



| <u>Committee and Date</u> | <u>Item</u> |
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| Shropshire Local Access Forum 17 October 2013 10.00 am | 4 Public |

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2013 AT 10.00 AM AT ACTON SCOTT HISTORIC WORKING FARM, WENLOCK LODGE, ACTON SCOTT, CHURCH STRETTON, SHROPSHIRE, SY6 6QN

10.00 am – 12.23 PM

Responsible Officer

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PRESENT:

Jane Ing (Chairman)

Stephen Bell, Peter Carr, Chris Chillingworth, Janet Mees-Robinson, Stuart Morgan, Dr Jane Morris, Alison Parker, Zia Robins, Dave Tremellen (Minute No. 55 onwards), and Mark Weston.

[On his arrival, Shropshire Councillor, Dave Tremellen, was welcomed to the meeting]

OFFICERS:

Shona Butter, Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader

Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Mr Paul Hyde, who was a member of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Access Forum (a bordering Local Access Forum) and was in attendance as an observer.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Members:

Gareph Boxley, Richard Cotham, David Cowell, Margaret Markland, Alan Mosley, Roger Plowden and Paul Wynn.

Officers:

Jim Stabler, Access Development Officer

ACTION

ACTION

52. MINUTES

52.1 RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 11 April 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- (i) Page 32, (Minute No. 42.2(i), second paragraph) should read “It was noted that Stuart Thomas who addressed the last meeting, had now left Shropshire Council.”

52.2 Arising on the minutes:

(i) Major Planning Applications and LAF Consultation

With reference to a comment from the floor that Minute No. 42.2(i), first paragraph) had still not been actioned, SB reported that work on this was ongoing. In addition, she reported that an email had been forwarded to the Planning Department requesting that the Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Forum also be listed as a consultee when making comments on planning applications.

SB

(ii) Commons – Clarity of Access

With reference to Minute No. 42.2(ii), the Chair indicated that as and when the new legislation was published this SLAF would be updated on the matter.

SB

53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

54. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

55. CAN WE FIND A WALKING CHAMPION IN SHROPSHIRE?

Mr Dickson Bailey was in attendance and addressed the meeting as follows. He was involved and represented Walking for Health and Walkers are Welcome in Much Wenlock. Much Wenlock had obtained Walkers are Welcome status in 2011, and had become the fifth town in Shropshire to do so (Clun had become the sixth town). There were six criteria that had to be met to achieve Walkers are Welcome status, namely:

- be attractive destinations for walkers with top quality information on local walks;
- offer local people and visitors excellent walking opportunities within their areas;
- ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are maintained, improved and well signposted;
- contribute to local tourism plans and regeneration strategies;
- promote the health benefits of walking and increase participation; and
- encourage the use of public transport.

He commented that there were three Walking Forums in Shropshire, all attended by representatives from various groups, and all promoting walking in their respective areas. He was now interested in promoting and raising the profile of walking and tourism throughout Shropshire. However, he was not convinced that Shropshire was doing as much as they could to promote cycling, mountain biking, horse riding etc. and his long-term vision was to promote Shropshire as a premier walking destination. To this end, it was considered that a Walking Champion for Shropshire would be an appropriate route to follow.

In response to a question from the floor, Mr Dickson Bailey explained that he envisaged the Walking Champion to be someone who was local to Shropshire, who had authority to speak for everyone, and who would focus, not just on walking, but be someone who would embrace tourism and co-ordinate all the great work that goes on with regard to walking in order to attract more tourists.

From the floor the following comments/suggestions were made:

- Dickson Bailey would make both an excellent Walking Champion and a walking representative on this LAF;
- The focus should not be limited to walking – if you wanted to encourage tourism other pursuits should be promoted, ie horse riding, carriage driving, cycling etc;
- Access for all should be included/promoted;
- The LAF had many responsibilities. There were three Walking Forums all feeding into this LAF - and although there was not currently an Access Champion we were getting there;
- It was important to accommodate the interests of the people living within and outside of Shropshire;
- Jim Stabler would make an excellent Champion;
- The health benefits far outweighed any tourism benefits - we had to get people walking and in turn they would live longer;
- Shropshire had the greatest mix of geology, geography and agriculture than any other County (although did not have a coastline) and it was important to develop a strategy to cross-promote the north and the south; and
- It should be somebody independent of Shropshire Council.

ACTION

In response, Shona Butter commented that Jim Stabler was currently Shropshire Council's Access Development Officer, and managing this LAF fell within his remit of responsibilities. An Access Champion would have its benefits, and Shropshire Council probably had such designated champions already; however, the main crux of the matter would be to define the remit of the responsibilities of these standing champions, and get someone to take on this role.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That this Shropshire Local Access Forum agrees, in principle, with the idea of appointing a Champion, but that it be designated as an Access for All Champion rather than a Walking Champion;
- (ii) That, in the first instance, the Access Development Officer, in consultation with Dickson Bailey, approach the three Walking Forums in the North, South and Central for their views.

JS

56. PROBLEMS WITH THE PERCEIVED REPORTING STRUCTURE FOR WALKING AND TOURISM MATTERS

In the absence of the Access Development Officer, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (i) That this matter be deferred to the next meeting; and
- (ii) That the reporting structure for riding and cycling also be included.

JS/LJ

57. PLAN OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN NATURAL ENGLAND, DEFRA AND THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS

In the absence of the Access Development Officer, the Chair introduced the item, which summarised the respective roles and responsibilities of Local Access Forums, Natural England and Defra, and set out Natural England's aims and objectives for the coming year.

With reference to the Engagement Plan and comments from the floor, the following was noted:

Paragraph 4 (Role of the Appointing Authority):

- All members present indicated that they were fully aware of their Terms of Appointment;
- Shropshire Council provided them with sufficient information and help when they became a member of this LAF;
- Documents on Yammer provided a constant source of information and included a LAF Members Handbook; and

ACTION

- All agenda, minutes and papers were publicised and available for public inspection on the website, and a web link was sent to the local media prior to every meeting.

During the ensuing debate, and with reference to raising awareness of the LAF amongst officers and Councillors throughout the authority (as set out at 4.2 of the appendix), members commented that this would provide an opening to approach Shropshire Councillors regarding lack of attendance, which had been a problem in the past, and Highway and Planning Officers with their concerns. Further, as many members of the public were not aware of the work/role of LAFs generally, they suggested the following:

- A champion should be appointed to promote and raise awareness;
- Dedicated Facebook and/or Twitter pages would embrace modern media methods, and enable people to interact and comment; and
- Regular good news stories should be published via the local media.

A member questioned how many people were aware of the reasons as to why the Definitive Map was created and what it had become.

The following were suggested as possibilities for future training:

- A general update on Rights of Way issues; and
- Implications of the Draft Deregulation Bill.

In response to comments/suggestions Shona Butter, Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader, distributed a document put together by the Ramblers Association entitled “A brief summary of the effects in England of the draft Deregulation Bill on rights of way” (copy appended to the signed minutes); and explained that the draft Deregulation Bill, which had followed on from “Stepping Forward” (The Stakeholder Working Group on Unrecorded Public Rights of Way), had been to Parliament and was now at the consultation stage. She confirmed that the comments of this LAF had been fed into the process. It was agreed that a link or electronic copy of the Bill would be provided for all members on this LAF.

SB/LJ

The meeting noted that Shona Butter had recently been appointed as the new Regional LAF Coordinator. She agreed to provide members of this LAF with a summary/link of all current Bills and any appropriate legislation.

SB

58. DEFINITIVE MAP CONSOLIDATION

The Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader, Shona Butter, explained that the paper Definitive Map had last been consolidated on 1 September 1965. Any subsequent legal orders or requests for modification had been marked up on an acetate working copy. She reported that there were plans to consolidate the acetate working copy of the Definitive Map in the near future, and an electronic copy would be available on the website.

In response to questions from the floor, SB explained that a copy of the Definitive Map was stored in a secure area; the 1965 map would be retained in perpetuity; the acetate took into account all changes from 1965; further consolidation would follow a publicised cut-off date; there would be an electronic version of the Definitive Map, however, at present, there was still a legal requirement to produce a paper copy; a paper copy would be available for public viewing; if, in the future, digital consolidation took place, (i) a paper copy would be printed off and retained in a totally secure area, and (ii) an electronic layer would also be retained; the base map was currently produced at 1/25000 scale, but a scale of 1/10000 would be preferred; and a national Definitive Map illustrating all local authority maps had been discussed. In conclusion, she confirmed that a full and extensive checking exercise had been undertaken and the whole County, along with any legal orders and original Parish claims, had been checked and re-checked and checked again. Appropriate legislation was in place to correct any errors.

Members of this LAF expressed their approval of the work done to consolidate the map, which would take account of all the legal changes from 1965 until present, and welcomed further consolidations to ensure the map was up to date.

59. REGIONAL LAF MATTERS - UPDATE

The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader, Shona Butter, confirmed that this Forum's Annual Report had been forwarded to Natural England. The National LAF Annual Report (April 2011 – March 2012), which included a summary of all the LAFs Annual Reports, had now been forwarded to Defra, and their response to the report was still awaited. (A copy of the National LAF Annual Report could be found on Yammer.)

Defra was keen to ensure LAFs were valued, and the way forward would be discussed at the West Midlands Regional Chairs' meeting on 17 July 2013.

SB confirmed that there were still some licences available for anyone who wished to have access to Huddle.

60. NATIONAL LAF ONLINE SURVEY

The Chair reported that she had completed a questionnaire, a copy of which was available for viewing on Yammer. The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader explained that it was Natural England's intention to circulate a further questionnaire, which would expand on previous questions and would provide the option to remain anonymous.

landowner had been prosecuted as yet. Consideration had to be given to whether it would be de minimis to do so and whether the outcome would result in a reduced number of footpaths. SB further explained that there was a mechanism to report issues of cross compliance, and the Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers (IPRoW) had recently written to Defra regarding this issue in the hope that local authorities could work more closely with Defra in the future.

ACTION

In response to a request from a member of the Forum, it was agreed that the presentation entitled “Providing Access to Hampshire’s Heritage” presented at the LAF National Conference held in February be circulated to all via email. This presentation was also available on Yammer.

SB/LJ

It was **AGREED**: That this item be considered at the October meeting.

JS/LJ

65. WEBSITE UPGRADE – UPDATE

The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader explained that Shropshire Council was currently in the process of updating and renewing their website. As a consequence, all input of new data had been put on hold.

Members of the Forum commented that the search facility on Shropshire Council’s website was generally unhelpful and impracticable, and quite often they had to wade through a vast amount of information before getting to an appropriate site.

66. PROJECTS UPDATE

With regard to Paths for Communities, namely the Oswestry Ring, a member of the Forum reported that the new section of path would now be dedicated as a bridleway.

The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader reported that out of the £2m allocated for funding Paths for Communities, £1m had now been allocated.

In the absence of the Access Development Officer, it was **AGREED**: that an update on the following projects be provided and uploaded onto Yammer:

JS

- Paths for Communities;
- Heritage Lottery Project; and
- WW1 Pilgrimage.

67. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER FORUMS AND ITEMS FOR NOTING

67.1 The following items were noted:

- (i) Consultation on Dog Control Orders (marked 18.1(ii))
- (ii) Shropshire Local Access Forum – Annual Report – April 2012 to April 2013 (marked 18.1 (ii)). It was suggested that the possibility of appointing an Access for All Champion could become a priority for the coming year.

67.2 Minutes / Papers

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

- (i) Southern Walking Forum – Notes of the meeting held on 22 March 2013 (marked 18.2(i))
- (ii) Southern Walking Forum – Notes of the meeting held on 23 May 2013 (marked 18.2(ii))

67.3 Future Meetings

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

- Deregulation Bill
- Dog Fouling – outcome of the consultation
- Access for All Champion
- Projects Update

(b) Future meetings for 2013/14 are as follows:

2013

Thursday, 17 October 2013

2014

Thursday, 6 February 2014

Thursday, 1 May 2014

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

68. CHAIRMAN

On behalf of all members of the Forum, Mark Weston thanked the Chairman, Jane Ing, for her dedication and hard work during her term of office as Chairman. All members concurred.

Chairman.....

Date.....