

# WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM



**Annual Report  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2008**

## **Forward**

The Wrexham Local Access Forum has continued to be involved in countryside and rights of way issues across the County Borough and has sought to develop an understanding of the conflicts that may arise from the use of the countryside by members of the public and the farming community earning it's living from the land.

The Forum has been very active in giving advice on the 10 year Rights of Way Improvement Plan, helping to shape the way the plan has been developed.

The chair has worked extremely hard to promote the work of the Forum and ensure it's views are taken note of. My thanks to the work across the year, of the members of the Forum and particularly the chair and vice chair.

**Martin Howorth, Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Manager**

## **Chairman's Report**

My name is Clive Menzies and I was elected chair of the forum on the resignation of Ieuan Lewis. Ieuan Lewis had taken the forum from its formation through its formative years, providing a guiding and steady hand and I would personally like to thank him for his sterling work.

I am a recreational user of the countryside with interest covering a wide range of recreational issues, although primarily I am a walker.

This year the LAF has been monitoring the production and publication of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). I would like to thank Martin Howorth on behalf of the LAF for his work, which has certainly placed Wrexham in a strong position to receive extra funding to help the implementation of this plan.

The forum has also been involved in making recommendations to the Council on various topics, and will continue to be active in the pursuit of improving access to



the countryside. In an attempt to create better links to the local communities the Forum adopted the nationally proposed communication strategy and will be holding at least two meetings in local communities during the coming year.

The Forum is due for reappointment this year and I would encourage people to apply. I am sure that the role of the LAF will develop over the coming years and its influence of the appointing authority will continue to grow.

### **Work Plan for the Coming Year**

During the coming year, the LAF are expecting to explore, consider and make recommendations to the appointing authority in the following areas:

- Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP)
- Definitive Maps
- Definitive Map Modification Orders
- Interactive Mapping
- Planning Applications
- Budgets & Resources
- Access to Inland Water

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Wrexham Local Access Forum was established in November 2002. Members of the forum have a three year tenure, and membership changes through an application and selection procedure. This was last carried out in 2005 with the new forum commencing operation in November 2005.

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 required the Local Authority to create Local Access Forums. The function of the forum is to advise the Authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others as to the improvement of public access to the land in the County of Wrexham for the purposes of open air recreation, and the enjoyment of the area. However, it must do so with regard to the needs of land management and the natural beauty of the area. All meetings of the forum are open to the public.

## **Annual Report**

This report seeks to provide a brief summary of the work of the forum, the minutes of which are published on Wrexham County Borough Council website or can be viewed at the Guildhall during office hours.

During the Year the LAF have made the following recommendations to the Local authority.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Authority's Response</b>
Additional resources to be provided to tackle the backlog of definitive map work. <i>(Minutes 04/05/07)</i>	Additional staff provided  <i>See Minutes (31/08/07)</i>
Become involved in the decision making process for gating orders	Scrutiny committee agreed <i>See Minutes (08/02/08)</i>

## **YEAR REVIEWED**

### **Access Land**

During the year, the Local Access Forum was not required to provide specific advice on access to open land as no applications for exclusions or closures beyond the statutory prescribed limit had been received.

The Local Access Forum receives a report from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), on activity within the County's boundaries.

### **Annual Report April 2006 to March 2007**

The annual report was approved by the LAF at the meeting of 04/05/07.

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

The LAF was kept apprised of the progress of the ROWIP throughout the development, consultation and publication of this plan. The LAF has also been consulted about and contributed to the first of ten-yearly Annual ROWIP plans. Additional Funding is being provided by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Countryside Council for Wales, and Wrexham, through the work of Martin Howorth and the

rights of way staff, are in a strong position to take full advantage of this funding.

*See minutes (04/05/07, 31/08/07, 09/11/07, 10/11/06, and 08/02/08).*

### **Youth Representation**

Concerns had been expressed that the LAF had no means of representing the youth of Wrexham County. The LAF have attempted to address this concern by undertaking a youth workshop. (See minutes 31/08/07)

### **Planning Applications**

The LAF continues to monitor planning applications that appear to impinge on the Public Rights of Way network. The criteria for those applications on which the LAF should be consulted upon were agreed at the meeting of 09/11/07.

### **Lay-By Parking**

A concern was raised about the insufficient level of parking in rural areas within the county. This was of particular concern in the Ceiriog Valley, where it has been reported that people using the public rights of way network are parking inappropriately and causing problems for the local community. This is of particular concern as the Glyn Ceiriog area is increasingly promoted but parking and public transport provisions are inadequate.

A member of the LAF volunteered to liaise with Northern Marches Cymru, which was compiling the bid for rural projects. It was hoped that through this funding additional car parking could be achieved. The LAF also wrote to all appropriate local communities encouraging them to identify suitable projects in good time.

Unfortunately this has not proved particularly successful and inappropriate parking remains a problem in some areas of the county.

In August, Karl Praker advised the LAF that following a meeting last year the bus and train timetable had been coordinated which has resulted in improved access in the Ceiriog Valley.

*See minutes (04/05/08, 31/08/07, and 09/11/07)*

### **Interactive Mapping**

This subject continues to be looked at by the LAF. Encompassed in the ROWIP is the plan to ensure that a version of the definitive map is available electronically. However, other uses for interactive maps are also being explored by the LAF.

*See Minutes (04/05/07)*

### **Creation of LAF Logo**

The LAF secretary, Emma Haldane, suggested to the LAF that in line with other LAFs it should create a logo that it could use on letterheads and other documents. This would help promote the LAF's identity as a separate body from that of the appointing authority. This was agreed and with the assistance of Dave Smith from the Rights of Way Department the logo was created.

The LAF would like to express its gratitude to both Emma Haldane and Dave Smith for their efforts in this matter.

*See minutes (04/05/07, 31/08/07)*

### **Access to Access Land in the Ceiriog Valley**

The LAF received a detailed report from Dr Gerald Moss concerning the lack of access to certain parts of Access Land in the Ceiriog Valley.

It was agreed to write to the Ceiriog Ucha Community Council asking for their advice on how to improve this situation. However the community council felt unable to provide specific advice. Currently it remains that certain parts of Access Land in the Ceiriog Valley actually has no access to it.

*See minutes (04/05/08, 31/08/07)*

### **Communication Strategy**

It was agreed to generally adopt the communication strategy drafted by the National representative.

*See Minutes (31/08/07)*

### **Definitive Map Modification Orders**

This area of statutory duty for the appointing authority was continuing to cause concern to the LAF.

The LAF wrote to the appointing authority expressing our concern and making recommendations that additional resources be provided to tackle the mounting backlog. As a result the appointing authority decided to add additional resources in the form of a new team leader. The appointment of Sean Hanratty led to the LAF approving a new statement of priorities in relation to Definitive Map Modification orders.

*See Minutes (04/05/07, 31/08/07, 09/11/07, and 08/02/08)*

### **Five Year Surveys**

As part of the LAF's desire to be more proactive members have volunteered to undertake five year surveys of local communities to ensure that the appointing authority meets its insurance requirements. This is an ongoing project.

*See minutes (04/05/07)*

### **Budgeting**

LAF members were informed at the November meeting that the council had run out of its maintenance budget. The LAF wrote to the appointing authority stating that this was unacceptable and recommending that additional resources be directed to this budget.

*See minutes (08/02/08)*

### **Gating of Certain Highways for the Prevention of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

The Chair of the LAF attended the Scrutiny Committee when it considered what Policy that the Appointing authority was to adopt in regards to gating orders. The Scrutiny Committee accepted that the LAF should be involved in the decision making process as this provided a source of independence and would thus strengthen the process.

### **Dogs in the Countryside**

This issue is a significant concern to the members of the Local Access Forum. It has been raised nationally and locally. The LAF continues in its attempts to find ways that assist landowners whilst not deterring considerate dog owners from using the public rights of way network. A particular issue has arisen with the dog fouling in Erddig Park. As a result the LAF wrote to the National Trust asking for the provisions of dog waste bins. Unfortunately the National Trust has not seen fit to reply.

*See minutes (31/08/07, 09/11/07)*

### **LIFE Active Blanket Bog on the Berwyns**

The LAF received a presentation on the activities being undertaken to restore the bog areas of the Berwyns.

### **Rangers' Reports**

The LAF receives a report each meeting outlining the activity of the rangers. The rangers have led walks, overseen general maintenance issues including improved signage and have also been involved in the improvements to specific community path networks.

*See minutes of 04/05/07, 31/08/07, 09/11/07, and 08/02/08*

### **Report from Countryside Council for Wales**

Reports have been received regularly from Alun Price on behalf of the Countryside Council.

*See minutes (04/05/07, 31/08/07)*

### **Foot & Mouth**

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth did cause concern to the LAF although the area was not directly affected. It was felt that a more consistent approach needed to be applied.

*(See minutes 31/08/07)*

### **Disabled Access Statutory Guidance**

Margaret Murphy kindly presented a paper clearly outlining the new statutory guidance incorporated into the Highways Act 1980. The LAF accepted her view that the appointing authority was on top of these changes and that no recommendation need be made at present.

*(See minutes 31/08/07)*

### **Cross Border Issues**

As part of the development of the LAF it has been decided to attempt to improve the working relationship with our surrounding LAFs. In particular it has been decided to attempt to create working parties to look at cross border issues.

### **Cases of Specific Matters**

Brymbo Path Project

Signage at Llanarmon Dyffryn Clwyd

Paths through Farm Yards

Off Roding

Legacy Station

Connect Magazine Article

Total Liability

*See minutes (31/08/07, 09/11/07, and 08/02/08)*