

Members and guests on a site visit to the footbridge over the Alderley Edge bypass.



CHESHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
Annual Report 2010 - 2011

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

The Forum has met 4 times this year using different venues around the 2boroughs within Cheshire. Despite the large cutback in local government expenditure the Forum has been able to influence positively changes affecting access to the Cheshire countryside. The energy and enthusiasm of the Forum members and in particular the officers of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester and Chester Councils have helped considerably. One of our priorities for next year will be to ensure that the respective Local Transport Plans provide resources for the recently published Rights of Way Improvement Plans

John White
Chairman.

Training

- Bob Anderson, John Taylor and John White attended the north west regional LAF training on localism and the Big Society in March 2011.

Priorities for 2010-2011

This year the Forum set up working groups in order to investigate more fully the issues surrounding:-

- Spreading best practice;
- Health;
- Under represented groups; and,
- Funding.

For example, the funding sub-group was set up to collect information on funding arrangements allocated to public rights of way within Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. The annual funding, in both resource and financial terms, has been summarised in a table and presented to the Local Access Forum. The simple format will allow trends in the spending by the Councils to be monitored on an annual basis.

The sub-group has also produced a paper which summarises possiblesources of external funding for access projects so as to encourage local organisations to apply for such funding.

The under-represented groups sub-group has spent the first year in exploring the issue. Internet research showed a wide range of groups has been identified as under-represented. Although a factor common to many of them was lack of transport, we felt the scale of the problem, the cost involved, and current restrictions on expenditure made approaches to this difficult at present. We also concluded that it was realistic to recognise that many people do not wish to access the countryside; our focus therefore should be on those who might wish to do so, but lacked information, means, opportunity or stimulus.

We decided to try to identify a few possible projects, to test out how far new initiatives might increase countryside use by some of the underrepresented groups. We immediately encountered a major problem – lack of good base-line data on current use, against which to measure any changes. Despite this, we felt that our general approach offers the best way of making progress, and that we should continue with it.

In the coming year, we have decided that we should concentrate our efforts on a single countryside site, attempting to identify as wide a range of activities as possible which might be exploited at it. Although this implies a fairly broad approach, the main focus is likely to be on schools and schoolchildren. Though children are not necessarily defined as an under-represented group in themselves, we are interested in the possibility of using them as a means of reaching parents and increasing adult participation, both short and long term. Our aim is to use the information we gather to work with rangers and education professionals to develop a pattern for increasing the number of school visits to the countryside and to the footpaths network.

Priorities for 2011-2012

Continued progress through the working groups and ensuring the respective Local Transport Plans provide resources for the recently published Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

Items of interest

- The Forum received a presentation by Vernon Stockton, Delamere Forest Manager from the Forestry Commission on the proposed future changes to the management of the country’s forests.
- The Forum continued to monitor the delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) projects, the development of the new ROWIPs for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, and annual reports for each. In particular, the Forum advised Cheshire East Council on the prioritisation methodology used to rank suggestions put forward during the consultation on the ROWIP.
- Members received a presentation on the Cheshire West and Chester Local Transport Plan from Jeanette Dodd and Sharon Blackshaw.
- The Forum received a presentation from member Ken Edwards on the proposed devolution of local services from the Borough Council to the Town Council, drawing on the experience of Bollington.
- Members contributed to the design and information provided within walks leaflets produced by Cheshire East Council
- Toni Proffitt attended the Forum’s meeting in March 2011, visiting from Denbighshire County Council
- The Forum was consulted on the proposal for a Dog Control Order across the whole of Cheshire West and Chester Borough.
- A presentation was received from David Pott on the new 86 mile pilgrimage route called the Two Saints Way which runs between the two cathedral cities of Chester and Lichfield, linking the shrines of St Werburgh and St Chad.
- The Forum was informed about the results of the Countryside Access Management (CAMS) survey which has populated the Geographical Information System (GIS) of Cheshire West and Chester Council with details of path furniture and surfaces.
- Members received an update from Danny Moores of Natural England on the progress of the coastal path project.
- The Forum made recommendations to the Highways Agency about the A556 Bucklow Improvement Project following a presentation by the Highways Agency and contractors Jacobs Engineering.

North West LAF Chairs’ Forum

Cattle free walking and 'walking for health' are emerging as concepts that Local Access Forums could be investigating more.

This was discussed at the regular meeting of the Chairs of each of the Local Access Forums across the North West of the country. Some experienced walkers thought that walking in areas where there is livestock is really a matter for individuals to do their own risk assessment. Others thought that some guidance would be helpful to encourage new walkers and to inform those who perceive a risk.

Chairs were also informed about the new internet based network ‘HUDDLE’ which will in due course be a source of information and discussion for all Forum members.

Alderley Edge Bypass site visit 23rd September 2011

The Forum’s meeting this quarter was held at the historic Nether Alderley Parish Hall in the grounds of St Mary’s Church. This gave the opportunity for members to take a short walk across the fields to the site of the new footbridge over the Alderley Edge bypass, pictured.



The Forum was instrumental in securing the footbridge to ensure that links in the public rights of way network were maintained following the construction of the bypass. The bridge is located on public footpath Nether Alderley No. 33. Further details were given in the Forum’s annual report of 2008-9.

During the site visit, members debated the costs and benefits of the installation of the bridge. Further discussion focused on the provision of access ramps to either side of the bridge even though the footpaths either side currently feature kissing gates and stiles. The site visit provided an ideal opportunity to consider these issues on the ground.