

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Local Access Forum**
held on Friday, 21st September, 2012 at West Committee Room - Municipal
Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Forum Members Neil Collie (in the Chair)
Robert Anderson
Rhoda Bailey
Helen Connolly
Andy Gildon
Dale Langham
Andrew Needham
Kay Loch
Keith Osborn
Keith Pennyfather

Officer and Others Genni Butler, Cheshire East Council
Rachel Graves, Cheshire East Council
Ian Hesketh, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Hazel Barber, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Adele Mayer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Graham Dutton, Warrington Borough Council
David Jeffreys, Natural England
John White
Alan Catherall, East Cheshire Group The Ramblers
Tony Overland, Mid Cheshire Bridleways
Ray Hall, Mid Cheshire Bridleways

Action

22 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

John White resigned as Chairman and as a member of the Local Access Forum

Neil Collie, as Vice Chairman, took the chair for the meeting.

Apologies were received from Kath Wurcbacher and Mike Taylor.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

24 RESIGNATION OF CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL FROM CHESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Ian Hesketh, Green Spaces Manager, reported that Cheshire West

and Chester Council had resolved to withdraw from the Cheshire Local Access Forum and were seeking to establish an independent Local Access Forum for the Borough of Cheshire West and Chester.

As the recruitment for the membership for the present Cheshire Local Access Forum was due to take place soon, it was considered an opportunity to pursue arrangements for a new Cheshire West and Chester Local Access Forum.

The benefits and advantages of having a Local Access Forum for Cheshire West and Chester were outlined as:

- provide a greater degree of focus upon relevant access matters specific to the Borough avoiding dilution across a wider geographical area
- broad representation of the varied cross section of interests attached to access and recreation focused upon the Borough area
- potential to increase level of local targeted forum activities and tangible outcomes
- development of a more innovative and dynamic approach to Forum business that reflected the Council's corporate objectives and aligned with the 'Altogether Better' agenda
- locally distinctive branding providing greater opportunity to engage with local communities and prospective stakeholders

Forum members expressed concern that no discussions about this decision had been held with the Chairman and members of the Cheshire Local Access Forum before today's meeting and asked that an urgent meeting be held between officers from Cheshire West and Chester Council and a group of Forum members made up of Andy Gildon, Helen Connolly and Bob Anderson.

**IH/HB/
AG/HC
BA**

RESOLVED:

That the Forum regrets the intention of Cheshire West and Chester Council to leave the Cheshire Local Access Forum, and that an urgent meeting be requested to discuss the issues.

25 LOCAL ACCESS FORUM RECRUITMENT

In the light of the previous item, it was agreed that this item would be deferred until the Local Access Forum meeting in December.

26 CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE CLAF ANNUAL REPORT

The Forum was required each year to produce an Annual Report. Members were asked to forward items for this year's Annual Report to Genni Butler by the beginning of November. The draft Annual Report could be considered at the Forum meeting in December.

**GB/
All**

27 PATHS FOR COMMUNITIES FUND AND THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM'S ROLE

David Jeffreys from Natural England briefed the Forum on the Paths for Communities Fund (P4C) and the role of Local Access Forums in the application process.

The aim of P4C was to encourage and support local communities to work with landowners to make improvements to the public rights of way network. P4C would operate over a two year period from May 2012 to March 2014, with a total fund of £2m. The scheme was funded by the Rural Development Programme for England and each project had to deliver some of its benefits in a defined rural area.

So far in Cheshire, six expressions of interest had been submitted by the Holmes Chapel Partnership, Mid Cheshire Bridleways (x2), East Cheshire Group of The Ramblers, RSPB and the BHS Merseyside County Committee.

Applicants were encouraged to consult with Local Access Forums on their proposals at the earliest opportunity, as the Forums would be able to give guidance on local access, legal and technical issues and advise if the proposals fit into Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Applicants needed proof of consultation with Local Access Forums as part of the application process.

Further details and the Applicants Handbook could be found on Natural England's website - <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/p4c.asp>
[X](#)

Representatives from two groups were present at the Forum meeting to brief members of their applications.

Alan Catherall, on behalf of East Cheshire Group of The Ramblers, gave a short presentation on the proposed Todd Brook Watershed Trail. The Trail would be a 15½ mile circular walk taking in Sponds Hill, the Bowstones, the Terrace (with Dipping Stones option), Todd Brook Reservoir, Taxal Edge, Windgather Rocks, Pym Chair, Shining Tor, Lamaload Reservoir, Broad Moss and Charles Head. There would be links with public transport and car parks on the route or near the route. The route would be based on existing footpaths and Open Access Land except for one part where negotiations were in progress with the landowner to create a new public footpath. A formal expression of interest had been lodged with Natural England and support was being sought from other local community groups.

Tony Overland from Mid Cheshire Bridleways gave details on a proposed multi user route from Stoneyford Lane, Oakmere to Station Road, Delamere. The route would go through woodland, quarry

working, farm land and along an existing public footpath. Discussions were being held with the landowners over the proposals as it was hoped that the existing public footpath could be diverted and upgraded to bridleway.

The Forum gave support for both schemes in principle and suggested contacting running and cycling groups to gain further support for the proposals.

28 A556 KNUTSFORD TO BOWDON SCHEME: POST CONSULTATION UPDATE

Neil Collie updated the Forum on the A556 Knutsford to Bowdon road scheme.

The Highways Agency had carried out consultation between 23 January and 16 April on the proposed plans for the A556. The Forum had sent a response to the consultation from a non motorised users view.

A number of changes to the scheme design had been made in response to public feedback. These included the inclusion of a roundabout and the slip road layout at the A50 interchange; Millington Junction being amended to include a southbound off-slip only with no overbridge, and Tabley Junction being amended to include Old Hall Lane diversion. The overpass at Rostherne was to be amended to allow vehicular access as well as access for non motorised users. Of particular interest to members, additional facilities on the existing A556 for non-motorised users would be considered as part of the de-trunking works.

It was suggested that the Highways Agency and Jacobs be invited to the Forum again to discuss the changes to the existing A556 resulting from the consultation.

29 FORESTRY COMMISSION: INDEPENDENT PANEL ON FORESTRY FINAL REPORT

The Independent Panel on Forestry had published its final report in July 2012.

The Panel believed that the public forests estate was a national asset which should remain in public ownership. The report also called for action leading to:

- more people being able to enjoy access to woodlands;
- the creation of a coherent and resilient ecological network at a landscape scale, and;
- the strengthening of wood supply chains, and promotion of the use of wood more widely across society and economy.

Defra was carrying out a survey online via Survey Monkey: "Forestry 2012 - Help Shape the Future of Our Forests" asking for views on some of the recommendations made in the Panel's report:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/forestry2012>

30 STATEMENT OF ACTION AND UPDATE OF DELIVERY PLAN FOR CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Hazel Barber reported on the Statement of Action and Improvement Implementation Plan for Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Council had completed an Open Spaces Audit and Assessment of Household Need survey, along with consultation with Town and Parish Councils, recreational organisations and the public on their Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2016.

The results from the survey were used to produce a Statement of Action and Improvement Implementation Plan for the next five years. The Statement of Action was split into six major themes, reflecting the conclusions of the surveys and consultation. These being:

- Assets and Maintenance
- Economic Growth
- Better Safety
- Change of Life
- Climate Change
- Equality of Opportunity

The format of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan presented to the Forum at each meeting had been amended to reflect the Statement of Action and the Five Year Delivery Plan.

31 UPDATE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Members of the Working Groups gave an update on their work since the last meeting:

Finance

Neil Collie reported that the Annual Funding Spreadsheet had been updated for Cheshire East to include the actual spend each year on maintenance and the results of the spring 2012 Ease of Use survey.

Under Represented Groups

The Group has nothing to report at present.

Health

Keith Osborn handed out a short briefing note on the NICE Public Health Draft Guidance on Walking and Cycling. The guidance aimed to set out how people could be encouraged to increase the amount they walk or cycle for travel or recreation purposes. The guidance

was expected to be issued in October 2012.

32 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES

Members were updated on the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester.

The progress on the following Cheshire West and Chester projects identified in their Five Year Plan was reported:

- random survey of 5% of the rights of way network
- progress on partnership working with Habitats and Hillforts
- Deeside to Neston link
- Working with town and parish councils to adopt local paths

The report for Cheshire East outlined details of the progress since the last meeting on the following current projects:

- Crewe to Nantwich Greenway
- Seven Sisters Lane, Ollerton
- Gritstone Trial – crossing of A54
- Promotion of routes added to discovercheshire.co.uk
- 2012-13 ROWIP and LTP cycling projects

33 FEEDBACK FROM NORTH WEST REGIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The last meeting of North West Regional LAF Chairs has taken place in June and its discussion had included the consultation on the review of National Trails and access to National Nature Reserves.

Two of the National Nature Reserves were located in Cheshire East – Rostherne Mere and Wybunbury Moss and it was suggested that Forum members may like to look into access issues for these two sites. Bob Anderson agreed to investigate access issues at these Nature Reserves on behalf on the Fourm

BA

The next meeting of the North West Regional LAF Chairs was on 18 October 2012. It was agreed that John White would attend as a representative on behalf of Cheshire Local Access Forum.

34 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Rhoda Bailey reported that Cheshire East Council would be carrying out a review of its Safe Walking Routes to Schools.

John White reported that he had been invited to attend a feedback session on Cheshire West and Chester Council's Greenspaces strategy in Ellesmere Port on 27 September and asked if any members could attend. Andrew Needham agreed to attend.

The Forum paid tribute to John White and thanked him for his work as

Chairman of the Forum for the past 3 years.

35 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Friday 14 December 2012.