

Shropshire Local Access Forum

<u>Committee and Date</u>

Shropshire Local Access Forum

2 July 2014

**MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 1
MAY 2014
10.00 AM - 12.18 PM**

Responsible Officer: Linda Jeavons
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Present

Councillor Roger Plowden (Chairman)
Councillors Gareph Boxley, Peter Carr, Alex Carson-Taylor, Chris Chillingworth,
Richard Cotham, Janet Mees-Robinson, Stuart Morgan, Alison Parker, Zia Robins,
Mark Weston and Leslie Winwood

29 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed and introduced everyone. In particular, he wished Deb Hughes, Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Manager, a speedy recovery; and thanked Paul Wynn for his valuable input and commitment during his membership on the Shropshire Local Access Forum.

30 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Members

Stephen Bell; David Cowell; Pauline Dee; Margaret Markland; Jennifer Spenser,
Dave Tremellen and Paul Wynn.

Officers

Deb Hughes and Tim King

31 Minutes and any matters arising

31.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 6 February 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the word 'Plan' (Minute No. 22, bullet point 6) being amended to read 'Path'; and the word 'Way' (Minute No. 24) being amended to read 'Trail'.

31.2 Arising on the Minutes:

- Mark Weston provided an update on the position to date with regard to the Deregulation Bill. The Bill had progressed through the 1st, 2nd and Committee stages; a new Clause with regard to motor vehicle use was now being considered; once enacted a further stakeholder working group would be set-up by DEFRA to consider the issue of motor vehicles on Rights of Way; and the Bill would go before the Lords early July with any further amendments to the Bill being tabled in the Lords. A further issue relating to guidance on diversions and extinguishment had been produced and this guidance had been deposited in the House of Commons library. No further information relating to gates was currently available; and
- Jim Stabler, Access Development Officer, reported that a report on the Annual Online User Survey would be presented to the next meeting.

32 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

33 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.

34 European Funding and the LEADER programme

Joe Bubb, Principal External Funding Officer, was in attendance and provided an overview of the European Funding and LEADER programme.

A question and answer session followed.

A member made reference to the national equine data figures in respect of the number of horses in Shropshire which, when multiplied by £3,000 (which was the suggested average amount each horse-owner spent each year), equated to an investment into the County of over £64m every year and requested that this economic driver be fed back to the appropriate body.

A member commented that the Ramblers Central Office had circulated an email, which indicated that some European funding received by LEPs might be spent on supporting rural tourism, including investments for public use in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and sign posting of touristic sites and small scale tourism infrastructure.

In response to questions from the floor, JB explained that tourism was recognised as a key growth area and an asset. The next round of LEADER delivery would be focussing on underdevelopment so existing local action groups, eg AONB and The Marches, would be working-up proposals which will be presented to DEFRA.

JS explained that one possible way forward would be to produce a TOOLKIT which would provide businesses, ie B&Bs, with the information they need to create

permissive walks from their doorstep and encourage visitors to use their premises. He urged everyone to come forward with ideas.

Suggestions included:

- The work done by this LAF on the Tourism Strategy should be revisited;
- Long distance multi-user routes and including accommodation for horses and owners should be explored; and
- Impact of short-events should not be overlooked – these events have the potential to generate instant financial benefits for the local economy.

It was **AGREED:** that:

- The Principal External Funding Officer to produce a précis (one side of A4) of the programme (a copy of which would be attached to the signed minutes); and
- A copy of the communication from Ramblers Central Office to be circulated to all members.

35 **LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and Local Nature Partnership**

Dan Wrench, Biodiversity Officer, was in attendance and provided an overview of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Local Nature Partnerships (LNP).

A discussion and question and answer session followed. Jim Stabler, the Access Development Officer welcomed the LEP and LNP and commented that the only way we could continue with projects that had a finite budget would be to involve these partnerships. A member asked if it would be possible for Shropshire Council to report to DEFRA as and when **permissive access** schemes came to an end and also to ask the question about what happens to permissive rights when funding was no longer available.

It was **AGREED:** That the Biodiversity Officer be invited to all future meetings.

36 **Launch of the Humphrey Kynaston Way**

Zia Robins provided an overview of the position to date. The route was already being well used, had been waymarked, and maps were available on the web.

The Chairman thanked Zia for all her hard work, drive and enthusiasm.

Jim Stabler commented that the work on the ground had finished but work on the website was currently ongoing. He was currently uploading maps of the routes and these would include links to local businesses.

37 **Shropshire Local Access Forum - number of meetings**

RESOLVED:

That this Forum continue to meet four times per year.

38 Volunteering

Jim Stabler introduced Helen Beresford. He explained that, as a consequence of restructuring, two new positions had been created. Helen Beresford had been appointed to the role of Shropshire Outdoor Development Officer and she would be looking to create and develop new volunteering groups around the County and help to integrate existing groups. A further post which aimed to reach the more difficult to get to groups would be advertised shortly.

Jim Stabler also made reference to the Probationary Service who currently contributed to the volunteer network and was doing an excellent job.

Dan Wrench explained that limited funding had been made available to use on projects that would benefit the environment and this money had been used to fund groups in the north of the County. These groups had gathered and shared useful information regarding the natural habitats in their respective parishes and he envisaged that this could be expanded to research e.g. farm buildings and footpaths and suggested that information gathered could then be used to inform the planning decision making process.

The Chairman welcomed the huge amount of volunteering that was already undertaken in the County and commented that there was a further need to harness the volunteering ethic and he asked for suggestions on how this could be achieved and how the future role of volunteering could further be developed and encouraged:

- Some reservations were expressed with regard to using scientifically unqualified persons to gather information that could detrimentally impact upon the planning decision process if misleading information was provided;
- Farmers and landowners would be a good source of information as they might have already undertaken surveys of their land and/or wildlife;
- The excellent work of the P3 groups was acknowledged;
- Schools could be approached; and
- The excellent ability of the Canal River Trust to attract many volunteers was noted and it was suggested that a representative from the CRT be invited to a future meeting of this LAF to explain how they go about recruiting volunteers.

In response to a question from the floor, JS confirmed that Shropshire Council would provide insurance and training for volunteers.

It was **AGREED**: That 'Volunteering' be included and discussed at the next meeting.

39 Wind turbines and the proposed National Grid Power Lines and their possible impact on access and tourism and Shropshire's economy

Shona Butter explained that she had recently attended a meeting with the National Grid. With reference to the map displayed she drew everyone's attention to the preliminary proposed line. She commented that Shropshire Council was being consulted and providing the National Grid with accurate information regarding our footpath/rights of way network. Hopefully, this LAF would also be consulted in the future and she was given to understand that the project would definitely be going

ahead. The bulk of the underground lines would be in Wales and the majority of the overhead lines in Shropshire.

From the floor it was expressed that consideration should be given to the impact of this project on tourism and the footprint of the pylons should not be positioned on any rights of way.

40 **Wind Turbine Planning Applications**

Shona Butter explained that appropriate Officers were consulted on all planning applications that affected rights of way. The number of wind turbine applications had increased and they responded to each **relevant applications** application on an individual basis and any response would also be dependent on the type of route, ie bridleway, footpath.

From the floor, it was suggested that this Forum should have an input and consider how these wind turbines impacted on the right of way network, the general access and tourism and how it might ~~prevent~~ **deter** people coming to Shropshire.

Dan Wrench confirmed that the Natural Environment team did get consulted on wind turbine and solar farm applications.

41 **Feedback from other Forums and items for noting**

41.1 **Items for Noting**

JS explained that the Walking Forums were meeting regularly, looking at local projects and involving local people.

41.2 **Minutes/Papers**

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

- (i) Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Forum – 7 October 2013
- (ii) South Walking Forum – 24 January 2014

41.3 **Future Meetings**

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

- What progress had there been on pushing forward UCRs and getting them opened-up. As many paths were overgrown it was suggested that an update from the maintenance team be received at a future meeting; and it was suggested that this could potentially be a suitable project for voluntary groups to undertake.
- Highways generally and UCRs – update
- Mapping - update
- NE Dedication Programme Nature Reserves - update
- Canal River Trust

- Volunteering
 - Oswald's Trail - update
- (b) A member commented that there was currently no record of important features on walks/routes – there was a list of listed buildings but no record of important **landscape** and historic features. She suggested that this would be a suitable project for volunteers to undertake.
- (c) It was noted that the National Library of Scotland had now completed a project to scan and make available on the internet old Ordnance Survey maps of England and Wales. Link to be forwarded to all members.
- (d) In response to a question from the floor relating to an obstruction of footpaths as a result of oil seed rape, Shona Butter explained that there was currently no specific policy for oil seed rape but there was a general policy for dealing with any crop. Initially the landowner would be contacted and they would have 14 days to remove any obstruction.
- (e) Jim Stabler informed the meeting that he would be leaving at the end of October and Clare Fildes would become the lead officer for this LAF.
- (f) Future meetings for 2014/15 as follows:

Tuesday, 1 July 2014 (Away Day) – possible venue Field Studies Centre Preston Montford and to include a walk of the new bridleway.

Thursday, 16 October 2014
Thursday, 5 February 2015
Date in May 2015 – TBC

All meetings to commence at 10.00 am at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury unless stated otherwise.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: