WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONFIRMED MINUTES

of the eleventh meeting held at Guildhall, Wrexham on 9 July 2004

41/04 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Attendance:

CHAIR	Ieuan Lewis	SECRETARY	John Marchant
MEMBERS	Paul Davies	NON-MEMBERS	
	Andrew Kelly	Jan Fair[1] (Speaker)	
	Naomi Klenerman	Nicola Holmwood (WCBC)	
	Mabyn Pickering	Emily Meilleur[2] (Speaker)	
	John L Roberts	John Pugh	
	Shelagh Roberts	Zia Robins[3]	
	Colin Simpson	Iestyn Thomas[4]	
	Edward Wardle	Niall Waller[5](Speaker)	

[1]Yew Tree Disabled Carriage Driving Trust
[2]WCBC Biodiversity Officer
[3]Shropshire Local Access Forum
[4]Countryside Council for Wales
[5]WCBC Leader Plus Manager

Apologies were received from members Sue Gittins; Mike Griffiths and Dave Liddy. John Lawton Roberts and Colin Simpson apologised for having to miss part of the meeting. The chairman welcomed new member Naomi Klenerman, who then briefly introduced herself.

The revised minutes were circulated and confirmed by the chairman.

42/04 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF WLAF 10 (21/5/04)

32/04 AK asked about the Equestrian Strategy and how he could help. CS said that it would be part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan that would be written by the officers. The forum would be one of the consultees but there will also be opportunities for liaison. The forum agreed that AK and the WCBC officers are to liaise on this and report to the next meeting.

39/04 NK advised that part of the proposed Cefn-y-Maes wind farm is in Wrexham CB and a map showing the location was available for the members. CS advised that as part of the consultation procedure, the Council had stated that Open Access land and the bridleway network would be affected. When a planning application came in, the Forum will be consulted and have an opportunity to make representations. MP asked if there were national guidelines about siting wind turbines. NK said the existing guidelines were out of date and dealt only with small turbines. IL said he would be prepared to call a special meeting if necessary when the planning application was received.

43/04 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

IL had attended the Joint English/Welsh National Access Forum in Manchester. Open

Access starts in the Peak District on 19 September of this year and the preparation work leading towards it was reviewed. Three site visits were made, one to a grouse moor where the estate was going to wait to see what was going to happen before putting in stiles etc. A five-year closure was possible here but anyone hoping to 'convert' a moor into a grouse moor to seek a closure would be unsuccessful.

An 'island' open access site was then visited where the farmer already had problems with his livestock and visitors' dogs. The Council officer there was going to erect a sign asking people to keep to the footpath that traversed the site.

At a third site, the gamekeeper complained about people and their dogs playing with Frisbees. A lot of damage was being caused both to grouse and other breeding birds. He had also had problems with fires caused by discarded cigarette ends.

Comment was made that the Local Access Forums that were administered from tourist departments of the local authorities fared better than those administered by transportation departments.

English authorities were able to draw 75% Access Management grants for improvements to open access but this was not available in Wales. IT thought that grants would come direct from Welsh Assembly Government. It was decided that the forum writes itself about this and also asks the Council to write.

ACTION: Secretary to write to CCW; Carwyn Jones; National Access Forum; WCBC, copy letters to Mike Ogden.

44/04 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Shropshire County Council had written on behalf of the Shropshire and the Borough of Telford and Wrekin Joint Local Access Forum about the Maelor Way. When the permissive elements of the trail had been resolved and a route agreed, the forum would ask the council to review it with a view to giving it strategic route status.

The forum is being consulted by the Welsh Assembly Government on proposals for regulations under section 38 – Appeals relating to 'Means of Access' Notices. The closing date is 24 September and the item will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

There were maps on the table showing the revised routes for the proposed new roads to Wrexham Industrial Estate. There were a few days left if members wished to comment.

Flintshire LAF had advised of their next meeting.

45/04 PRESENTATION FROM LEADER PLUS

The manager of Leader Plus, Niall Waller, spoke about Northern Marches Cymru, which is a partnership of different organisations representing rural interests. Current programmes are as follows: -

- Leader +. The programme is testing new ways of developing rural communities through innovative pilot projects. They are community-led and small scale and will have an impact on the economy of the area long into the future. The Horse B & B project was part of this programme.
- Article 33. This invests in the infrastructure of Wrexham's rural communities, funding projects that provide basic services, renovate villages and develop tourism and craft activities. There was scope here to develop routes leading to Open Access land and for

themed trails.

- Rural Community Action. This aims to increase the skills and confidence of rural communities, encouraging them to work together, under a common vision, to assess their needs and to develop long term and sustainable solutions.

Further information: Niall Waller 01978 298380/ niall.waller@wrexham.gov.uk

46/04 COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

Iestyn Thomas provided a breakdown showing the progress of Provisional Map appeals. MP was concerned that a recent high-profile successful appeal case suggested that the well-off who were able to afford legal representation won their appeals, while those less well-off lost. IT said that the land in question was improved and had it been located in Wales would not have been mapped as access land in the first place.

The first conclusive maps will be issued in September and the rest in February, however the right of access does not start until May. The new Restriction and Exclusion guidance documents will be issued in September; CCW will have a regulatory role with regard to restrictions and the website will show where exclusions exist. The new countryside code was being launched at the Royal Welsh show later this month.

A summary of CCW's preparations for the May 2005 start of the new rights of access was produced. Guidance notes on involving LAFs in the production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans were issued to members.

A new booklet giving brief advice as part of the new countryside code, "Managing Access in the Countryside – a Guide for Farmers and Landowners" will be published September and a revised edition of "Managing Public Access" will be published early next year.

EW asked if the Open Access officers will be visiting farms. The secretary replied that during the summer they were getting experience of various aspects of rights of way work and surveying farms hoping to join Tir Gofal. In the autumn they will begin visiting farmers with access land.

SR wanted to know about the dangers of unexploded bombs on Ruabon Mountain and what were the landowner's responsibilities. IT replied that walkers had to take on greater responsibilities on access land but if a landowner was concerned they could apply to CCW for advice.

Further information: Iestyn Thomas 01352 706600/ I.Thomas@ccw.gov.uk

47/04 WREXHAM GREEN NETWORK PROJECT

Emily Meilleur, the WCBC Biodiversity Officer, presented this project. Green Networks are a series of links between habitat areas that allow species movement. Such wildlife corridors help to strengthen species populations. They can also be safe attractive off-road routes for people, linking urban green spaces and towns with the countryside, facilitating and encouraging wildlife and people movement through the landscape. Green networks bring wildlife into urban centres and provide routes for people to travel out into the countryside, although some corridors may be only for wildlife and others may be only for people.

Green Networks are an important tool to help prevent habitat loss and encourage species dispersal. There are environmental benefits e.g. drainage, oxygen, pollution reduction, and advantages to health and education programmes.

Names were collected of those who may be interested in helping to form a Green Network Strategy steering group.

Further information: Emily Meilleur 01978 292514/ emily.meilleur@wreham.gov.uk .

48/04 NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

49/04 PUBLICITY

It was decided to hold this over until more members were present.

50/04 CARRIAGE DRIVING

Jan Fair is secretary of The Yew Tree Trust, a registered charity on the Chester – Wrexham border. About half of its work is directed at children and adults in North Wales and it offers the opportunity for disabled or disadvantaged children and adults to benefit from the experiences of carriage driving (either being driven or driving themselves) off-road.

Mrs Fair talked about the enormous benefits carriage driving brought such people and asked that the forum gives its support to the proposed government policy to create restricted byways and to remember carriage driving when access to the countryside is discussed.

CS spoke of the problems faced by both the forum and the council in trying to keep motor vehicles off bridleways without also denying access to carriages.

Further information: Jan Fair 01244 570570.

51/04 AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

IL thought that Bob Lowe, CCW's Head of Recreation and Access, should be invited to the November meeting.

52/04 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Countryside Code: MP reported on the recent meeting at Llandudno about the proposals for publicising the new code.

53/04 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was now fixed for 17 September. It was decided that the following meeting would be on the 19th or the 26th November 2004.

The meeting closed at 4.40pm.