

# WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

## CONFIRMED MINUTES

of the ninth meeting held at Guildhall, Wrexham on 5 March 2004

### **12/04 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

Attendance:

CHAIR Michael Edwards (Dep. Chair) SECRETARY John Marchant

#### MEMBERS

Paul Davies  
Mike Griffiths  
Gwynfor Jones  
Andrew Kelly  
Ieuan Lewis (Chairman)\*  
Gerald Moss  
Mabyn Pickering  
John Lawton Roberts  
Shelagh Roberts  
Colin Simpson  
Edward Wardle

#### NON-MEMBERS

Iestyn Thomas (CCW)<sup>1</sup>  
Jan Fair (YTDCDT)<sup>2</sup>  
Naomi Klenerman (CPRW)<sup>3</sup>  
Martin Chadwick  
Graham Findlay (DW)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Countryside Council for Wales

<sup>2</sup> Yew Tree Disabled Carriage Driving Trust

<sup>3</sup> Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

<sup>4</sup> Disability Wales

\*Ieuan Lewis could attend for only part of the meeting, so Mike Edwards took the chair.

Apologies were received from member Harry Prankard and also from observer Mavis McBride.

### **13/04 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF WLAFO8 (9/1/04)**

02/04 (55/03) A reply has been received from the Chief Executive of Wrexham County Borough Council.

02/04 (60/03 UNAUTHORISED MOTORCYCLING) The survey report has been received from CCW and has been distributed to members.

03/04 (71/03 RINGFENCING OF CROW ACT MONEY) IL has now sent the letter.

11/04 (Denbighshire Local Access Forum) Discussions were continuing with other forums.

11/04 (Rights of Way Improvement Plan) The draft timetable was not yet available but would be sent to the ROWIP sub-committee as soon as possible.

11/04 (CCW Recreation and Access Newsletter) Two editions of this had now been distributed to the members.

## 14/04 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

IL thanked M.E. for taking the chair. He said he had attended the meeting in Builth Wells for the Chairmen of all Welsh Local Access Forums and had found it very useful. The meeting consisted of a series of workshops and the opinions and decisions to come out of them were that: -

- there should be better links with other Local Access Forums
- there should be at least one conference a year for the Chairmen
- there should be a representative for the LAFs on the National Access Forum
- CCW will distribute papers to the Chairmen of the LAFs as well as to the secretaries
- WAG should supply the LAFs with summarised responses of consultations
- CCW continue to attend Local Access Forums as observers
- Local Access Forum members should notify secretaries of training needs

IL also reported on the National Access Forum meeting in Cardiff.

IL had received a reply from the Chief Executive of Wrexham County Borough Council to the effect that Rob Wilkinson, the Chief Transportation and Engineering Officer, will attend the next meeting. It also states that a further service pressure will be submitted in the hope of increased resources for rights of way in 2005/06. It was unanimously agreed to ask Mr Wilkinson to bring with him details of expenditure.

***ACTION: Secretary to ask Rob Wilkinson for breakdown of Rights of Way expenditure in 2003/04.***

IL announced the departure of Lynne Jones from the forum. Members read both the letter from the council to Mrs Jones and her reply.

CS said that it was an unfortunate coincidence that having been appointed as a member of the forum to represent the interests of the hill farmers, Lynne Jones then took employment with the Council and fell foul of the regulation which states that the forum can have only one Council officer. Lynne Jones had been reminded that she could attend meetings as an observer. CS said that attempts were being made to find a replacement from the same area to continue the good work. The Council had already written to community councils in the Ceiriog Valley hoping that they may be able to nominate someone.

Addressing Mrs Jones's dismay that none of the applicants resident in the Valley for the new posts had even been interviewed, CS explained that they did not hold the minimum academic qualification for a scale 5 post. Without having achieved the essential qualification, it was not possible to consider the benefits of their place of residence or experience in lieu of the higher, desirable, qualification.

In summary, ME said that it was unfortunate because Lynne Jones had been a very good forum member but unfortunately had fallen into a category that all members had read about in the terms of reference before appointment. He proposed that a letter of thanks be sent to her from the forum.

***ACTION: Chairman to write letter of thanks to Lynne Jones.***

MP asked that steps be taken by the Council for areas of conflict to be identified when they interview for new members of staff and also when interviewing for new members of the Forum.

#### **15/04 SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Details of meetings of neighbouring forums were announced.

A copy of 'The Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales' had been obtained for the forum's library.

All 34 community councils in Wrexham CBC have been written to inviting their members to attend forum meetings and asking for the enclosed posters to be displayed.

#### **16/04 PRESENTATION FROM DISABILITY WALES**

Disability Wales is the national association of disability organisations, funded by Welsh Assembly Government, and Graham Findlay is the Access Officer. He addressed the forum on the subject of access to the countryside for disabled people. He saw the forthcoming Rights of Way Improvement Plan as a chance to improve the situation for disabled people and asked that their needs were not overlooked when shared use schemes were planned.

Graham guided forum members through important parts of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and recommended 'BT Countryside for All' with its "least restrictive access" alternatives.

#### **17/04 COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

Iestyn Thomas reported that the Access Map for Northeast Wales was at Appeal stage. Nineteen appeals had been received but none was in Wrexham.

He offered the new Open Access and Improvement Officers an opportunity to visit the CCW Mold offices to see the mapping process.

#### **18/04 ENHANCED WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGEMENT**

It was unanimously agreed that enhanced WAG support is necessary to achieve a meaningful improvement in the condition of public rights of way and a joint approach should be made to the WAG.

***ACTION: Secretary to reply to Ceredigion Local Access Forum supporting its initiative.***

#### **19/04 NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM**

AK reported that he had attended the last meeting in Cardiff on behalf of Flintshire LAF. CCW gave a presentation on progress so far with Open Access. He reported on concerns from landowners. 89% of the public thought that signage should be improved. OS mapping of Access Land was discussed along with Occupier's Liability and wildlife considerations.

In November/December CCW will start dialogue with the Local Access Forums about how to help launch open access, due in May 2005. The Walking and Cycling Strategy and recent motor cycling consultation were discussed.

## **20/04 OPEN ACCESS AND IMPROVEMENT OFFICERS**

CS announced the appointment of Sion Roberts and David Smith. The procedure leading to the appointments was explained by CS. This was followed by an outline of their duties over the next few months. Members were assured that they would receive training about wildlife, conservation and other topics. Members considered that liaison between the new officers and the police was essential.

## **21/04 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE**

Unfortunately the Council had not managed to produce the draft timetable but the secretary said that it would be posted to the sub-committee members as soon as possible. The matter of another member for the sub-committee would be held over.

## **22/04 PUBLICITY**

AK thought that a sub-committee should be formed. MG commented on the excellent way in which the meetings are publicised at present. The secretary said there was a limit to what publicity he could do and he knew of some Local Access Forums that were achieving more with a sub-committee or sub-group. The matter was held over as too many members were absent to consider trying to form a sub-group.

## **23/04 CONSULTATION ON USE OF MECHANICALLY PROPELLED VEHICLES ON RIGHTS OF WAY**

The main consultation was dealt with at the last meeting. However, Mr Pugh had submitted a letter which members were asked to consider ready for this meeting. No member thought that the forum's response should be changed. GM has written to the Chairman asking that motor vehicles should be excluded from all unsealed highways in view of the damage that they were causing. A discussion ensued but it was decided that the forum's response to the consultation did not need to be changed.

## **24/04 AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING**

No suggestions were made for items in addition to those already scheduled.

## **25/04 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Poster**

SR complained that the picture on the poster advertising the forum showed part of her farm, which was not open access land and was therefore misleading. However, the foreground was access land and in the distance was Ruabon Mountain. The secretary commented that the LAF was about more than just Open Access, it was also about Rights of Way. While he apologised for any inconvenience he said that the picture, which showed access land in the foreground and in the distance, was not labelled and only a very few people would be able to identify the location.

### **Leader Plus**

ME spoke about the Northern Marches Community Action Plan and its meetings in Ruabon and Holt and wondered if the forum should have some input into it. EW commented on meetings in Bettisfield and Bronington, and said that the scheme encouraged communities to think of projects for their local areas. Northern Marches would then assist with funding and advice. The secretary confirmed that the Leader Plus Manager had agreed to give a presentation to the forum.

### **26/04 NEXT MEETINGS**

The date of the next meeting was already fixed for 21 May. It was agreed that in order to avoid a conflict of commitments for HP, the following meeting should be on either 2 July or 9 July.

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.