

WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONFIRMED MINUTES

of the sixteenth meeting held at Ceiriog Centenary Hall, Llanarmon DC on 10 June 2005

25/05 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Attendance:

CHAIR

Ieuan Lewis

SECRETARY

John Marchant

MEMBERS

Michael Edwards
Sue Gittins
Martin Howorth
D Gwynfor Jones
Andrew Kelly
Naomi Klenerman
Dave Liddy
Gerald Moss
Mabyn Pickering
Shelagh Roberts
Tim Stevens
Edward Wardle

NON-MEMBERS

Glenda Crawshaw
Michael Crawshaw
Sheila Crawshaw*
Paul Humphreys
R M Hughes
Alun Price (CCW)
Andy Reeks
Mark Schwarz
Colin Simpson (WCBC)
Michael Vitkovitch
Angela Williams

* Clerk to Ceiriog Uchaf Community Council

Apologies:

John Lawton Roberts

26/05 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF MEETING ON 10 JUNE 2005

(15/05) (05/05) A reply has been received from the Wynnstay Estate asking for more details. It was suggested that forum members ME; SG; AK and a representative from the council ask for a meeting with the estate.

Action: Secretary to write to the estate asking for a meeting.

(17/05) A reply has been received from CCW stating that there were no other details available about the work plan.

(19/05) The walks on the launch weekend for Open Access at the end of May had been well attended and members commented that they had been well arranged and had been enjoyable.

27/05 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The chairman thanked the 4x4 owners who had given their time and shown their expertise in driving the forum members around during the morning to look at various problems on the unsurfaced roads used by the Ceiriog Equestrian Trails.

He also thanked the staff of the Ceiriog Centenary Hall for the catering including the splendid lunch.

New member, Martin Howorth, was welcomed to the forum.

The chairman gave details of the meeting of Local Access Forum chairs that he had attended at Builth Wells. Finance; conflict between access interests and conservation interests in opening up rights of way across SSSIs; and illegal use of motor vehicles were also discussed. Results of the workshop sessions would be circulated.

Action: Secretary to circulate conclusions of workshops.

TS asked that the forum supports the demand for ring-fencing the funds allocated to Local Authorities, as the present system does not work because the money goes to schools or hospitals. IL said that Wrexham was not too bad in this respect and most of the money had been spent appropriately.

Proposed by TS; seconded by SG and unanimously agreed that forum should write to WAG asking that money allocated for access and rights of way improvements should be ring-fenced.

Action: Secretary to write to Welsh Assembly Government.

SR claimed that more signs were needed, for example for trying to keep cyclists off permissive paths.

28/05 SECRETARY'S REPORT

About half of the Access markers had been put up and work is proceeding. The NAF had sent to us a paper from CCW titled 'Work of the Wales Off-Road Motorcycling Group' and copies had been supplied for the members.

29/05 MOTOR VEHICLES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

A reply had been received from the Council to the effect that there was no money for maintenance to unclassified county roads unless there was a special reason for doing so. There were concerns about volunteers working on roads as it involved heavy machinery. The Council would be involved in extra work with training, risk assessments etc. with the problem of insurance liability. The Council would be interested to hear the forum's views on whether there was scope in designating more routes for non-4x4 use through traffic regulation orders and other routes for any users. Perhaps the forum would consider carrying out a survey of local 4x4 clubs and equestrian interests on what their views were on the way forward. Would a voluntary code of conduct work for 4x4 users, would it be effective and who would police it?

TS said that none of the problems viewed that morning on the site visits needed more than a spade and pickaxe; heavy machinery was not needed. He could find volunteers that were better qualified than the Council's highway engineers.

ME suggested that the forum write to the chief executive explaining that it was not satisfied with the responses received.

From the floor, Mrs Crawshaw explained that there had been a meeting over a year ago between local people, Kevin Edwards and the local member, Mrs Roberts about the condition of the roads. Nothing had been done.

The forum decided unanimously on the following:

Action: Secretary to write to Chief Executive, copy to Mrs Roberts, expressing its dissatisfaction at the responses received.

Mrs Crawshaw said that once again the public phone at Pentre was under threat of removal by BT.

Action: Secretary to write again to BT asking for it to be allowed to remain.

30/05 OPEN ACCESS LAND

SG asked for more waymarkers for footpaths across access land. For the Council, the secretary explained that the access wardens had instructions to carry out such waymarking when time permitted.

AK reported on an incident where walkers had mistaken the 'end of access land' marker as meaning that the footpath was closed.

31/05 DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

A list giving details of these was made available to members. AK wondered why the list of outstanding orders had increased and why nothing had been done to increase the number of staff to resolve the matters.

TS observed that there was a Human Rights issue. Fifteen years was a long time to wait for one's rights to be established. He warned the Council that they had slipped behind and with increasing numbers of applications arriving and asked how they were going to cope.

Action: The forum will discuss the item on an annual basis and go through the list.

32/05 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The secretary had written to the Council about the delay and copies of the response were provided for the members. MH said that the timetable would be ready by September. TS spoke of the poor performance of the Council and doubted that the Plan would be prepared in time. AK claimed that there was nothing in the Countryside Strategy for horse riders and he did not want to see another wishy-washy document. MH disputed that the Countryside Strategy was 'wishy-washy' and said that the Council was being pre-judged.

33/05 COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

Alun Price gave an update on open access and stressed that a lot of education now needed to be done and we all had a role to play. Although there have been a few problems on the whole landowners have been surprised about how little change there has been in the countryside as regards open access.

TS asked for clarification about the Highway Authority duty to maintain a road conflicting with the law as regards Special Sites of Scientific Interest. AP said he would look into what guidance was available for distribution.

34/05 NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM

AK reported that NAF had discussed funding for rights of way and damage caused by 4X4s. He passed on an appeal from CCW for instances of inaccurate reporting regarding open access.

The secretary had written to CCW as requested asking for details about progress by local authorities with their Rights of Way Improvement Plans. The reply stated that the information was in the latest edition of Recreation and Access Newsletter. This had been supplied to every forum member.

CCW had also been asked if LAF members should be given paid time off work to attend meetings. The reply was that the matter was not seen as something for the NAF and realistically it was doubted that funding would ever be available unless the local authority decided to pay. AK proposed that the forum writes to the Welsh Assembly about this matter. Voting was 7 in favour; 1 against.

Action: Secretary to write to the Welsh Assembly.

35/05 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AK spoke about the standard of gates on both roads and bridleways on both the Equestrian Trails. The gates used during the site visit in the morning shows that not all the gates had been replaced or, if they have been replaced, they have not been done properly. The job was managed by Groundwork and their contractor needs to be brought back in to put things right. Regular inspections are needed.

Action: Secretary to ask Groundwork Wrexham and Flintshire to rectify problems and report back to AK.

From the floor, Mrs Crawshaw asked the forum to put pressure on Wrexham Council to leave the public toilets in Llanarmon open during the winter months. The forum members unanimously agreed to this request.

Action: Secretary to write to Council.

36/05 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Not dealt with.

37/05 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Not dealt with.

The meeting closed at 16.43.