

# Cheshire & Warrington Local Access Forum



Mr John White (Chairman). c/o Countryside & Rights of Way Office.  
Ground Floor, Phoenix House, Clough Road, Winsford, Cheshire. CW7 4BD

Erika Wenzel and Julie Openshaw (Cheshire East)  
Steve Robinson and Fiona Crane (Cheshire West and Chester)  
Andy Farrall (Warrington)

Date

---

Dear

## **Provision for a Statutory Local Access Forum after April 1 2009**

I am writing to you on behalf of the existing Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum, to draw your attention to the need to plan for this statutory advisory body after vesting day for the new councils of Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East.

The current joint forum was set up in 2001 in accordance with the requirements of S94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and is currently operating under the "Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2007". The purpose of the forum is to advise the appointing authorities and other prescribed bodies as to the improvement of public access to land in Cheshire and Warrington for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area and its functions include a statutory overview of the preparation and implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which is part of the Local Transport Plan. The authorities concerned are bound to take account of the advice given by the Forum in respect of decisions being taken about such matters.

The joint appointing authorities are currently Cheshire and Warrington and the joint arrangements were agreed by the Members of those councils.

At its meeting on 19 September 2008, the Forum agreed that its preference was that joint arrangements be continued after vesting day. However, this will require the formal agreement of the three authorities concerned.

The process for changing the boundaries or make up of a forum is contained in Part 3 of the Regulations. If the individual authorities wish to withdraw from the current joint arrangements, 21 days' notice must be given and each authority will be under an obligation to establish its own forum. Although the costs of supporting a Forum are modest (typically £9000 per year, mainly in officer time), the costs associated with three

separate forums will triple, especially since it is a requirement that a secretary be appointed and notified to Natural England. In addition, there is a formal recruitment procedure every three years which is due to take place in 2009/10; this carries additional costs of formal advertising and selection, costs which have previously been shared.

It should be noted that Natural England carried out research several years ago into the effectiveness of local access forums; it found that the ability to recruit and retain members and the ability to make a difference to countryside recreation in the local area is demonstrably related to the size of the area concerned and the calibre of the secretary.

Please note that there is a Peak Park Local Access Forum which covers the boundaries of the National Park and which therefore already includes part of Cheshire East.

I hope that this information will enable your council to come to a formal decision in respect of the future of the Local Access Forum in Cheshire and Warrington.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John White  
Chair  
Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum