

Committee and Date

Shropshire Local Access Forum

1 May 2014

10.00 am

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
HELD ON THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2014 AT 10.00 AM IN THE SHREWSBURY
ROOM, SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY, SY2 6ND**

10.00 am – 12.16 PM

Responsible Officer

Linda Jeavons

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PRESENT:

Stephen Bell, Gareph Boxley, Peter Carr, Alex Carson-Taylor, Chris Chillingworth, Richard Cotham, Pauline Dee, Margaret Markland, Janet Mees-Robinson, Stuart Morgan, Alison Parker, Roger Plowden, Zia Robins, Jennifer Spenser, Dave Tremellen, Mark Weston and Les Winwood.

OFFICERS:

Deb Hughes, Outdoor Recreation Manager

Shona Butter, Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader

Linda Jeavons, Committee Officer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Keith Pybus (Plans for the walks to commemorate WW1 events)

16. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Members:

David Cowell and Paul Wynn.

Officers:

Jim Stabler, Access Development Officer

18. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 October 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ACTION

19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

20. 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.

21. PLANS FOR THE WALKS TO COMMEMORATE WW1 EVENTS

Mr Keith Pybus was in attendance and gave a presentation on the series of walks planned to take place over five years from 2014 to 2019 to commemorate WW1 events. The walks aimed to tell the story of life on the Home Front in Shropshire during the First World War and themes would cover the role of women, volunteers and conscription, agricultural production and rationing, forest output, quarries, railways, auxiliary military hospitals, the military tribunals and conscientious objection, prisoners of war, many war memorials, individuals who served in the armed forces and civilians. Four walks were planned to take place each year (one in each of the north, central and south areas of the County plus one additional walk) and would be led by local enthusiasts. Self-guided versions would also be published. Details of planned events for 2014 along with any contact details could be found at Appendix 1 appended to the signed minutes.

LJ

Any suggestions for walks or details of any known local events should be forwarded to Jim Stabler, Shropshire Council's Access Development Officer.

ALL

22. UPDATE ON OUTDOOR RECREATION – FUTURE SERVICES PROVISION

With reference to Minute No. 10 (17 October 2013), the Outdoor Recreation Manager, Deb Hughes, provided a further update on the future of the Outdoor Recreation service. Main points as follows:

- The section had recently entered into a period of staff consultation on a proposed restructure;
- Some savings would be achieved by 1st April 2014 and had partly been due to the reorganisation of staff;
- Also looking to achieve a reduction in costs on work undertaken in relation to green space;
- Working towards increasing income particularly at Severn Valley Country Park and Mere;
- Public Health (now under the remit of Shropshire Council) had recognised the work and benefits of the OR service in terms of public health outcomes and had agreed to support OR for at least a two year period. As a consequence of this a new staffing structure had been

formulated which would enable OR to maintain the work being done to encourage active volunteering on our sites and rights of way network and to grow this over the coming years;

- Increase partnership working, eg Parish Plan Path Partnership schemes;
- It was proposed that the service would operate on an area basis, ie a north team and a south team, to manage recreational assets (rights of way, green spaces and country parks). A further team would manage the developmental opportunities;
- The Definitive Map and any associated documents would be maintained as well as the enforcement function; and
- As of 1 April 2014, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership would form part of OR.

From the floor concerns were expressed that history and paperwork would get lost and/or misplaced during all the changes and it was asked if the work to copy and digitalise maps had been completed or was ongoing. It was suggested that the possibility of using internships to progress digitalisation could be explored. DH agreed to take these concerns back to highways and check on progress with the maps; and would explore the possibility of making use of the Council's internship/graduate programme and also consider the possibility of recruiting volunteer(s).

DH

In response to questions from the floor, DH explained that:

- Work with the Probation Service was ongoing and a new agreement had recently been entered into with the West Mercia Probation Trust;
- Currently, a supervised team of probationers, working four days per week, were carrying out work on our sites that would normally be contracted out;
- PPP groups were being encouraged to highlight potential areas of work for the probationers; and
- Towards the end of next year, DH aimed to reintroduce the production of the annual report which would demonstrate the benefits of such projects.

23. ANNUAL ONLINE USER SURVEY

Deb Hughes, the Outdoor Recreation Manager, provided an update. This was the annual survey which helped the OR service to steer their priorities. She encouraged all to complete the survey.

ALL

From the floor, a member commented that the survey was now more inclusive of all activities and was now not just aimed at walkers; and the OR service was congratulated for a job well done.

With regard to dog mess on sites and in response to a question asking if there were any Dog Control Orders that landowners could use to restrict access to dogs on Rights of Way, DH commented that she was not aware of any legislation but agreed to check and report back.

DH

RESOLVED: That the appendix marked '8' attached to the report be noted.

24. OSWESTRY RING UPDATE

Peter Carr provided an update and stated that after two years of hard work sufficient funding had been secured to make this project a reality. However, because they could not dedicate parts of the route as a bridleway they had been unable to obtain partnership funding. An improved route would now be constructed; a booklet would be published; work would begin in the spring; he had completed approximately two thirds of the resurvey work; it was envisaged that the launch would take place in September; and the route would be known as Oswald's Way Trail.

From the floor, disappointment was expressed that a section of the route would not now be designated as a bridleway.

25. HUMPHREY KYNASTON WAY WITH CIRCULAR ROUTES OFF

Zia Robins provided an update and stated that, despite setbacks, work had commenced and was now progressing well; an article on the route had been produced and included in the winter edition of the Outdoor Recreation Service Newsletter; new waymarks had been erected on the linear route; the route would link many sites and communities; to ensure funding requirements were met all work had to be completed by February; and the route was already being used. She thanked the OR team for their involvement and support.

She expressed concern and disappointment that on part of the link to Hanwood a house had been constructed on land actually designated as a bridleway. As such, at this point in time on this part of the route there was only access for walkers via a footpath located nearby but no access for horse riders and cyclists. She confirmed that enforcement was aware of this problem.

DH thanked both Peter and Zia for their involvement in both the above projects. Both these projects were fantastic examples of how working at a local level could bring in funding and projects such as these would be of great benefit to tourism in Shropshire.

26. NATIONAL AND WEST MIDLANDS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CONFERENCES

The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader, Shona Butter, was in attendance and in her capacity as the West Midlands Regional LAF Coordinator she reported that this year two Conferences would be held, one each in Bristol (attended by SB) and Durham. One topic discussed related to funding and, in particular, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships. Arising from this she suggested that this LAF could come up

with some ideas to enable Shropshire to get some additional funding for work on the access network. In addition, and as Shropshire Council intended to establish a European Funding Team in the near future, DH suggested that a representative from the External Funding Team be invited to the next meeting of this LAF to provide an overview of the potential and complexities of European funding, talk on the new LEADER programme, and to discuss access in the future; and also Dan Wrench, from the Natural Environment team to talk on the Local Natural Partnership.

Following debate it was **AGREED**:

- (i) That a representative from the External Funding Team and Dan Wrench from the Natural Environment team be invited to the next meeting; and the possibility of inviting someone from the Local Enterprise Partnership body be explored; and
- (ii) That feedback from the National Conference and regional meetings, particularly with regard to the control of dogs in the countryside and on rights of way, be given to a future meeting of this Forum; and
- (iii) Paperwork from the National Conference and regional meetings be circulated to all members of this Forum

DH

SB

SB

27. **CLARIFICATION OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON PROPOSED DEREGULATION BILL**

The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader, Shona Butter, provided an update on the position to date with the Draft Deregulation Bill (DRB). The majority of the DRB focussed on the simplification of the process of looking after the Definitive Map. It would have to go through several stages before coming into force and it was hoped that it would be implemented before the next General Election. One possible key issue would be to give landowners the right to apply for a diversion.

Mark Weston, a member of the Stakeholder Working Group explained that the DRB had undergone its second reading and was now at the Committee stage. He advised that an explanatory memorandum had been uploaded onto the Government website and he urged anyone who was interested to read the section on rights of way. In response to requests for clarity with regard to the term 'gates' and whether this referred to a physical gate or a generic term for cattle control so consequently would a cattle grid be termed as a gate, and would gating be a way of controlling access on and off common land as opposed to a hedged byway, MW indicated that this could be discussed at the next meeting of the Stakeholder Working Group and feedback would be given at a future meeting.

MW

28. **FEEDBACK FROM OTHER FORUMS AND ITEMS FOR NOTING**

28.1 **Items for Noting** – None

Trial/Quad Bikes - At this juncture, SB explained that they had been

approached for advice in relation to a small number of alleged conflicts involving quad bikes travelling at inappropriate speed and failing to give way to pedestrians. This more likely involved non-affiliated riders who did not belong to an organized group and she asked if any member of LAF knew of any way these riders could be reached to inform them of their responsibilities and encourage good practice.

From the floor it was suggested that the Trial Bike Federation might be able to assist but it was more likely to be unaffiliated riders from the local area. If they were registered vehicles then registration numbers could be recorded and/or riders photographed and reported to the local police.

DH reminded all that there was an agreed policy regarding vehicles in the countryside and Shropshire Council would and did work with legitimate organisations and would continue to inform them of any issues. We were being asked to consider TROs which would stop everyone from using some routes but this was not fair when it was the minority who were not treating the countryside as they should do.

In response to concerns, it was suggested that representatives from the Trail Bike Federation and a dog group could be invited to contribute in some way to this Forum. DH explained that in the past there had been a forum which had focused on byways and suggested that an attempt could be made to resurrect it although she doubted that the number of people necessary to do this would be available – DH agreed to investigate.

DH

From the floor it was suggested that this was probably a case of educating people on how to respect and behave in the countryside and one that should start with children through schools and colleges. In response, DH explained that a bid for funding from the Sustainable Transport Fund was planned and, dependent on the outcome, would be used to try and encourage young people to get out walking and could include a programme of education.

28.2 Minutes / Papers

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

- (i) Shropshire Riding and Carriage Driving Forum – 10 June 2013
- (ii) North Walking Forum - 14 October 2013
- (iii) Shropshire Cycle Forum – 16 October 2013
- (iv) Central Walking Forum – 29 November 2013
- (v) North Walking Forum – 27 January 2014

28.3 Future Meetings

DH/SB/JS

- (a) The following agenda items were suggested for consideration at a future meeting:
 - To discuss and consider the possibility of reducing the number of meetings of this Shropshire Local Access Forum from four to three;
 - The Spirit of Volunteering – to consider how we can encourage volunteers, ie litter picking;
 - Wind turbines and the proposed National Grid Power Lines and their possible impact on access and tourism and Shropshire’s economy; and
 - Cumulation of wind turbine planning applications.

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

2014

Thursday, 1 May 2014

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

Chairman.....

Date.....