

Discover Cheshire with the help of new websites

Walkers, riders, cyclists and canoeists across Cheshire will be able to discover the hidden places of this beautiful county, following the launch of new and improved versions of the popular Discovercheshire websites.

Developed by Cheshire West and Chester Council in partnership with Cheshire East Council and The Mersey Forest, the sites are aimed at local residents, as well as visitors planning their trip to the county. They use interactive Ordnance Survey mapping to provide multimedia information on all of the area's promoted routes, as well as country and urban parks. Users can even print out maps and directions to take with them into the countryside.

The websites also provide information on places of interest and events – as well as details of visitor attractions, pubs, restaurants and accommodation, within easy travelling distance of a chosen route or destination.

A new Discover site focussing on the Gritstone Trail launched in November 2010. This not only provides interactive mapping, directions and tourism information for the trail, but also details of the history of the route, as well as of the geology, flora and fauna that can be seen along the way. Similar websites are to be launched next year focussing on the Sandstone Trail and Weaver Way.

Among many other potential uses, the Discovercheshire websites have also been chosen as the primary means of promoting routes devised as part of the new Delamere

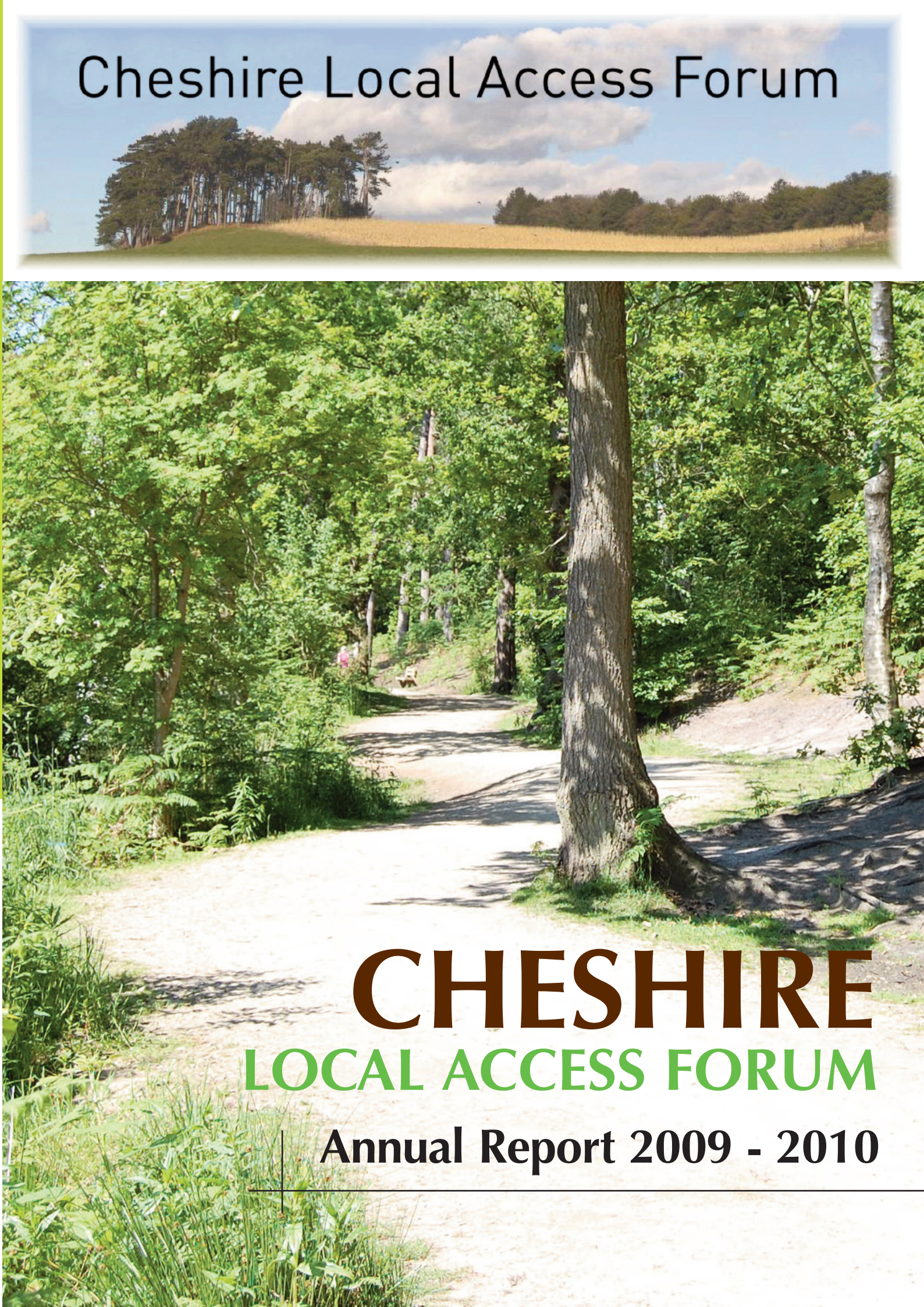
Project, which is supported by the Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Forestry Commission and Visit Chester and Cheshire.

The Discover sites can be found at: –
www.discovercheshire.co.uk (information for all of Cheshire)
www.discovercheshirepeakdistrict.co.uk (further information on Cheshire East and Cheshire's Peak District)
www.discoverthemerseyforest.co.uk (information on the Mersey Forest area).
www.discoverthegritstonetrail.co.uk (comprehansive details of this popular route)



Membership

Member	Area of interest
Robert Anderson	Accessibility
Rhoda Bailey	Councillor, Cheshire East Council
Neil Collie	Walking
Helen Connolly	Horse riding
Ken Edwards	Walking, local government
Andy Gildon	Community involvement
Dale Langham	Cycling and walking as sustainable transport
Andrew Needham	Councillor, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Keith Osborn	Land management
Keith Pennyfather	Walking and sustainable transport
Michael Scott	Land management
John Taylor, Vice Chair	Land management, accessibility
John White, Chairman	Walking
Kath Wurbacher	Horse riding





Chairman's introduction

[requested by 30th November: first annual report of the Cheshire LAF, new recruits, working groups, LAF role in light of proposed future changes to Natural England etc.]

John White
Chairman.

Training

- New members to the Forum received induction training before the December 2009 AGM.
- Keith Osborn, Andrew Needham, John White and Michael Scott attended a training day for new members on 5th March 2010 arranged by the north west region LAF co-ordinator.
- John Taylor and Bob Anderson attended a training day on the Lancashire County Council Trumper Scheme in the Forest of Bowland on 25th March 2010.
- Andrew Needham accepted an invitation to visit Cumbria's LAF on 25th March 2010.

Priorities for 2009-2010

- involvement in ROWIP2 and LTP3
- safety on rural roads
- urban rural access
- how does access better raise the health and wellbeing of the residents of the county

Priorities for 2009-2010

Development of working groups with the following themes:-

- Health
- Under represented groups
- Funding
- Spreading best practice

Items of interest

- Members reviewed the new Cheshire East policy on structures on public rights of way which uses the principle of least restrictive option to make paths more accessible for all, including those with disabilities
- The Forum responded to the Cheshire West and Chester Council following a presentation on the development of the Local Transport Plan 3
- Continued to monitor the delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) projects, the development of the ROWIPs for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, and annual reports for each
- Members contributed to the development of Walks for All leaflets, giving information to users on accessible routes across the county
- The Forum made changes to the environmental impact surveying of public rights of way and users within the A556 Mere Highways Agency scheme following a presentation by contractors Jacobs Engineering
- Members assessed the differing roles and interest in public rights of way across the town and parish councils of Cheshire. A best practice guidance note was prepared
- The Forum learned about the number of long distance routes that span Cheshire
- The Forum heard about the Open Spaces Survey being conducted in Cheshire West and Chester Council
- The Forum heard about the relaunch of the Discover Cheshire website:
www.discovercheshire.co.uk



Members' articles

Some Thoughts from a New Boy

I was a bit surprised to be accepted as a member of the Forum: I spend quite a lot of time in the Cheshire countryside, birding and/or walking my dog, but this didn't seem much of a qualification. Inevitably, the first year has been a matter of learning rather than contributing: I still have problems identifying the abbreviations, acronyms and technical terms, though I think I am improving.

First impressions? The Forum members all, like myself, bring "on the ground" experience to bear – and a varied experience at that, including (for example) horse-riding, cycling, running and estate management, and drawn fairly widely from across the county. That's quite impressive and re-assuring – even if we are (inevitably?) a typical white middle-class gathering. Equally impressive is the excellent back-up from officers – not just in servicing meetings, but in availability at other times to provide information and deal with queries. All this makes for informed, and informative, discussion.

A pleasant surprise was the regional dimension, and the opportunity to learn about what is going on elsewhere. Having missed a couple of training events, I feel a bit guilty about referring to visits to Beacon Fell in Lancashire for a demonstration of the impressive Trumper vehicles for disabled people, and to Thurstaston Country Park to learn about coastal path issues and to sit in on part of a Merseyside LAF meeting: each was a really good day out! That said, I came away from each with something to think about (the logistics of a Trumper hire scheme; the very different access problems in a major conurbation.). I do wonder, though, if we should have contact with LAFs in the West Midlands and North Wales – much closer than, say, Cumbria and maybe with similar experience to our own.

Another feature has been the scope for making connections between CLAF and other parts of my life. Plodding about doing bird surveys has at least given me some first-hand knowledge of footpath problems, and I've been able to introduce some access material, gleaned from contact with CLAF, into the county birding community. More important, perhaps, is the fact that the inclusion agenda has

meshed in fairly well with my interests, once professional and now voluntary, in working with older and less able people: there's a lot more to this access business than just blocked footpaths.

So it is probably all coming together: it is more complex, and more varied, than I anticipated; it seems very worthwhile; I'm beginning to feel that maybe I can be a useful part of the Forum (and I'm glad that I eventually acquired broadband just before joining! I'm not sure I could have coped otherwise). As far as the future goes, I'm very worried about what impact public-sector cuts will have on access work generally (aren't we all?), but whatever happens I can see plenty of scope for pursuing issues which are important to our well-being – even if, as I suspect, the full scope of the Forum's activities is not very widely recognised by the public at large. After all, until I joined I didn't recognise it.....

Bob Anderson

New routes in the Peckforton Hills

I have now been a member of the Cheshire Local Access Forum for almost a year and during that time have seen a significant project spanning both the Cheshire East and Cheshire West areas come to fruition. With a particular interest in access for equestrians, the re-opening of the route over the Peckforton Hills is a real step forward in improving off-road riding possibilities. I have recently ridden this route with my own horse and found it took me a good 3 hours. There are pleasant surroundings and scenery from every aspect and the view of Beeston Castle from one part of the route is stunning. Where a horse can go, most other users also can and this route, either entirely or in fragments, because it is unencumbered by stiles and kissing gates, can be enjoyed by walkers (also those with the larger dog!), cyclists, those less able and parents with small children in pushchairs. The project is a true credit to the Hillforts and Habitats Landscape Partnership Team.

Helen Connolly