

# WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM



**Annual Report  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2009**

## **Wrexham County Borough Council Foreword**

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 its living from the land.

The Wrexham Local Access Forum has worked in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council in helping to deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and has advised on the Annual Action Plan. My thanks to all members of the Forum for their good work over the last year.

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

## **Chair of Wrexham Local Access Forum Report**

### **Introduction**

Wrexham Local Access Forum was established by Wrexham County Borough Council in November 2002, as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW). The statutory function of the Forum is to advise Wrexham County Borough Council, the Countryside Council for Wales and others about improving public access to land in the area for the purposes of recreation and enjoyment of the area. In doing this the Forum must pay proper regard to the needs of land management and the natural beauty of the area.

The membership of the Forum must show a balance between the various users of public rights of way and access land on the one hand, and owners or occupiers of access land or land over which there are local rights of way, on the other. Wrexham County Borough Council has a representative on the Forum, and provides a Secretary.

All meetings of the Forum are open to the public, and the dates of forthcoming meetings can be found on [www.wrexham.gov.uk/laf](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/laf)



## **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.

### **The Work of the Forum in the Year Ending 31 March 2008**

#### **Members of the Wrexham Local Access Forum**

Acting Chair- Mabyn Pickering, previous Chair Clive Menzies resigned due to ill health.

John Cooper-Poole, Mike Crawshaw, Sue Gittins, John Marchant (WCBC), Shelagh Roberts, Gerald Moss, Edward Wardle, Karl Prakes, Margaret Murphy, Mavis McBride. Gwynfor, D Jones.

Secretary- Emma Haldane

#### **What must the Forum do?**

The statutory functions of the Forum fall into two broad categories, which to some extent overlap:

(a) Giving advice on and generally monitoring access to land designated as “access land” under the CROW Act. In particular, it must advise on any proposal by a landowner to curtail access for a longer period or for reasons other than those permitted by the Act.

(b) Giving advice on the maintenance and improvement of rights of way.

#### **How does the Forum do it?**

The Forum has adopted a pattern of four meetings each year. This year, two of the meetings were held in the Guildhall, and two were “field” meetings. One of these was held in Brymbo, preceded by a walk round the village to see rights of way work in progress. The other was at Overton preceded by a walk around some of the footpaths in the area.

Both field meetings provided opportunities to meet people living locally who are involved as users, or in helping to maintain rights of way.

The CROW Act gives LAFs the power to appoint sub-committees to deal with particular topics. So far we have not felt a need to do this and have been keen to avoid “bureaucratic creep”. The relatively small area of WCBC makes it possible to maintain good personal relations with the relevant officers of the Council, particularly the LAF Secretary, and with each other, so that when any particular matter needs attention the appropriate people can easily meet.

### **Work in relation to access land**

During this year there were no formal requests by owners of access land to restrict access for extended periods. WCBC has used the powers given by the CROW Act to appoint Wardens for access land. Sion Roberts and Dave Smith work on access land and public rights of way. They present a report at the Forum’s meetings either in person or through the WCBC representative. This gives the Forum the opportunity to discuss any issues relating to access land which are raised by the wardens or by members of the Forum.

### **Work in relation to Public Rights of Way**

The framework for WCBC’s work in relation to rights of way is provided by the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This was completed in 2007 after widespread public consultation including input from the Forum. From this plan yearly work plans are developed, measuring activity against specific targets so that progress can be periodically reviewed, particularly at the end of each year. The implementation of the Plan is the responsibility of WCBC, but the Forum is kept informed and consulted about progress, and comments freely on any matters of concern. The Forum supports the officers wherever possible, for example by writing as a body to the Council’s Chief Executive when deemed necessary.

Sometimes problems relating to particular rights of way are brought to the Forum's attention, and individual members with first hand knowledge of the problem have taken a lead in trying to solve it. During the year there have been particular problems on a path at Legacy and on the Maelor Way at Shell Brook Bridge.

### **Surveys**

As part of the Wrexham 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.

Most members of the Forum belong to other organisations and their experience and contacts from these organisations can be brought to bear on the work of the LAF.

### **Contacts with other LAF's**

The Chairman of the Wrexham LAF attends the meetings of Chairs of LAF's in Wales, and our former Chairman Clive Menzies became Chairman of this group and did much work at national level. Unfortunately, ill health forced him to resign this position, as well as his position as Chairman and member of the Wrexham LAF in June 2008. Through the participation of our Chair in the national meetings we are kept abreast of issues of more than local concern, and receive news of the activities of other LAF's.

We have been concerned about some cross border issues with neighbouring authorities, both in Wales and in England. For example, footpaths or bridleways which appear to end at a border. It was agreed to write to bordering LAF's to suggest setting up small groups of members of relevant LAF's to try to solve any such issues. Positive replies have been received from all but one other LAF concerned.

### **Contact with Countryside Council for Wales**

A representative of CCW regularly attends LAF meetings and briefs us on the current work of CCW and any relevant issues.

### **Other issues explored**

The work and concerns of many other organisations is relevant to those of the LAF, and in order to learn more and to provide opportunities for informed discussion with those concerned, several presentations have been made by other groups at LAF meetings. During 2008/09 the following presentations were made:

- David Rogers of Countryside Recreational Access Group, on their activities.
- Matt Strickland, Policy/Process Recreation & Navigation Adviser for the Environment Agency, Wales on work in progress.
- Helen Cook, Senior Environmental Health Officer and Wayne Hughes, Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer gave a presentation on the new legislation relating to Dog Control Orders.  
The control of dogs, particularly on farmland and where game birds are managed is of great concern to members of the LAF, but so far no practicable way of controlling inconsiderate dog owners has been found.
- Tim Stratton, on behalf of horse riders, outlined some of the problems that they face, particularly when they must pass along busy roads to get to bridle paths. Mathew Ellison, of Transport and Asset Management attended this meeting and undertook to examine ways in which the Council could help to solve some of the problems mentioned.
- Zara Lomax, Wrexham County Borough Council Ecologist attended a meeting to brief the Wrexham LAF on her work as an ecologist for Wrexham County Borough Council.

### **Definitive Map Modification Orders**

In previous years the Wrexham LAF has voiced its concern about the lack of progress completing these DMMO's. With the appointment of Sean Hanratty by WCBC to concentrate on this work progress is now being made. Mr Hanratty has asked the LAF to make a proposal for new bridleway links. The Chair is pursuing this.

### **Programme of Work for 2009/10**

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

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