

Shropshire Local Access Forum

<u>Committee and Date</u>

Shropshire Local Access Forum

23 April 2015

MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015 10.00 AM - 12.45 PM

Responsible Officer: Linda Jeavons
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Present

Councillor Roger Plowden (Chairman)
Councillors Mark Weston (Vice Chairman), Stephen Bell, Gareph Boxley, Peter Carr,
Alex Carson-Taylor, Janet Mees-Robinson, Stuart Morgan, Zia Robins and
Leslie Winwood

Officers

Shona Butter, Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader
Clare Fildes, Outdoor Partnerships Development Team Leader
Emily Harrison, Rights of Way Officer, Legal Orders and Enforcement
Deb Hughes, Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Manager
Ian Kilby, Planning Services Manager
Joe Penfold, Landscape Partnership Community Officer
Dan Wrench, Biodiversity Officer

17 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

18 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Members:

Chris Chillingworth, Richard Cotham, David Cowell, Pauline Dee and Dave Tremellen.

19 **Minutes and any matters arising**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on the 16 October 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to it being noted that:

- Minute No. 4, paragraph 2, should read: “.....incidents caused by the **interlocking canopy** of oilseed rape.”; and
- Will Chambers was now a member of this Forum.

Matters Arising

- 19.1 With reference to Minute No. 7 (Mid Wales Transmission Line Project) a Member commented that, following receipt of a detailed map, it had become apparent that contrary to what was indicated by representatives from National Grid the route of the MWTL project would run parallel to a bridleway.

It was **AGREED:** That, in consultation with Zia Robins, the Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader (SB) would pass the comments on to the National Grid.

At this juncture, the Planning Services Manager (IK) provided an update on the position to date with regard to the MWTL project. He reported that the consultation exercise was ongoing with all responses required by Monday, 9 February and he encouraged all members to submit comments.

- 19.2 With reference to Minute No. 13 it was noted that CF would provide an update on the Irresistible Offa project and the Volunteer Development Plan during the meeting.

- 19.3 With reference to Minute No. 14:

- CF agreed that she would approach the road cycling fraternity to explain the role of the Forum and to invite any interested parties along to attend the next meeting; and
- SB would check the position to date with regard to appointing other members to the Forum.

20 **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

At this juncture, Mr Trevor Allison, Secretary of the Shropshire Area Ramblers (attending as an observer and potential member of the Forum) reported that on the 20 March he would finally complete his mammoth task of walking all of Shropshire's public rights of way. This would culminate in a celebration at the Tally Ho Inn, Bouldon. Any information gathered would be used to inform a database of Shropshire's rights of way network.

The Chairman congratulated him on his achievement.

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

22 **Change in Order of Business**

RESOLVED: That item No. 8 (Site Allocations and Management Development (SAMDev) Plan and Planning – How Access is Incorporated/Considered would be considered as the next item of business.

23 **Site Allocations and Management Development (SAMDev) Plan and Planning - How Access is Incorporated/Considered**

Ian Kilby, Planning Services Manager, provided an overview of how access is incorporated and considered in the planning process. The following points were highlighted:

- He provided an update on the position to date with regard to the Site Allocations and Management Development Plan (SAMDev) and the five year land supply;
- Explained that the Core Strategy document set out the strategic aims and planning policy for Shropshire. Core Strategy Policies 6, 16 and 17 made particular reference to access;
- Place Plans – there were 18 Place Plans which identified the infrastructure needs of a community. The Place Plans were reviewed annually following consultation with the communities, Town and Parish Councils and infrastructure and service providers;
- Planning guidance was incorporated into two important documents – National Planning Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework (both of which were available on Shropshire Council’s website);
- The planning vision was to encourage more connectivity which would provide for increased access which would then hopefully encourage a reduced dependency on the car and encourage people to walk, cycle and ride;
- Decision Making – when making a recommendation, the Planning Officer would refer to policy and the views received from individuals and groups. The Rights of Way team would be consulted on any appropriate planning applications. Anyone could comment on any planning application via the planning portal;
- With regard to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, he explained that the community and/or Town and Parish Council would identify and highlight any priorities and these would be prioritised during the annual review of Place Plans; and
- Impact of a development on a right of way was a material planning consideration, and a Planning Officer would weigh up the benefits of any scheme before making a recommendation.

In response to a question, Shona Butter explained that when determining planning applications Planning Officers did use and had access to an up-to-date digital version of the definitive map.

Mid Wales Transmission Line project

It was noted that all documentation for the MWTL project was available electronically via the following link <http://midwalesconnection.com/>.

Following a discussion, it was noted that SB would be attending a meeting with National Grid and it was:

AGREED: That,

- (i) A Focus Group be convened to formulate a response of all the concerns raised by members of this Forum with regard to the Mid Wales Transmission Line Project; and
- (ii) Membership of the Focus Group to include Trevor Allison, Gareph Boxley, Peter Carr, Stuart Morgan and Zia Robins.

24 Open Hills - Proposed Scheme and Access

Joe Penfold provided an overview of the Open Hills project by way of a presentation, a copy of which would be appended to the signed minutes, and answered questions from the floor.

The Chairman thanked Joe Penfold for his excellent presentation, input and attendance at the Forum.

25 The Use of Towpaths

It was noted that, in the absence of a representative from the Canals and River Trust, this item would be considered at the next meeting.

26 Irresistible Offa - Sustainable Tourism Project

Clare Fildes was in attendance and provided an update on two projects, 'Irresistible Offa' a Sustainable Tourism Project and the Volunteer Development Plan.

Volunteer Development Plan

CF explained the Plan was now complete, a copy of which would be appended to the signed minutes. A new Shropshire Great Outdoors website would be developed and would incorporate the information held on the Shropshire Walking and Riding websites with the cycling and walking information on the Travel Shropshire website. As part of the delivery of the Plan, Shropshire Council was putting together a Lottery bid which would provide funding to get those in the largest communities, eg North Shropshire, Oswestry, Stokesay, Whitchurch, Highley and parts of Ludlow, out and about. The plan was to involve a range of partners, eg Town/Parish Councils, Partnership Schemes, Wildlife Trust, National Trust, schools and ramblers and a range of taster sessions, to include geocaching, were planned. A meeting with all partners was being arranged.

Irresistible Offa

CF provided an update on the position to date. This current stage of the walking project was coming to an end. The next stage would still be about economy and sustainability and developing the recreational use and access of the countryside was integral.

Ten key themes had been identified - Offa's 360os; Wild Offa; Borderlands Hill Forts; Conflict, Control and Castles; Power, Prestige and Religion; Engineering Marvels; Accessible Offa; Contemporary Offa; Eating Offa; and Cycling Offa.

Key projects – Oswestry and Ellesmere as walking and maybe cycling hubs; Volunteer Development; Development of Shrewsbury to Llangollen bus journeys as a visitor experience; Walkers are Welcome in Ellesmere and Llanymynech; Joined up promotion of heritage and access events; and Montgomery Canal.

A Business Plan for the whole area would be signed-off shortly. In terms of funding, they were hoping to obtain EU funding towards a total estimated budget of £1.65m.

How can the LAF help?

A discussion took place on how this forum could help. CF commented that any letters of support and any match-funding or “in-kind” funding would be welcomed. There was a need to ensure that any work our partner organisations wanted to see done was achieved.

CF suggested that a workshop session be held prior to the next meeting to discuss and think about the specifics and how individuals and groups might help.

27 Ploughing and Cropping and the role of Shropshire Council

In response to comments from members, Deb Hughes explained that there was a programme for sending out reminder letters to landowners which had been quite successful. However, there were repeat offenders and in these instances further action was required.

Alex Carson-Taylor informed the meeting that the CLA local branch issued a newsletter advising landowners of the compliance regulations.

28 Outdoor Partnerships Update

Deb Hughes provided an update on the position to date. She commented that it was heartening to hear how access supported tourism and the local economy and hoped that this would continue in the future. Savings of £215,000 had been achieved and a further £230,000 of savings was now required for 15/16. The service overall had had a 45% reduction in staffing across its core work. The Rights of Way Team had been faced with a big reduction in manpower, which, despite best efforts, resulted in an increasing number of complaints being unresolved. With regard to rights of way maintenance there was a need to ensure the service brought in revenue to support the reduction in the budget and, in line with Shropshire Council’s Business Plan, the Outdoor Partnership service would operate on a more commercial basis with income generation being key to support reduced maintenance budgets.

As a result of the Parish Access Project rights of way had been improved and access to approx. 80% of routes had been achieved; however, current surveys had indicated that this had now fallen. 65% of routes remained open at the current time but the ability to respond to the remaining 35% would be limited.

Bridge inspection data had revealed a continuing problem with large scale structures and not having the funding to resolve issues over the years had compounded the problem. Capital funding had been allocated in the next budget round to help with major structures which hopefully would reduce the need to close routes on the rights of way network where there was a potential risk to public safety.

29 Feedback from other Forums and items for noting

Items for Noting

Publicity - A member commented that greater publicity should be given to promoting the meetings of this Forum and it was important for all members to spread the word.

Minutes / Papers:

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

- (i) Shropshire Cycle Forum – 14 October 2014
- (ii) North Walking Forum – 27 October 2014
- (iii) Central Walking Forum – 29 October 2014
- (iv) South Walking Forum – 16 January 2015

Future meetings:

The following agenda items were suggested for consideration at a future meeting:

- The Use of Towpaths
- Feedback from Highways - unsurfaced public roads
- Ramblers PathWatch project
- Shropshire Highways - an update on the management of the unclassified county roads by rights of way
- Digitalisation of Highway Maps
- Deregulation Bill
- Lost Ways in Shropshire
- Tread Lightly Charity

Future meeting dates:

- Thursday, 23 April 2015
- Thursday, 2 July 2015 – venue to be confirmed
- Thursday, 15 October 2015

Signed (Chairman)

Date: