



WLAF 29

WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONFIRMED MINUTES

*Twenty ninth meeting of the forum held at Brymbo and Tanyfron Enterprise Centre,
Blast Road, Brymbo, Wrexham, LL11 5BT on
Thursday, 8 May 2008*

13/08 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Attendance:

CHAIR

Clive Menzies

SECRETARY

Emma Haldane

MEMBERS

John Cooper-Poole
Sue Gittins
John Marchant
Gerald Moss
Mavis McBride
Margaret Murphy,
Mabyn Pickering (deputy chair)
Shelagh Roberts

NON MEMBERS

Martin Howorth
Ken Monti
Alison Whitley (ranger)
Tim Stratton
Peter Cade (RECAP)
Matt Strickland

Apologies: John Cooper-Poole, Edward Wardle, Mike Crawshaw,
Alun Price (CCW), Tim Rosselli

14/08 Access to Inland Waters

Matt Strickland, Policy / Process Recreation & Navigation Advisor for the Environment Agency Wales, gave an informative presentation of work currently underway in Wales.

15/08 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 February 2008 Cross Border Issues

Wrexham were keen to forge closer ties with other LAFs. One suggestion was to join working groups to look solely at the issue of cross border paths between Wrexham and neighbouring counties. This was felt to be a way to instigate closer working. It had also been suggested that the groups could take a look at the wider



picture and may be able to make suggestions for upgrading path status to create circular walks around villages, or bridleway circuits.

Letters were sent to Denbighshire, Flintshire, Powys and Cheshire LAF Secretaries. Powys had responded stating that they were interested in participating but would prefer to wait until their new members were in post following LAF member re-appointments later in the year.

16/08 Report from Access Rangers

- Alison reported that she had been heavily involved in the Coedpoeth path project working closely with Groundwork, Wrexham and Flintshire. The project has successfully seen the improvements of most paths in the area. The next step was to put together a sign post schedule and an adopt-a-path scheme. She will be attending meetings with Gwersyllt Community Council and other local people in preparation for this year's path project.
- Reminder letters had been sent out to landowners that have had issues with cropping and ploughing in the previous years.

Alison presented a report by rangers Dave Smith and Sion Roberts:

- Dave reported that surveying was already underway on the May 2008 BVPI's and work should now have been completed on the forthcoming Wats Dyke Way trail. All works on the Offas Dyke trail have been completed, and the Maelor Way has been recently fully surveyed and essential works have now been carried out.
- Dave has also recently redesigned the signpost flag and hopes to see it rolled out in the next community path project. The new phase of Tir Gofal farms are coming on stream and he is preparing to survey them soon.
- Sion reported a contractor would shortly begin to strim approximately 60 footpaths and bridleways throughout the county. The paths will be strimmed again in August as part of the annual strimming programme.
- There had been a good turn out for the Ruabon Mountain and forest walk in April. Sion reported that he would be leading another walk around Llanarmon in September. Details of this can be found in the Wrexham Parks, Countryside and Public Rights of Way Service Events guide.
- Sion will shortly be meeting with bridge suppliers to look at various bridges that need replacing or installing over the coming months.
- A council footpath contractor will be installing a boardwalk made out of recycled plastic over the summer. Due to the urban location a more vandal proof boardwalk is needed and it is anticipated that recycled plastic will provide an alternative solution.

The installation costs are similar to those of wood alternatives, but maintenance costs are kept to a minimum, as the plastic does not deteriorate.

Shelagh Roberts reported that she had received a call regarding the height of a new sign post placed in Trevor which was felt to be positioned too low and stuck out .

ACTION: Shelagh to locate path number and let John have further details to investigate

17/08 Chairman's Report (including national issues) **Synopsis of Chairs meeting held in March and April 2008**

Letter Regarding Offroading

As the national representative, Chair had written a letter to all Welsh Police forces, highlighting the concerns felt nationally with regards to illegal offroading. Only 3 replied positively.

It had been suggested that LAFs liaise closely with Police, Wildlife Officers and link with the MOD police where appropriate.

Training Module

A training/introduction pack for new members had been produced and circulated to all LAF Secretaries and Chairs.

Agri-Environmental Schemes

A review of Agri-environmental schemes is to take place, with input required from LAFs.

Any future scheme, if similar to Ty Gofal must have permissive paths publicised on a website, and probably hosted by CCW.

A degree of cross compliance is envisaged, but only against existing conditions and should not add any further level of burden on the farming community.

Whatever scheme is introduced an effective policing routine was required.

Lost Ways

Due to recommendations of Natural England it was unclear what action WAG would take regarding Lost Ways. An area of concern was whether ways identified prior to the cut off date of 1 January 2026 will continue to be processed after this cut off date. Providing these claims will be processed then it was held by the majority to continue with the cut off date. If however these paths were not going to be processed then the date should be scrapped.

All agreed that the voluntary sector should be encouraged and that the only major cost was the use of the land registry.

Alley Gating

This legislation has been in force for approximately a year. Some concerns were raised about access to open air recreation. It was felt that the LAFs could provide an independent voice and thus strengthen the process and as such the LAF should be a statutory consultee.

Foot and Mouth Procedures

Concerns had been raised about the way that some of the foot and mouth disease procedures had been dealt with, but generally there were no major concerns. It is clear that some lessons had been learnt, but it was felt that there was a need for stronger protection in protected zones.

Planning Applications

A new standardised planning application would be used shortly. However, for outline planning permission, there is no requirement to identify if the application affects a Public Right of Way. This may limit the ability to protect the Public Right of Way network.

Coastal Documents

Standards for the coastal paths had been published and copies would be circulated to LAFs shortly.

WAG Priority Funding

The coastal path is the flagship project of the WAG with spending that reflects this. It is clear that the budget from WAG has increased significantly.

The figures quoted are:

Capital Resources £1.5 million – 2008/09. This has now risen to £4 million.

Local Issue

It was reported at the last meeting that a number of complaints had been received recently revolving around the Minera Quarry area from members of the public and local councillors.

In a report by Pete Bland it was stated that the area of concern was north of the track to Minera Quarry, as approached from Allt Eisteddfod – grid ref – SJ 254 525.

The area in question has been used to feed cattle and as a consequence the ground had become heavily poached. As this land became wet it became impossible to use the public footpath.

The farm concerned was part of the agri-environment “Tir Gofal” scheme and close to an area of SSSI. The farmer had stated that he was constrained as to where he could allow his cattle for feeding by the SSSI restrictions under the Tir Gofal scheme.

The Tir Gofal scheme however contains a cross-compliance obligation regarding public rights of way, which have to be kept in good order.

A drainage channel has now been dug with an earth “bridge” over it to allow passage on foot and access to footpaths 14 and 20, but the ground is still difficult to walk on and there are still some very muddy patches.

Wrexham County Borough Council officers have been in contact with the Tir Gofal Office in Mold to try and get an improvement to the situation. Discussions continue and it is hoped that a solution can be found in the near future.

18/08 Secretary’s Report

No report on this occasion.

19/08 Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Update

At the last meeting 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.

He reported that the Assembly had not released any funding to the authority to help fund projects to date. It was hoped that some of this money was to be used at improving bridleway access.

20/08 Countryside Council for Wales

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

21/08 LAF Reappointment Timetable

John Marchant informed the forum that new LAF re-appointments were due to take place later this year and presented members with a re-appointment timetable.

There was currently no shortage of walkers and riders wanting a place on the forum but because it is vital that it is balanced between 'users' and 'owners' they cannot join unless an equal number of farmers and landowners are found.

Members suggested that an appeal be publicised to help attract the interest of local farmers and landowners to join the forum.

**ACTION: Articles to be placed in CLA and Gwlad publications
John to contact Gwynfor (NFU) for ideas**

LAF Regulations

All LAFs are recommended to have a minimum of 2 meetings per year.

The method of electing chairs means that effectively a meeting is lost. Chair had suggested that all new chairs are appointed at the first meeting and that secretaries write outlining this procedure and ensure potential chairs can make an address at this first meeting.

22/08 Any Other Business

- **Footpath project**

Prior to the meeting Forum members had participated in a walk around the village of Brymbo to look at the project and areas that were in need of further improvement. It was agreed that the walk proved successful and members were approached with questions by various members of the community.

Chair thanked Alison for all her hard work with regards to the project and John Marchant congratulated everyone who had made the Brymbo project possible. It was felt that without the help of the local community, schemes such as this one would not be able to continue.

23/08 Items for Next Agenda

No items recorded

24/08 Date and Location of Next Meeting

Thursday, 7 August 2008 at 4.00pm in Overton Village Hall, Overton on Dee, Wrexham.