

<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Shropshire Local Access Forum	2
31 January 2013	
10.00 am	
	Public

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
HELD ON THURSDAY, 18 OCTOBER AT 10.00 AM IN THE SHREWSBURY
ROOM, SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY, SY2 6ND**

10.00 am – 12.30 pm

Responsible Officer

Linda Jeavons

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PRESENT:

Jane Ing (Chairman)

Stephen Bell, Gareph Boxley, Peter Carr, Chris Chillingworth, Richard Cotham, Margaret Markland, Janet Mees-Robinson, Dr Jane Morris, Alison Parker, Roger Plowden, Zia Robins, Madge Shingleton, Mark Weston and Paul Wynn.

OFFICERS:

Shona Butter, Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader

Peter Dunhill, Shropshire Way Project Officer

Mick Dunn, Walking Co-ordinator, Countryside Access Team

Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jonathan Brown, ReaVEN

Nick Holden, ReaVEN

Jo Dimitri, Project Manager, National Trust

Peter Moss, Meres and Mosses Project

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Members:

David Cowell, Pauline Dee and Stuart Morgan

Officers:

Deb Hughes, Outdoor Recreation Manager

Tim King, Tourism Officer

Jim Stabler, Countryside Access Development Officer

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 July 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Minute No. 4.1(i) should read, "Humphrey Kynaston Way (Jack Mytton Way Extension)"

16.1 Arising on the minutes:

In the absence of Jim Stabler, Members received and noted the written update, as detailed at Appendix '10' to the agenda, subject to it being noted that it should refer to the Humphrey Kynaston Way (Jack Mytton Way Extension) and not the Humphrey Kynaston extension.

(i) Paths for Communities

With reference to the 'Oswestry Ring', Members noted that this application was no longer an Expression of Interest, but had proceeded to the application stage.

(ii) Lost Ways – Prioritisation Programme

Shona Butter informed the meeting that work was ongoing. She was currently looking at priorities, and as soon as any proposals were agreed and pertinent documentation ready, the Local Access Forum would be consulted for their views and input prior to finalisation.

(iii) 1929 Handover Map

With reference to Minute No. 7 (1929 Handover Map), a member commented that although the minute replicated what was said at the meeting, it was factually incorrect. The maps were drawn up to show roads maintained by Rural District Councils, with scheduled roads in green, other roads in yellow. Rural District Councils then passed these maps to the County who then took over maintenance of these roads.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that a statement had been received from Mr Bill Hodges as follows:

“I wish to draw attention to the current planning application for a multi storey car park between Raven Meadows and Pride Hill in Shrewsbury. Some years ago the Forum was presented with a proposal to extinguish a Right of Way known as the Seventy Steps down through the Darwin Centre adjacent to the car park “Gap site”. At that time the Forum strongly resisted the proposed extinguishment which was not proceeded with.

It would appear that the development proposal offers an opportunity to create a more satisfactory replacement for the Seventy Steps. I have drawn the Planners attention to the possibility. The Forum may wish to consider the issue and urge Planning and the developers to investigate possibilities in the general public interest.”

Jane Ing explained that, as a general rule the Local Access Forum did not consider specific Rights of Way, but could choose to.

Shona explained that, as a general rule, Shropshire Council Officers were consulted on all applications that affected a Right of Way, and Officers had responded in line with the comments of Mr Hodges. If there was an opportunity to provide a better route through the site then that would be preferable. The planning application could be viewed on the website, along with all comments made by consultees and members of the public.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED**: That, due to time constraints, any comments should be forwarded to the Chair as soon as possible following the meeting, either by email or verbally, and she would formulate a response on behalf of the Forum.

18. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Madge Shingleton stated that, in order to comply with the Code of Conduct, and as a Member of the South Planning Committee, she would leave the room during consideration of agenda item No. 6 (Wenlock Quarries Update) if reference was made to a proposed planning application 12/03034/MAW. She also gave an overview of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

19. REA VALLEY ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (ReaVEN)

Jonathan Brown and Nick Holden from ReaVEN were in attendance and provided an overview of the project to create a Rea Valley traffic free trail utilising part of the old Minsterley railway line. A copy of the presentation would be attached to the signed minutes.

In the ensuing discussion, and question and answer session, the following comments and points were raised:

- JB explained that everyone would have access, but the majority of the data available from Sustrans was for cyclists, if data had been available for walkers and/or horse riders then it would have been used;
- The main section that could be walked at the moment was from Pontesford to Pontesbury, which was Council owned;
- The complete route would eventually be approx. 7 miles in length.
- A Member suggested that, if a route was intended to include equestrian use, then any future presentation should make reference to this;
- A Member questioned whether consideration should be given to having more segregated routes, given the problems associated with multi-user routes especially on the Long Mynd. In response, a Member commented that the level of incidents on multi-user tracks was relative low. As a general rule, users of segregated routes travelled faster and had less regard to other users;
- With reference to low carbon, a Member commented on the number of people travelling to these sites by car. JB explained, that although many people were taking their bikes on their cars or by train, they were also hiring them on location, thus generating money for the local economy;
- Landowners had generally wished to see the route used, it was now just a question of how the use of the route would fit in with their use of the land;
- Concern was expressed relating to the impact of these routes on the future of heritage railway lines, especially if it meant that a route could not be returned back to a rail track because it would now be on an existing cycle track or bridleway. In response, JB explained that, if it turned out that there was a viable proposition for a route to be returned back to a railway, then an argument could be made to suggest that it would be beneficial to do so. At the moment, given the huge capital investment in returning it back to a railway, the benefits of Walking for Health and Access to the Countryside, would outweigh a return.
- JB explained that the Feasibility Study was available on the RaeVEN website.
- Members questioned whether partly permissive routes would be eligible for Paths for Communities. Jim Stabler to provide clarification.

AGREED:

- (i) That, in principle, the Rea Valley Multi User Trail be supported; and**
- (ii) That regular updates on this project be received by the Shropshire Local Access Forum.**

20. WENLOCK QUARRIES UPDATE

20.1 Jo Dimitri, Project Manager, National Trust, was in attendance and provided an update on their proposals for this area, and she answered questions from the floor. A copy of the presentation would be attached to the signed minutes.

(Cllr Madge Shingleton, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, left the room during consideration of this item.)

20.2 Railway Tunnel – Presthope

In conclusion, JD informed the meeting that Peter Carty (National Trust) and Jim Stabler, (Shropshire Council) were looking at the probability of linking-up the Rights of Way of bridleway status through the railway tunnel at Presthope Caravan Park, and she was seeking support toward progression of this project from this Forum.

AGREED:

- (i) That, in principle, the Shropshire Local Access Forum support the linking-up of the Rights of Way at bridleway status either side of the railway tunnel at Presthope Caravan Park; and
- (ii) That before a formal decision was made with regard to the linking-up of the Rights of Way through the railway tunnel, an update on the proposal be received and discussed at the meeting of this Forum scheduled for 31 January 2013. However, if, because of time constraints, it became necessary to make a decision prior to the next meeting, the Chairman would consult with all Members.

21. MERES AND MOSSES PROJECT – UPDATE

Peter Moss was in attendance and provided an update on the Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme and the nature improvement area. A copy of the presentation would be attached to the signed minutes.

In the ensuing discussion, and question and answer session, the following comments and points were raised:

- The partnership would talk to and work with landowners and businesses;
- He agreed to ask the development team why equestrianism had not been included in the original plan, and whether there would be an opportunity to include it in the future. He would report back on the outcome at a future meeting of this Forum;
- A Member commented that the Fenns, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses were in Batch 5 of Natural England Natural Natures Reserve

dedication batch list and, as part of their higher rights dedication criteria it stated that any aspirations for riding or cycling that may have been put forward by the local community, LAF, or relevant access groups should be considered, and asked what opportunities would there be for those discussions to take place. PM explained that this could not now be progressed, as the majority of the projects were set out in stone before they went to the Lottery Board for approval;

- Provision of a brick kiln was purely an aspiration at this stage; and
- A Member commented that the Countryside Access Strategy and the recent Rights of Way Survey had identified a need for more equestrian routes in North Shropshire, and she was concerned that this had not been addressed.

22. LAUNCH OF THE SHROPSHIRE WAY

Peter Dunhill, Shropshire Way Project Officer, Shropshire Council, was in attendance and provided an update on the joint launch of the Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme, Nature Improvement Area and the Shropshire Way Project, which would take place on Friday, 2nd November 2012 from 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm.

He reported the following:

- By 2 November, the main routes of the Shropshire Way from Ellesmere to Whitchurch and from Wem to Whitchurch would all have been signed and furniture installed;
- The Shropshire Way guide book would be available in draft form;
- The Shropshire Way section of the Shropshire Walking website would shortly be redesigned to reflect all the development so far;
- Currently working on 10 walks around Whitchurch; and
- 297 miles of the Shropshire Way was now open.

23. WALKING FORUMS

Mick Dunn, Walking Co-ordinator, was in attendance and provided an update on the progress and work of the Walking Forums.

He reported that the three main concerns that had arisen from the meetings had been:

- Ploughing and Cropping
- Dog fouling and control of dogs on rights of way
- Shropshire Walking Website – although this did do a fantastic job in promoting walking routes it did not search for routes by postcode.

With reference to parking facilities and specifically the lack of parking near to walking routes, Members commented that there was a need to explore the possibility of increasing car parking provision. It was suggested that any sites should be identified and promoted. Also, the possibility of using permissive parking at village halls, production of a definitive list of car parks, and linking walking routes to bus routes should be explored.

Some Members expressed confusion with regard to “ploughing and cropping”, particularly appertaining to the legalities of cropped fields and public rights of way. The Chairman referred to a Guidance Note (PG05) and agreed to circulate a copy of this, along with a covering statement, to all Members of the Forum.

In response to a question, Shona Butter explained that Shropshire Council did work with landowners where they could to improve rights of way that cross the middle of fields. Shropshire Council could allow permissive routes, but it also had a duty to protect the correct definitive line.

24. PROJECTS UPDATE

Members received and noted the written update, as detailed at Appendix ‘10’ to the agenda.

25. HUDDLE/YAMMER UPDATE, ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION OF COMMITTEE PAPERS, AND LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HANDBOOK

The Chairman reported the following:

25.1 Distribution of Committee Papers

In order to save money on printing and postage, Members of the Forum were asked to consider having their agenda and papers via electronic format only. Following discussion, Members were asked to let Linda Jeavons have their preference on how they would like to receive their papers in the future, ie:

- Electronic form only;
- Electronic form and a paper copy available at the meeting; or
- Hard copy via the postal system, be it 1st or 2nd class.

25.2 HUDDLE/YAMMER

There were currently three signed up to Huddle. The restriction on numbers had been lifted, so if anyone wanted to become a user of Huddle, they should contact Jim Stabler. Also, if anyone wanted to sign up to or have a lesson on how to use Yammer, they should contact Jim Stabler direct.

25.3 Local Access Forum Handbook

The Local Access Forum Handbook was available on Yammer.

26. ANNUAL REPORTS – NATURAL ENGLAND AND SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Annual Report for Natural England covering the period April 2011 to March 2012, had been completed and submitted. However, she commented that the Natural England report only reflected part of the work done by this Forum, and she also considered that it would be more helpful if it spanned from October to October. She suggested that a Shropshire Local Access Forum Annual Report would be more useful for Members of this Forum.

AGREED:

- (i) That, in principle, a Shropshire Local Access Forum Annual Report be prepared by the Countryside Access Development Officer, in consultation with the Chairman; and
- (ii) That the list of leader headings as detailed in the agenda be agreed, subject to the inclusion of an additional heading entitled “List of Interests”.

27. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER FORUMS, SECTION 94 BODIES, AND ITEMS FOR NOTING

27.1 The following items, were noted:

- (i) Making Ways for Horses (Off-Road Equestrian Access in England)
- (ii) Dedication of Natural England Freehold National Nature Reserves
- (iii) Stopping Up and Diversion Orders : Reform of the Application Process for Local Highway – Interim Report

27.2 **Minutes / Papers**

The following minutes / papers, which were circulated with the agenda for information, were noted:

- (i) South Shropshire Walking Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2012 (marked ‘13A’)

- (ii) Central Shropshire Walking Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2012 (marked '13B')
- (iii) West Midlands Regional Local Access Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2012 (marked '13C')
- (iv) Shropshire Cycling Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2012 (marked '13D')
- (v) Shropshire Cycling Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2012 (marked '13E')
- (vi) Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Forum – Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2012 (marked '13F')

28. FUTURE MEETINGS

28.1 The following agenda items were suggested for forthcoming meetings:

- (i) Commons – clarity of access
- (ii) Plus, items agreed from previous meetings, that had yet to be considered, namely:
 - Availability, Accuracy and Relevance of the Highways - It was agreed that this item be revisited in six months time to receive an update on progress.

It was noted that Andy Savage, Highways Development Control Manager, had agreed to attend the meeting now scheduled for 11 April.
 - A Member of the Planning Department to attend and offer an explanation of how the planning process impacts on Rights of Way.
 - Safety issues arising from cyclists using footpaths as downhill bike tracks.
(A representative from the Cycling Forum to attend the next meeting)
 - Independent Panel on Forestry Report.
 - Safety Issues relating generally to Rights of Way and the multi-use of BOATS

28.2 The following date changes for future meetings for 2012/13 were agreed:

2013

Thursday, 31 January

Thursday, 11 April (this was a change to the previously agreed date)

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

28.3 The following dates were noted:

West Midlands Regional LAF Conference	February (date to be confirmed)
National LAF Conference	27 February

Chairman.....

Date.....