

WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONFIRMED MINUTES

of the nineteenth meeting held at Guildhall, Wrexham on 3 February 2006

01/06 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Attendance:

PRESIDING OFFICER

John Marchant Forum Secretary

(Following item 02/06, Ieuan Lewis, Chair, took over as Presiding Officer and Emma Haldane, as Forum Secretary).

CHAIR

Ieuan Lewis

SECRETARY

Emma Haldane

MEMBERS

John Cooper-Poole

Mike Crawshaw

Sue Gittins

Gwynfor Jones

John Marchant

Mavis McBride

Clive Menzies

Margaret Murphy

Mabyn Pickering

Karl Praker

Edward Wardle

Gerald Moss (apologies given – arrived after election)

NON MEMBERS

Martin Howorth

Paul Humphries

Alun Price (CCW)

John Pugh

Apologies: Shelagh Roberts, Tim Stevens

02/06 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The Presiding Officer confirmed that postal votes had been received from Shelagh Roberts and Gerald Moss.

Candidates, Ieuan Lewis and Clive Menzies gave their election addresses to the forum.

Ieuan Lewis was elected Chair and Clive Menzies was elected Deputy Chair.

Ieuan Lewis then addressed the forum with thanks for their support.

He also gave thanks to Mike Edwards, previous deputy chairman of the forum, Colin Simpson, from Transport and Asset Management Department of the Council, for his invaluable contributions and John Marchant for all his help and support over the past three years.

03/06 CHANGE OF SECRETARY AND MEMBERSHIP CHANGE

John Marchant stepped down as secretary and took his place on the forum as the council's representative.

Emma Haldane took her place as new secretary.

04/06 THE USE OF TAPE RECORDERS AT FORUM MEETINGS

The Chairman asked members if they were happy for the tape recorder to be used to record forum minutes. Mabyn Pickering had some concern over data protection issues.

It was agreed that an opening statement would be read out at the beginning of all future meetings, explaining that the tape recorder would be used for minuting purposes and that any tapes used would be erased when minutes were confirmed.

Agreed: Use of tape recorder to continue.

05/06 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Secretary invited new members not able to attend the last meeting to introduce themselves.

Member, Mike Crawshaw gave a brief introduction of his background, experience and interests relevant to the forum.

06/06 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING ON 25 NOVEMBER 2005

The draft minutes were distributed to members on 30 December 2005 and two weeks were allowed for comment. No amendments were necessary and the minutes were confirmed correct on 18 January 2006.

(29/05) – Minor Roads. A response was received from John Bradbury, Chief Environment Officer. **(Discussed in Agenda Item 08/06)**

(35/05) – Groundwork contacted about the gates

Subsequent to the last meeting it was noted that Groundwork had been contacted about the gates in August and the secretary understood that a Groundwork Officer would contact Andrew Kelly. Groundwork stated that all remedial works to the gates should be completed by the end of November.

(39/05) - Wynnstay Estate – request for meeting.

Action: Secretary to chase reply.

(60/05) - At the last meeting member, Edward Wardle suggested that the forum discuss a cut off time for future meetings.

Agreed: Meetings to start at 1.30 pm and finish at 4.00 pm.

To be monitored.

07/06 SECRETARY'S REPORT

- 'Breath of Fresh Air' booklet and 'Recreation and Access Newsletter' were distributed to members at the beginning of the meeting.
- The Secretary outlined what expenses could be claimed by the Forum. Full records must be kept and receipts produced when appropriate. Claim forms will be available at all meetings.¹
- **Monitoring of the National Access Forum**
Clive Menzies agreed to monitor the business of the National Access Forum. Sue Gittins would monitor in his absence.

- **Winter Gritting Workshop**
The Forum had received an invitation to attend a Wrexham County Borough Maintenance Policy Workshop.
Clive Menzies agreed that he would attend on behalf of the forum.
- **New Proposed Trail Guides**
Draft versions of the new proposed longer trail guides were displayed for all members to see.
- **Green Network Steering Group**
The Steering Group no longer had a forum representative present.
Mabyn Pickering agreed to act as the forums representative for the group with Sue Gittins attending in her absence.
Action: Secretary to advise Malcolm Phillips, Planning Policy Manager.

08/06 MOTOR VEHICLES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

At the last meeting, member Tim Stevens had asked whether the LAF would be involved in the process of finding a safe designated area for off road vehicles and whether a Consultation Paper had been published by the assembly. John Marchant confirmed that no Consultation Paper had been received. It was believed that a comment by a Welsh Assembly member of the existence of such a paper had been misinterpreted.

Gwynfor Jones thought that special areas should be designated for children on mini bikes and it was a concern to most members.

As Tim Stevens was not present and had extra knowledge of the subject, it was agreed that it would be discussed at the next meeting.

(29/05) – Minor Roads - Response from Chief Environment Officer.

In response to John Bradbury's letter on repair work to minor roads, Sue Gittins was concerned that volunteers were asked to provide their own insurance, which proved to be costly. The British Trust Conservation Volunteer Insurance seemed to be the best option, but the cost in recent years has increased. She informed members that Powys County Council had an appointed volunteer co-ordinator who trained teams in maintenance work.

From the floor, Regional Team Leader, Paul Humphreys, Countryside Recreational Access Group (CRAG) said that Councils were reluctant to use volunteer groups. He said that CRAG provided their own Public Liability Insurance and labour and the Councils provided the materials for work needed completing.

John Marchant confirmed that Groundwork do some project work, usually when there are grants involved from CCW and others, but they do not use volunteers. He wanted to remind members that at a previous meeting member, Tim Stevens offered to manage and organise a volunteer group. John Cooper-Poole suggested speaking to AVOW as they have a volunteer bureau and experience of dealing with these projects.

Agreed:

- **Forum to pass on CRAG details to Tim Stevens to pursue.**
- **Secretary to contact AVOW for further information to discuss at the next meeting.**
- **The Council to contact certain Community Councils in problem areas to find out what work needs completing.**

09/06 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Martin Howorth, Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Manager, reported on the progress of Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

He confirmed that Wrexham was doing very well in comparison to Flintshire and Denbighshire.

Workshops were held in December to which members were invited and attendance was good. Over the next month, consultants 'Resources for Change' would start to write up the assessment report. This would basically look at the state of the network. The 16% survey of the rights of way network would be incorporated and the state of the Definitive Map and the 'Lost Ways' would be looked at.

He confirmed that the first draft of the assessment phase should be ready for members to look at by the next LAF meeting.

It was noted that members were pleased with the progress of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Agreed: Draft to be discussed at the next meeting.

Mike Crawshaw asked if signage was included under ROWIP. He had encountered problems on his land from walkers straying from footpaths. Martin Howorth confirmed that the ROWIP looked at certain issues and targets made on how Rights of Way could be improved. Any individual problems that are encountered can be looked at to see whether they coincide with other issues.

John Marchant confirmed that the authority had been advised that 'Access Land Ends' signs should not be put up where a public footpath continues as it can be misleading. The authority had signs that could be put up if required.

10/06 REPORTS FROM THE ACCESS RANGERS

Sion Roberts, Access Ranger, introduced himself to the forum. He gave a report of work completed in the County over the last couple of months:

- Work had started on footpaths in the Ceriog Valley, with Stiles, Gates and Waymarking posts to be erected on various paths.
- 25 new signposts to be erected around the county shortly. Damaged and worn flags to be replaced with new ones showing destinations and distances.
- Motorbike inhibitors have been ordered for various footpaths. One is due to be erected near Chapel Street, Rhosllanerchrugog shortly.
- The first of 6 guided walks organised by the Rights of Way Section took place in January around the Nant y Ffrith Woods, Bwlchgwyn, with 15 people taking part.
- A six metre footbridge had been erected on footpath number 20, in Marchwiell. This has now completed the Marchwiell footpath project. A similar smaller footpath project is currently taking place on footpaths around the Plas Bennion area near Penycae.
- In a report prepared by Dave Smith, Open Access and Improvement Officer, no significant issues had been reported with regards to walkers and no applications made for restrictions or exclusions on Access Land.
- Wrexham Council had been successful in obtaining additional access grants and work was progressing well. A significant amount of access infrastructure now meets and exceeds national standards.

John Marchant informed members that organised walks can be viewed on the Wrexham County Borough Website.

Sue Gittins was pleased to hear that signage was being improved.

Clive Menzies asked whether the forum had a policy on furniture and was keen to see the erection of 'Kissing Gates' to encourage disabled people to access the countryside. John Marchant confirmed that there is a 'Gap – Gate – Stile' policy in place. He explained that if a 'Gap' or a 'Gate' could not be erected then a 'Stile' would then be considered.

Gwynfor Jones had concerns that certain stiles on published WebWalks in the County had been erected incorrectly. John Marchant asked whether details could be provided to himself or Sion after the meeting. He confirmed that stiles are the responsibility of the landowner, but stiles on a promoted footpath would be maintained by the Council.

Gwynfor Jones praised the Council for their informative website which promoted county walks www.wrexham.gov.uk/walks.

John Marchant thanked him for his encouraging comments and would pass them onto the Council's web team and his staff.

11/06 COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

Alun Price, CCW gave his latest report to the forum.

He reported that there had been very few exclusions and restrictions in the whole of North Wales.

In response to Karl Prakes's question on a restriction in Berwyn, Alun Price confirmed that the restriction was temporary and probably due to pheasant shooting. Any restrictions in force are published on the CCW website.

Clive Menzies asked whether grants given to local authorities were ring fenced. Alun Price confirmed that they are hypothecated. Grants that were given to local authorities were audited on their use.

The new 'Countryside Code' information pack was brought to members' attention. They thought the pack was very informative and beneficial for forum members, schools and young farmers.

Action: Secretary to request copies for the next meeting.

12/06 ANNUAL REPORTS

The Chairman asked if members were happy with the draft annual reports produced.

Clive Menzies thought the reports were not very informative. John Marchant explained that the forum had not produced annual reports before and they were just a summary of what had been discussed. Minutes of past forum meetings were published on the Council's website www.wrexham.gov.uk/laf.

John Cooper-Poole thought that resources should be made available to produce these reports as it was a statutory requirement. Sue Gittins thought future annual reports should hold more content.

Agreed: Annual Reports prepared to be submitted to CCW.

Clive Menzies to produce future reports.

13/06 THE BALANCE OF THE FORUM

Some members thought that there was a lack of expertise in the forum in certain areas. There was room to make adjustments if necessary for the balance, but the council was not keen to have the maximum amount of members and was happy with the present balance.

John Marchant confirmed that 22 was the maximum number of members allowed in the forum and there were 16 members at present.

The Chair asked that a letter be sent to all retiring LAF members, thanking them for all their hard work and contributions made to the forum over the past 3 years.

Action: Secretary to write to retiring members.

Agreed: Members agreed to monitor the balance over the next couple of months.

14/06 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

The following items were suggested by members:

1. Planning Applications
2. Definitive Map Modification Orders
3. Budgeting Issues
4. Balance of the Forum

15/06 DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman suggested that the forum discuss future venues at the next meeting.

Friday, 5 May 2006 at 1.30 pm in Committee Room 3, Guildhall.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

Footnote

New Regulations on VAT recovery by the Authority on fuel purchased for business journeys (meetings etc).

It was established after the meeting that a VAT receipt is required to be produced with a mileage claim in order that the VAT be reclaimed by the Authority. VAT receipts can be requested from all petrol stations of proof of fuel purchased.

Below are the standard criteria for meeting the less detailed VAT invoice specifications:

- The name, address and VAT registration number of the retailer.
- The date and time of the supply.
- A description sufficient to identify the goods, or services supplied.
- The total amount payable including VAT.
- For each rate of VAT chargeable, the gross amount payable including VAT, and the VAT rate applicable.

Any queries please contact Forum Secretary.

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