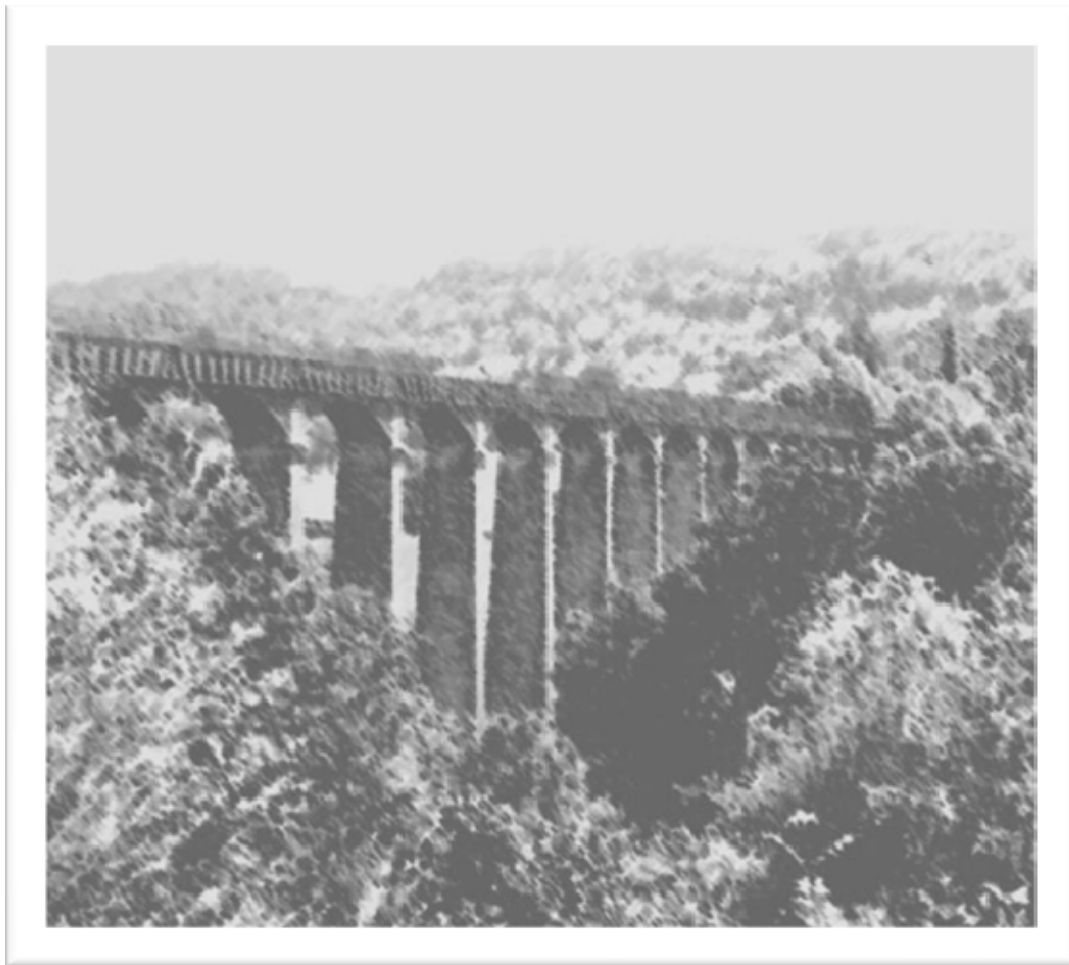


WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM



Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2010

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. It continues to develop an understanding of the conflicts that may arise from the use of the countryside. Users include members of the public and the farming community, who earn their living from the land.

The chair has worked hard to promote the work of the Forum and ensure that its views are taken onto account. My thanks to all members of the Forum for their good work over the last year.

Martin Howarth, Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Manager

Chair of Wrexham Local Access Forum Report

Introduction

The Local Access Forum was established in 2002, as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW). The statutory function of the Forum is to advise the County Borough Council, the Countryside Council for Wales and others, with regards to improving public access, in all its forms, to land within the County Borough. Any advice must take into account the needs of land management and the natural beauty of the area. Membership of the Forum must strike a balance between the various users and owner / occupiers of the land. All vacancies on the Forum are advertised but we continue to have difficulty in attracting members to represent cycling, canoeing and disabled groups. All meetings are advertised on the website and are open to members of the public. The minutes, once confirmed and translated, are placed on the County Borough Council website www.wrexham.gov.uk

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 2009

Public Rights of Way

We attempt to report problems on numbered footpaths to the Rights of Way section. This should enable the Forum to concentrate on strategic issues. Progress on cross border issues with Powys, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Shropshire and Cheshire remains very slow but some headway has been made. A useful meeting was held with the Flintshire Local Access Forum.

The Forum continues to consider the needs of horse riders and problems associated with 4 x 4 use in the countryside. A Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the County Borough is in place and the Forum is focussed on trying to implement the plan.

Financial constraints loom large and bearing this in mind, it was decided to produce four hard copies of the Definitive Map of Wrexham. One copy is in Wrexham library and the other three copies are with Forum members across the County Borough. It is also available online.

All of the Welsh Assembly funded Rights of Way capital improvement work was completed.

Funding from the Big Lottery for Walkabout Wrexham ended in March 2010.

Wrexham is making progress in dealing with Definitive Map Modification Orders but many of the cases are complex and lead to a Public Inquiry. Two Definitive Map Modification Orders and two Public Inquiries were held in 2009.

A significant proportion of our funding is from the Countryside Council for Wales. A representative from CCW is usually present at meetings and informs us of all relevant issues.

Speakers are invited to the indoor meetings and Yvonne Palmer, the Equine Safety Officer, gave a talk on safe riding routes.

During the year, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct achieved World Heritage status. The many paths in that area will need to be accessible and well maintained in order to accommodate the anticipated increase in visitor numbers.

The presence of dogs in the countryside is a problem everywhere. Wrexham County Borough Council has kindly supplied, and will be responsible for, emptying three dog bins within the Erddig National Trust area. That was a huge step forward in what was a problem area.

The chair and vice chair attend meetings of Local Access Forums in Wales and also attempt to send a member of the Forum to the National Access Forum meetings. We also respond to requests for information from Local Access Forum Wales.

The Local Access Forum is concerned about budget cuts in the forthcoming years.

John Marchant retired in 2009, after long service and the Forum wish him well for the future. Many checks are made on paths by volunteers, to whom we are very grateful.

My thanks go to the Forum members for their work during the year, especially the vice chair, the part time secretary, Carla McClusker and Martin Howarth, Countryside Rights of Way Manager.

Mabyn Pickering