



WLAF 28

WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONFIRMED MINUTES

of the twenty eighth meeting held at Guildhall, Wrexham on 8 February 2008

01/08 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Attendance:

CHAIR

Clive Menzies

SECRETARY

Emma Haldane

MEMBERS

John Cooper-Poole
Mike Crawshaw
Sue Gittins
John Marchant
Gerald Moss
Mavis McBride
Mabyn Pickering (deputy chair)
Karl Praker
Shelagh Roberts

NON MEMBERS

Martin Howorth
Sean Hanratty (Team Leader)
Alan Guest (Divisional Manager)
Norman Venables (RECAP)
Peter Cade (RECAP)
C. Basey (horserider)
H. Pemberton (horserider)
Len Coling (footpaths)

Apologies: Edward Wardle, Margaret Murphy, Alun Price (CCW)

02/08 Secretary's Report

- **Connect Magazine Article.**
An article will be published in the Spring Edition of Connect Magazine to help promote the Forum's work as part of the Communication Strategy.
- **Letter Acknowledgement**
Secretary acknowledged a letter from Keith Owen, Community Councillor for Maelor South Community, with regards to stile and kissing gate concerns in his area. This was presently being addressed.

03/08 Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting on 8 November 2007

40/06 Youth Involvement

No further news to report at present.



30/07 Total Liability

Members had concerns over the burden placed upon landowners and occupiers by the application of total liability and the cost of diverting paths. Chair informed the Forum that the act had failed through parliament and that the burden presently still lay with the landowner. Chair had discussed the concerns at national level to agree a way forward and this will be discussed at the next national meeting in March.

32/07 Foot and Mouth

This had been raised at national level. Chair felt that there did not seem to be the same level of concern nationally.

04/08 Chairman Report (including national issues)

Lost Ways

Chair felt that both WAG and CCW considered this to be of low priority.

To help to try and keep the issue afloat, he would be asking national representatives for ideas of how they are prepared to keep this issue alive. Legally, after 1st January 2026 any historic 'Lost Ways' that were not recorded and could only be located by using map reference or historical documents, will no longer be applicable for inclusion in the definitive map. Local concerns raised recently in Legacy station path, provide a clear example of how problems can arise if paths are not recorded appropriately.

Chair asked members how they wished to push this item forward and what level of involvement they felt was needed. As a starting point, Gerald suggested taking some time to look at old railway maps, though time resources were an issue.

Chair felt that the procedure was quite difficult to follow at present and that the issue be addressed at national level to look at trying to make the procedure easier.

Cross Border Issues

Wrexham were keen to forge closer ties with other LAFs. To form a working group to look solely at the issue of Cross Border paths between Wrexham and the adjacent counties was felt to be a way of instigating closer working. It was suggested that a couple of members from each forum could work together on the definitive map and statements to identify anomalies such as a Public Right of Way changing status from footpath to bridleway or visa versa and instances of cul de sac public rights of way caused by the border. The group could also take a look at the wider picture and make suggestions for upgrading path status to create circular walks around villages, or for an increase in bridleway circuits.

Chair felt that this would be a good exercise in linking in with other LAF's

Secretary to write to LAFs with proposal

Planning Applications

3 applications had been received this year to date, with minor or no impacts on the network where the planning application has been adjacent to a path. None have been sufficient to warrant any objections.

Local Issue

A number of complaints had been received recently revolving around the Minera Quarry area from members of the public and local councillors. Highland cattle had been reported to be causing footpath damage in the area and concerns over safety had been raised. John Marchant had agreed to look into these concerns and report any issues he felt needed highlighting.

National Issues

Budget Paper CCW

The Welsh Assembly Government had asked the Countryside Council for Wales for advice on the funding of the implementation of local authority Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs).

Chair summarised the budget paper and felt it to be quite significant in the long term.

It had recommended that ROWIPs be prioritised locally and that more money be directed this way. Chair would take forward any suggestions or proposed actions to help improve the situation.

05/08 Rights of Way Improvement Plan

- **Annual Action Programme 2008/09 – (Martin Howorth)**

Martin Howorth, Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Manager, presented to the Forum a programme of proposed improvement works relating to the ROWIP for 2008/09. The Assembly had stated that they were looking at giving the authority some funding towards some of these projects, though the amount had not been finalised or agreed to date.

Members were happy with the proposals.

Non-member, Ms Pemberton felt that bridleway access in the Brymbo area was very poor. A meeting was being held 27 February in Brymbo for walkers, riders and other members of the community to look at improving the bridleway access in the Brymbo area.

Chair agreed to attend to represent LAF.

- **Statement of Priorities – Definitive Map Modification Orders (Sean Hanratty)**

There had been a number of occasions where applicants for DMMOs had successfully applied to the Assembly under schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to have their application determined by Wrexham after 12 months. This resulted in a number of applications taking priority over other cases where no direction to determine had been applied for.

At present Wrexham dealt with applications in date order (except where it has been directed to determine an application) and had no published statement for dealing with its backlog of DMMOs.

To help prioritise cases, a statement of priorities had been developed. The current backlog of DMMOs, and also any new applications received, would then be prioritised by using this system.

Sean felt that the Assembly would look at things differently if these measures were put in place.

All Agreed

06/08 Report from Access Rangers

John Marchant presented a report of work currently underway:

- Alison reported that the path project in Coedpoeth was running smoothly and that work had started on the paths. She is now looking at other community areas for next year's project. It is likely to be either Gwersyllt or Chirk unless another community comes forward showing interest.
- Alison will be leading a walk from Nant Mill, Coedpoeth on the 12th March based around the Gwenfro and Clywedog Valleys. She is also hoping to look at a limited number of cropping issues in the coming months.
- Dave Smith reports that he is continuing his work on promoted route maintenance, focussing recently on Offa's Dyke Path, Maelor Way, the Overton circular walks and the proposed Wats Dyke Way.
- He is also dealing with two major temporary footpath closures and subsequent diversions in Overton, and serving more notices to landowners.
- Dave was pleased that the forum had decided to use his design for the new LAF Logo.

07/08 Countryside Council for Wales

Alun Price, CCW sent apologies. No report available on this occasion.

08/08 Budget Matters

Concerns were raised at the last meeting about the current budget situation and the budget allocation for 2008 with regards to the financial resources provided for Rights of Way Section. The authority had duties in law with regards to the maintenance and signing of Public Rights of Way, let alone health and safety issues, and it was felt that at the very least funds should be made available from the Council's emergency reserve to meet the legal duties.

The Forum had written to the Chief Executive and Leader asking what the authority intended to do to remedy the situation and therefore extended an invitation to attend the next meeting.

The Forum had recommended that the Council release some additional money to the Rights of Way Section for the remainder of this financial year, thus enabling them to continue to meet their legal duties and obligations in relation to Public Rights of Way, and that serious consideration be given to increasing the budget of the Rights of Way Section for 2008, so that this situation does not recur.

Alan Guest, Divisional Manager stated that the Rights of Way Section has a budget of £70,000 and that there may be a possibility of extra funding next year. He stated that the authority had provided extra funding for a Definitive Map Modification Order post last year to help meet its obligations.

Members felt that the council should be promoting the potential health benefits of walking, riding and cycling and that extra funding should be made available for the Rights of Way Section to help to encourage the community to participate in outdoor activities.

Clive thanked Alan for attending the meeting on behalf of the authority.

09/08 Gating Orders

Scrutiny Committee met in December regarding the introduction of the power of local authorities to make Gating Orders and agreed to introduce a policy that invites application (subject to criteria of clear evidence of anti social behaviour, community support etc). The Committee had requested that a further report identifying criteria be set requiring clear evidence of anti social behaviour and community support to be submitted to a future meeting, with consideration being given to inclusion of a representative of the LAF in the Gating Order process as an independent body.

Clive stated that the authority had agreed to implement it to an extent, but there were cost implications.

Gerald proposed that Chair write to the scrutiny committee with any concerns and suggestions.

Members Agreed

10/08 Any Other Business

- **Legacy**

At the last meeting a problem had been highlighted with a path near Legacy Station. Mabyn felt that the forms that required completion by the Council to show evidence of use, were inadequate and that this may be giving people a negative effect when trying to fill them in.

Agreed – Chair to write a letter stating problems and suggestions on how to make form more user friendly.

- Mike Crawshaw reiterated the growing damage caused by 4x4 vehicles offroading near the Ceiriog Valley area.
CCW were working with the police nationally to combat the problem.
Chair felt that generally speaking, 4x4 vehicles used properly and legally should not cause problems, but there is no justification for illegal offroading and would keep the issue afloat at national level.

11/08 Items for Next Agenda

No items recorded

12/08 Date and Location of Next Meeting

Thursday, 8 May 2008 at 4.00pm in Brymbo Enterprise Centre, Brymbo, Wrexham