received for information:

Shropshire Cycling Forum minutes – 14 September 2011

- (i) With reference to minute no. 6 (Wem Biketrack Project), Members noted that RoSPA had visited Wem on 17th January 2012 and a report would be submitted on their findings.
- (ii) Members noted that a Shropshire Council Officer would be in attendance at future Local Access Forum meetings to provide feedback on cycling issues.

11.2 In response to a question, Jim Stabler and David Cowell of the National Trust updated the meeting on the progress at Lea Quarry, Much Wenlock. They reported that the National Trust had employed a Programme Manager who would produce a report on their intentions and the effects this project would have on the hinterland. The intention was to route the Shropshire Way through the tunnel (still maintained by British Rail) and link up with Lilleshall quarry. A risk assessment would have to be undertaken by Shropshire Council before this was achievable. He confirmed that Shropshire Council had sold Presthope car park and it was now the intention to establish rights of way through the caravan site to establish a bridleway/footpath.

11.3 Planning Application – Wind Turbines

Mrs Janet Mees-Robinson drew members’ attention to a planning application for the erection of wind turbines near to Meadowley and the Jack Mytton Way. Members expressed concerns relating to noise and, as this was also a bridleway, expressed concerns about the possibility of the noise frightening the horses and ice falling from the blades injuring users of the route.

Further information received following the meeting confirmed that an application had been submitted; however, at this point in time, consent had been given for a wind monitoring mast only. The results of this monitoring would influence whether an application would subsequently be made for wind turbines in this area and the form any such turbines would take.

12. **Next meeting**

12.1 Members were asked to suggest agenda items for the next meeting which would be held on Tuesday, 1 May 2012.

- Dedication of Local Nature Reserves as Open Access
- Update on Priorities
- Paths for Communities
- Future of Canal and River Trust – update on access and management
- Definitive Map of Highways clarifying status of routes

12.2 The following dates for 2012/13 were noted:

2012

Monday, 9th July

Possible Venue – Acton Scott

Thursday, 18th October

2013

Wednesday, 30th January

Tuesday, 14th May

All meetings would be held at 10.00 am in Shirehall unless stated otherwise.

The meeting closed at 12.17 p.m.

Signed

Date