

Cheshire East Local Access Forum Annual Report 2013-2014



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Background to the Forum

The Cheshire East Local Access Forum (CELAF) is a statutory body established under section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, to provide advice on access to the countryside. The primary purpose of the Forum is to provide advice to Cheshire East Borough Council, and other bodies, such as Government departments, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, English Heritage, Sport England, Town and Parish Councils, on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.

The Forum, whose members are volunteers, meets quarterly in Crewe and Macclesfield, with site visits and sub-group meetings in between. Forum meetings are open to the public and the agenda packs and minutes are available online.

Chair's introduction

This report covers the first year of the new CELAF's life, and I believe it shows that the Forum has quickly settled down as a capable organisation with clear planning of its activities and the energy to pursue them. What it does not show in detail is either the commitment and energy of Forum members which made it possible to do so much in the past year, or the unfailing and informed support received from Council officers and the elected member. Without their support, we would have been far less effective. As Chairman, I can only say that I regard myself as fortunate in being involved with such a strong Forum team, and that I look forward to our building in the future on the foundations we have laid.



Bob Anderson

Chair, Cheshire East Local Access Forum

Priorities of the Forum

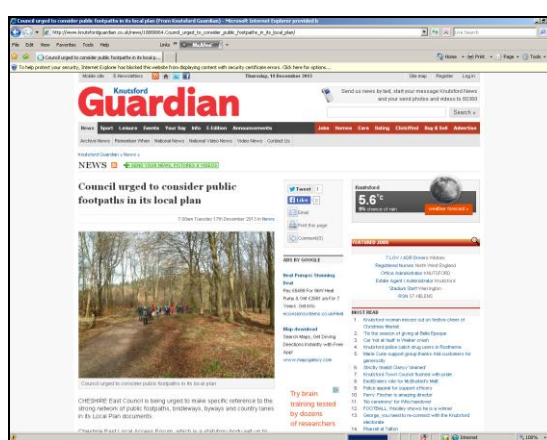
The Cheshire East Local Access Forum held its first meeting in April 2013. During the initial meetings of the Forum, members discussed the various topics of countryside access involved within the Forum's remit. The main priorities were identified as:

1. **Publicity** – to strengthen the Forum's identity and public awareness of the Forum and its work.

Against this aim, the Forum has secured publicity through local newspapers on a number of topics. This success has been of interest to the North West Regional LAF Chairs and resulted in an invitation to lead a workshop at the Northern LAF conference in 2014.



Crewe Chronicle
16th October 2013



Knutsford Guardian website
19th December 2013

2. **Safety on rural lanes** – the development of a campaign focussing on the improvement of safety for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers on rural lanes.

The Forum invited an officer from the Cheshire Police Road Safety team to discuss the Forum's priority of road safety in rural lanes. Cheshire Police have run a campaign focusing on accidents involving tractors and motorcyclists which could be used as a template for a similar campaign relating to non-motorised users and further discussions with Cheshire Police will be taking place in 2014.

3. **Lost ways** – focussing attention on and assisting progress with research into possible public rights of way that are not currently recorded on the legal record, the Definitive Map and Statement. It was decided to put this priority on hold due to forthcoming legislative changes.

4. **Walks for all** – assisting in the production of a new edition of the Cheshire East Walks for All leaflet of accessible walks in the countryside. Members are submitting suggestions for suitable walk locations and assisting in the collation the accessibility information provided in the leaflet. Further work on this topic is planned for 2014.

The work of the Forum

During the year, the agendas of the meetings were packed with items, some generated by members themselves and some as a result of external requests for the collective expertise of the Forum to provide comment on a particular initiative. The following gives a flavour of the items on which the Forum has worked:

- The Forum wrote a letter to Reaseheath College in Nantwich expressing the Forum's disappointment that the permissive permission for a cycle path, part of the **National Cycle Network** had been withdrawn. A letter of response was received from Meredydd David OBE, Principal of the College.
- In light of the above interruption in the National Cycle Network, the Forum submitted comments related to countryside access on the impact of a **planning application** for the Kingsley Fields development in Nantwich.
- In response to a representation by a Ward Councillor, the Forum wrote to **Cheshire East Council** expressing the Forum's concerns about the allocation of Public Rights of Way resources. A letter was received back from Kevin Melling, Head of Environmental Protection and Enhancement.
- The Forum registered as an interested party with the Planning Inspectorate in relation to the **A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Improvement Scheme** and received consultations on proposals for non-motorised users within the scheme.
- Forum members **unveiled a plaque in memory of former Local Access Forum Vice-chair John Taylor** at the Bluebell Wood on the Connect 2 Crewe to Nantwich Greenway in Wistaston.



LAF members and friends and family of John Taylor, and the plaque

- Members briefed the Forum on the proposed **SEMMMS A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road** which would provide a dual carriageway from the A6 near Hazel Grove to Manchester Airport via the existing A555. A response was submitted to the Phase 2 consultation on the scheme, outlining the Forum's discussions and concerns.

- The Forum held a site visit to the Carrs park in Wilmslow in relation to a request for support from the **Friends of the Carrs' application to Natural England for Paths for Communities** funding. The funding was being sought to create a multi-user route through the park for both leisure and active travel and had the support of a number of local groups. The Forum added its support for the application in principle, and was able to see first hand during the site visit the issues of flooding, erosion and perception of conflict between users that had been raised.



Forum members on a site visit to the Carrs park in Wilmslow

- The Forum was consulted about aspirations for the proposed **Congleton Relief Road** and **Poynton Relief Road** and the effect of the schemes on public rights of way and wider countryside access.
- The Forum was given a presentation on the **Disley Footpaths Society's Paths for Communities Fund application** to create a path between Disley railway station and an entrance to the National Trust property at Lyme Park. The Forum's support was offered to the group, although unfortunately there was no money left in the Paths for Communities fund at the time that the application was received.
- The Forum submitted a consultation response on **Cheshire East Council's Pre-Submission Core Strategy**, one of the Local Plan documents which will shape the future of development within the borough.
- The Forum was briefed on the **changes to Public Rights of Way legislation** brought in by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 and the proposals within the draft Deregulation Bill.
- The Forum continued to **monitor the delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)** projects and the annual reports of the Public Rights of Way team at Cheshire East Council.

Update on Road Schemes

The Forum has been consulted on a number of new road schemes in Cheshire East, with the progress of each scheme summarised below, as of March 2014.

1. SEMMMS A6-Manchester Airport Relief Road.
 - scheme being developed by Cheshire East Council, Manchester City Council and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council;
 - 2 public consultations held to which the Forum responded;
 - planning permission applied from each Council with results due March 2014;
 - anticipated public inquiry June/July 2014 with result late summer;
 - Department for Transport approval anticipated autumn 2014;
 - construction commences winter 2014/2015;
 - road due to open summer 2017.
2. Poynton Relief Road
 - scheme being developed by Cheshire East Council;
 - initial views of the Forum sought;
 - Initial alignment options outlined.
3. Congleton Relief Road
 - scheme being developed by Cheshire East Council;
 - initial views of the Forum sought;
 - public consultation undertaken January–February 2014 on 3 alignment options;
 - preferred route announcement due spring/summer 2014;
 - detailed route consultation proposed summer 2014;
 - planning application proposed autumn 2014;
 - construction start proposed 2016;
 - link road in use proposed 2018.
4. A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Scheme
 - scheme being developed by Highways Agency;
 - initial views of the Forum sought;
 - public consultation undertaken;
 - Development Consent Order (DCO) application submitted to Planning Inspectorate (PINS);
 - Forum involved in discussions about proposed changes to DCO;
 - 3rd March 2014: deadline for close of examination by PINS;
 - construction anticipated to take approximately 2 years.
5. Crewe Green Link Road
 - scheme being developed by Cheshire East Council;
 - initial views of the Forum sought;
 - planning permission obtained;
 - Compulsory Purchase Order confirmed with modifications in November 2013 – modification being the removal of spur roads and therefore removal of impact on Basford Footpath No.1;
 - advance environmental works (newt relocation) due to commence in spring 2014, with main construction works to commence summer 2014;
 - road opening, including footway/cycleways along both sides for full length is expected summer/autumn 2015.

Membership

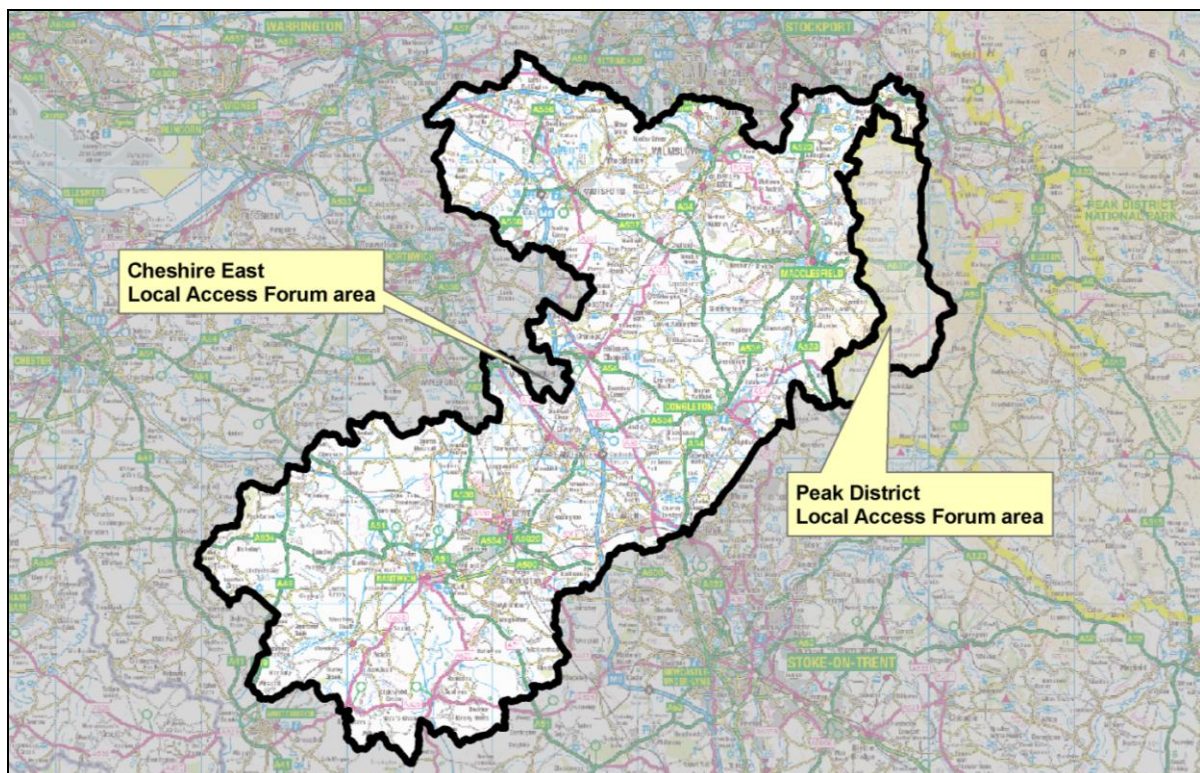
Membership of the Forum runs for a period of 3 years. The members currently appointed to the Forum, and their areas of interest, are shown below:

Name	Areas of interest	Geographic area
Bob Anderson, Chair	Accessibility for all, wildlife, walking	Nantwich
Councillor Rhoda Bailey	Ward Member, Public Rights of Way Committee Member	Scholar Green
Carole Bentley	Walking, information and publicity	Willaston
Chris Driver	Wildlife, conservation, planning	Acton
Pat Featherstone, Vice-chair	Walking, volunteering, health improvement	Disley
Andy Gildon	Involving local communities, running and walking	Chelford
John Handley	Land management, landscape interpretation	Wilmslow
Gillian Herdman	Walking, leisure cycling, working members of the public	Hassall Green
Dale Langham	Walking and cycling as sustainable transport	Wilmslow
Linda Rose	Carriage driving, horseriding	Great Warford
Ivor Williams	Visitor and rural economy, land management	Rainow

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The Cheshire East Local Access Forum area

The Forum covers all of Cheshire East except for that part of the borough inside the Peak District National Park, as the National Park has its own Local Access Forum.



Contact Cheshire East Local Access Forum

Post: c/o Public Rights of Way,
Cheshire East Council,
2nd Floor, Old Building,
Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street,
Crewe,
Cheshire, CW1 2BJ

Web: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/laf

Email: laf@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Tel: 01270 686029

Web: On the website you can view meeting agendas and minutes, along with previous annual reports.

Meetings: The Forum meets quarterly, alternating between Crewe and Macclesfield. The meetings of the Forum are open to the public.