

Question 1 from Stuart Morgan

Question to Shropshire County Councils Shropshire's Great Outdoor's Strategy Board

Has the Great Outdoors Shropshire's Great Outdoor's Strategy Board considered the case for safe public access across the North West relief road and if so was the proximity of a right of way to a service bridge for the private use of the Berwick Estate considered? Especially as this anomalous right of way so obviously points to a lostway.

The advantages to the Borough, economic and social, could be huge. Less obvious are the advantages to the Estate itself. This possibly, because of the historical and current opposition to access privately expressed by the landowner lobby groups through various publications.

The trails that this access point could lead into the County town relate well to geography, history and geology of this county and relate well to the ambitions of many beyond that of its boundaries. I would have hoped that any person with an interest in the Great Outdoors would have spotted at least some of the features, of how the access network of Shropshire can grow towards the needs of the 21st century.

I wrote a letter to our MP about this, I received a brush off that indicated that Daniel Kawczynski had referred to the County Council. This suggested scant consideration to the possibility that the public should share in the countryside beyond its town boundaries, when there is such an obvious anomaly on the Ordnance Survey maps. Surely this must have been looked at during the planning stage of this road. It is alarming if a past mistake by Local Government is not tabled for correction, as the needs for open green space grows.

Is the Great Outdoors Liaison Group doing its job in the best interests of all the people of Shropshire or safe guarding the interests of a privileged minority, as a former officer of the council probably did? Something I warned of, repeatedly, when I was a member, at the time it was merely called a Local Access Forum, a title bequeathed by the Act of Parliament that brought it into being.

However there is perhaps another more relevant question the GOSB should consider and that is why the owners of the Berwick Estate have not petitioned to have the right of way over this service bridge and asked for other lostways to be scrutinized adjoining their boundary. As there are several natural long distance routes that could enter the Borough from this direction. Routes that could become nationally popular, with the rising trend for long distance walking. With an annual earning per mile of £8000 in 1990, the Penine Way established a positive factor for public access as a contributor to rural economies. Such facts that were noticeably missing from the CLA's 2012 policy on Access.

Answer

The SGOSB can confirm that Officers who are responsible for protecting and asserting the public rights of way network have and continue to be involved in discussions with the Highway consultants leading on this project. All potential affected public rights of way have been identified, together with the provision of desire lines to improve connectivity within the network affected.

Question 2 from Trevor Allison, Walking Environment Officer for the Shropshire Area of the Ramblers

Now that 2 major Planning Applications for the 'Ironbridge' Power Station site have been lodged, is the Board confident that the positive approach so far displayed by Harworth, the Developers, and expressed in the documents, will provide, when the Development is completed, a sensible and worthwhile network of Public Rights of Way, which will connect to other existing routes in all directions. The basic proposals are depicted in the diagram ADC1776-DR-008 which is to be found in the Residential Travel Plan of 19/05560 after page 25. As long as these routes are actually established as properly connected P. R. O. W's. (Footpaths, Bridleways or even Restricted Byways) then considerable public benefit will be provided.

Answer

Officers concur with the views expressed in this question and can confirm that an initial meeting with the agents acting on behalf of Harworth's was very positive and the issues raised highlighting the existing network and increased connectivity were put forward. Since that time officers have responded to the current planning application and have reiterated the need for legally recorded outlets at the correct status and the wishes previously put forward by this group and other user groups.

Question 3 to SGOSB (formerly LAF) From Karen Pearce, Bickton Heath resident and user of local PROW

The Oxon Link Road (OLR) subject of a previous planning application on the west of Shrewsbury will now be merged into the planning application for the proposed NWR.

Forgive me if I am wrong, but this group appears to have had no involvement in protecting the recreational and access interests of existing local people and the thousands of new residents of the SWUE who will be affected by the proposed new road.

The OLR application was a poor application and was subsequently withdrawn. It attracted hundreds of objections many relating to access issues including severance of local lanes and PROW and lack of safe passage across the proposed road. The Urban Extension has little provision of usable open space and proposes that residents access it by crossing the proposed road. The OLR did not provide footbridges despite their need accepted for phase 1 of the SWUE. The current planning application for Phase 1 does not provide the necessary bridge either. **Would it be possible for this group to look into this and ensure that current and future residents can access what open space will remain safely?**

Is this group aware that much of the land for the proposed OLR leg of the NWR and the SWUE is owned by Shropshire Council? The Council are also the promoters of the proposed road and will also determine the planning application.

The LAF is now incorporated into SGOSB which has a different remit and membership to the original LAF. **Can this group assure the residents of Bickton/Bickton Heath that their interests will be properly protected by the group when the Council clearly has a vested interest in developments? Would the previous LAF have been more independent and served us better?**

Is this group willing to show a more active interest in the huge amount of development planned for the Bickton/ Bickton Heath area and seek to protect the many PROW/Bridleways enjoyed by so many of us? Existing and new residents face a huge loss of access to the countryside, PROW and open spaces. This appears have largely been ignored by the Council in their apparent desire to develop every available open space in their quest for continual economic development.

Would the group be able to explore the possibilities of retaining existing PROW (which sometimes follow very old hedgerows) as green corridors within the developments to allow continued enjoyment of routes that have existed for centuries and to protect wildlife? It seems these valuable and historic features always find they are in the way of houses when it is the houses that are in the way! **Is there any way that this group could use its role as LAF to encourage the planners/architects to be a bit more creative and incorporate PROW into well designed places to live?** SC have signed up to a climate emergency and should be valuing PROW for many reasons.

Members of this group may not be aware that on top of loss of PROW that access and movement around the area will be severely hampered by severance of many of the local lanes

(Calcott, Shepherds, Little Oxon, and Clayton Way. There will be an impact on pedestrian and cycle use on Holyhead Road (National Cycleway) where a huge island is proposed.

Given that the proposed road will likely go well over budget please could this group ensure that funding is obtained and ring fenced for footbridges to counteract proposed severances and that existing and new residents are allowed to be able to continue to use all the Rights of Way to which they are entitled?

Answer

Officers have raised their own concerns regarding the retention of the public rights of way in this vicinity as well as the provision of easily accessible public open space. It is felt that the inclusion of this proposal with the NWRR is an opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of a well considered network throughout the scheme.

Officers have addressed with the developer the issue of lack of central public open space, lack of green corridors through the site and the crossing of the NWRR by public footpath 7 and have suggested that the planning application at Churncote be redesigned accordingly.

Should the group wish to contribute to the planning application at Churncote then this is the appropriate time to submit comments to be addressed.