



WLAf 27

# WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

## CONFIRMED MINUTES

*of the twenty seventh meeting held at Guildhall, Wrexham on 9 November 2007*

### **37/07 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES**

#### Attendance:

##### CHAIR

Clive Menzies

##### SECRETARY

Emma Haldane

##### MEMBERS

John Cooper-Poole

Mike Crawshaw

Sue Gittins

John Marchant

Gerald Moss

Margaret Murphy

Mabyn Pickering

Karl Praker

Shelagh Roberts

Tim Rosselli

##### NON MEMBERS

Martin Howorth

Alun Price (CCW)

Michael Morris

(LIFE Active Blanket Bog)

Charlotte Flett (ROW)

Sean Hanratty (team leader)

Apologies: Edward Wardle, Mavis McBride

### **38/07 LIFE Active Blanket Bog on the Berwyn's**

Michael Morris, LIFE Project Advisory Officer gave a presentation on the restoration work currently underway on the Berwyn's. The project was launched in August 2006 in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales, with an aim to restore the active blanket bog. Michael explained that although large areas of blanket bog still occur in Wales, the majority have been seriously degraded through afforestation, encroachment by species such as rhododendron, overgrazing, drainage and with either deliberate or accidental burning.

The bogs were formed due to a combination of a wetter climate that resulted in increased water logging and leaching of soils that encouraged bog mosses to develop and forest clearance by man. Also the removal of trees further increased



water logging, making the areas less sustainable, and further encouraging bog mosses.

The LIFE project team had already begun blocking drains on the blanket bog to allow it to retain water once more.

It was hoped that during the 5 year LIFE Blanket Bog in Wales project, significant and sustained improvement in the condition of blanket bogs in key areas of two special areas of conservation (SACs) in North Wales would be seen.

### **39/07 Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting on 31 August 2007**

#### ***40/06 Youth Involvement***

To gain further young person participation, secretary agreed to contact NEWI students after September enrolling. It was felt that Environmental students could provide valuable feedback to the LAF. No response received to date.

**Secretary to report at the next meeting**

John Introduced Charlotte Flett, a modern apprentice who had recently joined the rights of way team. The objective of this scheme was to offer young people a chance to gain qualifications together with ongoing work experience over a 3-year period. This year the authority had recruited around 16 young people throughout the Council. Charlotte stated that she had gained an increased knowledge of the rights of way department and appreciated the amount of work the department did as a whole.

Chair and members thanked Charlotte for sharing her working experiences of the scheme.

Mabyn felt that the quality of the 5 year survey maps produced was excellent and wished to use this opportunity to thank the Rights of Way department for all their hard work.

#### ***30/07 Rights of Way Improvement Plan***

##### ***Total Liability***

Members had concerns over the burden placed upon landowners and occupiers by the application of total liability and the cost of diverting paths. It was agreed that a letter sent to Wrexham MP's asking them to support the legislation currently going through parliament, would be beneficial. Secretary wrote on 26 September. One response had been received from Martyn Jones MP.

**Chair agreed to discuss at national level.**

#### ***32/07 Foot and Mouth***

Still unclear instructions were coming from DEFRA. It was felt that there was no clear message of what action should be taken.

**Chair agreed to discuss at the next national chairs meeting.**

#### ***33/07 DMMO's***

Members welcomed Sean Hanratty to the Forum. Sean had been employed as a Team Leader by The Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way division to work on Definitive Map orders.

### **34/07 Any Other Business**

- **Dog Fouling**

Concerns had been raised about the amount of dog litter collected in plastic bags and left tied to bushes bridges and trees throughout the National Trust property grounds of Erddig. Secretary agreed to write with concerns.

**ACTION: Letter sent on 25 September – No response received to date.**

### **40/07 Chairman's Report (including national issues)**

After taking up the post as national representative last year, it had become apparent that no method had been established in identifying how processes should be taken forward. In experience, when putting proposals forward nationally some representatives felt unhappy that they couldn't represent their own LAF's without prior authority with regards to certain issues. As a result Chair had written to all LAF chairs as national representative and asked to put a motion forward locally. This motion stated that as an elected national LAF representative, authorisation for the chairman, or deputising individual to represent the views of local LAF at future chairs meeting be given. The chair or deputising individuals would now have the authority to agree and direct the national representative on suitable action to take but must consider the views of the LAF on these issues when doing so.

**MOTION AGREED**

### **41/07 Secretary's Report**

- Secretary reported that the new LAF logo can now be viewed on the Wrexham Local Access Forum website [www.wrexham.gov.uk/laf](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/laf)
- As part of the Communication Strategy, secretary agreed to organise a meeting timetable for 2008:

<b>DATE</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
<b>8 February 2008</b> (Friday)	1.30pm in Committee Room 3, Guildhall
<b>May 2008</b> (Thursday)	Brymbo – awaiting confirmation of date and times
<b>7 August 2008</b> (Thursday)	Overton Village Hall - awaiting confirmation of times
<b>7 November 2008</b> (Friday)	1.30pm in Committee Room 3, Guildhall

Confirmation of the above dates would be circulated to members shortly.

- To help reach a wider audience, agendas and a brief summary of issues will now be publicised in a local press release, together with posters displaying meeting dates and venues.

**Members agreed to place posters in their local communities.**

### **42/07 Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Martin Howorth, Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Manager, gave a report of progress made so far.

The final plan had been approved by Executive Board and be viewed and downloaded from the Council's website into PDF format.

Martin had organised for a limited number of hardcopies and discs to be published.

**ACTION: Members to advise secretary of preferred format.**

Martin had regularly provided updates with regards to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan as a standing agenda item at past forum meetings. It was now up to members to decide whether they wished this to continue or whether they preferred an update of issues once or twice yearly.

**ACTION: Members to advise at next meeting**

Members congratulated Martin and his department for all their hard work in completing the plan and thanked the team on the excellent work that had been put together. It was noted that Wrexham had completed ahead of neighbouring authorities, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

Concern had been raised about both the current budget situation and the budget allocation for 2008 with regards to the financial resources provided for Rights of Way Section.

**ACTION:**

- **Chair agreed to bring up concerns at the next national chairs meeting.**
- **Chair agreed to write to CE and Leader, with an invitation to attend the next meeting in February.**

#### **43/07 Report from Access Rangers**

John Marchant, presented a report prepared by two Access Rangers of work currently underway:

- Brymbo was now coming to a close with all but one of the works complete. A joint press release with Groundwork would be issued shortly. Most of the new road signage has been erected and all of the waymarking completed.
- Coedpoeth was on target with all paths surveyed and groundwork was currently putting together a schedule of works.
- Sion had been spending most of his time dealing with the backlog of general complaints the Council receives and liaising with contractors.
- A Council contractor has recently erected a total of 60 new signposts with destinations printed on around Brymbo as part of the footpath project. He is also due to start clearing / brushing various paths with steep gradients and steps as part of the public rights of way winter maintenance schedule.
- The Council's Construction Services are due to start work repairing bridleway number 10 that runs between Vicarage road and Glyn Lane in Brymbo. The bridleway has been closed for some time due to a collapsed culvert.
- Sion would be meeting the Ramblers Association in early December to discuss various maintenance issues on paths throughout the County.
- Concerns had been raised regarding river erosion of footpath 1A near Pont Hafodgynfawr / Post Office in Glynceiriog. Sion recently met Environment Agency staff to discuss securing the bank with gabion baskets to prevent further erosion.

#### **44/07 Countryside Council for Wales**

Alun Price, CCW gave his latest report to the forum.

He reported that there had been no exclusions or restrictions reported in the North Wales area.

The latest Recreation and Access Newsletter was now in circulation. A future article from Wrexham would be appreciated.

**ACTION: Secretary to liaise with Chair**

Martin and Alun had been working together on grants to help fund work currently underway in Wrexham.

**AGREED: Alun to report on current funding at the next meeting in February.**

#### **45/07 Planning Applications**

It was agreed that:

LAF's should be consulted on all planning applications where the implementation of the plan would impinge on the experience of users of public rights of way, access land or other access opportunities. This includes any plan that would affect a users visual or aural experiences.

#### **46/07 Lay-by Parking**

Due to time scales, no match funding could be found for a recent bid made to Northern Marches Cymru. Martin reported that there was an opportunity to go back again at a later stage.

'Off Road Parking' had been identified previously as a problem in some rural communities. A particular problem had been highlighted in the Ceiriog Valley. Mike Crawshaw felt that signs in passing places would help alleviate the problem, but the highways department did not consider these areas to be passing places. The problem was ongoing.

**ACTION: Chair agreed to take forward at national level**

#### **47/07 Any Other Business**

- **Public Rights of Way – 5 Year Survey**

John gave a further update of surveys completed and near completion.

He again thanked members for all their hard work in helping to complete this survey.

- **Signage**

Difficulties had been found accessing a particular footpath in the Llanarmon DC area. This area had suffered erosion near to the river and had become quite dangerous, which in turn limited access to parts of the footpath. Some confusion had arisen over the text used in the signage erected. John agreed to investigate further.

- **Paths through farmyards**

This item had been raised previously (30/07). It had been highlighted that there was a general feeling that people did not like walking through farms and it was felt that diversions should be put in place. Members had concerns over the burden placed upon landowners and occupiers by the application of total liability and the cost of diverting paths.

**AGREED: Chair to raise nationally**

- **Off Roading**

Mike had concerns with regards to damage made by 4x4 vehicles near the Ceiriog Valley area. It was felt to be a problem nationally. Chair stated that the Welsh Assembly Government were aware of the many schemes running which try to manage legal and illegal offroading.

Alun stated that CCW do work with the police to try and combat the problem.

- **Path**

A problem has been highlighted with a path near Legacy Station, which had been earmarked as a future right of way. Cllr Mark Pritchard had been out to visit with John and found that an obstruction had been put in place across the lane leading past Legacy Cottage. Sean agreed that the matter would be investigated and that a definitive map modification order should be applied for.

#### **48/07 Items for Next Agenda**

- Budget

#### **49/07 Date and Location of Next Meeting**

Friday, 8 February 2008 at 1.30 pm in Committee Room 3, Guildhall, Wrexham