

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Local Access Forum**
held on Friday, 22nd June, 2012 at Room 2, Wyvern House, The Drumber,
Winsford, CW7 1AH

PRESENT

Forum Members John White (in the Chair)
Robert Anderson
Rhoda Bailey
Neil Collie
Andrew Needham
Kay Loch
Keith Osborn
Keith Pennyfather
Kath Wurcbacher

Officers and Others Mike Taylor, Cheshire East Council
Genni Butler, Cheshire East Council
Rachel Graves, Cheshire East Council
Hazel Barber, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Adele Mayer, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Action

12 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Helen Connolly, Andy Gildon,
Dale Langham and Ian Hesketh.

13 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

38 Cheshire Local Access Forum Website

Neil Collie commented that the Forum webpage only displayed the
front sheet of the agenda and not the attached reports.

It was agreed that a link would be provided on the Forum webpage
to the reports and minutes on Cheshire East Council's website. **RG/HB**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2012 be agreed
as a correct record.

**14 DEFRA PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED
PACKAGE OF CHANGES TO THE PROCESSES FOR
RECORDING, DIVERTING AND EXTINGUISHING PUBLIC
RIGHTS OF WAY**

Mike Taylor briefed the Forum on the DEFRA consultation
"Improvements to the Policy and Legal Framework for Public
Rights of Way".

The proposals in the consultation document would affect three areas of rights of way work – Definitive Map Modification Orders and the Definitive Map, Public Path Orders, and the relationship between planning consents affecting rights of way and any necessary consequential public path orders to allow development to proceed.

The consultation had arisen as a result of a Stakeholder Working Group report “Stepping Forward”, published in March 2010, which contained a package of 32 proposals designed to improve various processes associated with identifying and recording historical rights of way. The consultation document set out how the Government intended to implement these proposals. The deadline for responding was 6 August 2012.

Mike had presented a paper to the Cheshire East Council Public Rights of Way Committee on 11 June 2012 which had outlined the Council’s response to the consultation.

John White reported that the Ramblers had drafted a response, which had been sent to members of the Ramblers for consultation before submission.

Hazel Barber confirmed that Cheshire West and Chester Council would be responding with their views.

It was agreed that the Chairman would compile a response to the consultation on behalf of the Forum, generally supporting Cheshire East Council’s response with the caveats that sufficient resources must be made available to implement the proposed changes and that careful wording must be used in the legislation and guidance. **JW**

15 CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL CYCLING STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Jamie Matthews, Transport Strategy Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council, briefed the Forum on the consultation for the new Cycle Strategy for the Council.

There had been considerable investment in the local cycling network in Cheshire over the last 10 years. Chester had been successful in gaining Cycle Demonstration Town status between 2008 and 2011. The challenge for the future was to improve local links to the cycle network and consider how to extend the success and lessons learnt from the Cycle Demonstration Town to the rest of Borough.

The Council was keen to encourage more people to cycle to work, to school and for the fun of it and hoped to be able to encourage

cycling as part of their tourism agenda. It was keen to develop awareness campaigns to highlight the health benefits of cycling and encourage more people to take part in cycle training schemes.

To meet these aims the Council was preparing a new Cycling Strategy for the Borough and was consulting on the following four objectives:

1. **Build** – new and improved infrastructure to improve facilities for cyclist
2. **Inform** – smarter choices, awareness and marketing campaigns to encourage a cycle friendly culture and promote the benefits of cycling as a low carbon form of transport
3. **Know how** – education and training to improve cycle safety and security
4. **Enthuse** – measures to highlight and raise the profile of cycling in the Borough.

Forum members were encourage to respond to the consultation either by completing the forms handed out or online at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/cyclingconsultation. The deadline for returning completed questionnaires was Friday 13 July 2012. The responses would be used to create the draft Cycling Strategy which would be published and consulted on in September/October 2012, with the final Cycling Strategy being published in December 2012.

16 UPDATE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

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

Finance

Neil Collie spoke on the Annual Funding Spreadsheet, which had been included in the agenda. He thanked the officers for providing the information for the spreadsheet.

For Cheshire East it was noted that the maintenance budget had been reduced and the Forum was concerned that this would have an effect on rights of way network. Genni Butler reported that the result of the 'Ease of Use' Random 5% spring survey was 76%, which was down on previous years. It was too soon to know if the budget reductions had contributed to this decrease. Genni also reported on the external funding which the Council had obtained for rights of way projects.

For Cheshire West it was noted the budget and the staffing numbers were decreasing and a concern that resources were not available to ensure that work was carried out within prescribed timescales. Hazel Barber reported on the external funding which

the Council has obtained such as £250,000 from Sustrans.

Under Represented Groups

Bob Anderson and Kath Wurcbacher reported that the Group had been considered ways to encourage access to the countryside and had come up with two ideas.

The first was to link the use of public transport and access to the countryside. It was suggested that a leaflet with the timetable and costs of buses from Crewe to Nantwich be included with the leaflet for the Nantwich Loop in the hope that it would encourage families from Crewe to access this walk. The Group asked if Genni Butler could help them with this proposal.

BA/GB

The second suggestion was to target schools to encourage them to bring pupils into the countryside by holding a day in Marbury Park, Northwich, to show teachers what the Park could offer. Funding would be needed for this project and it was suggested that the Group should look for an enabling partner. Hazel Barber agreed to provide details of organisations which may be able to help.

HB/KW

Health

John White reported that Group would be considering the National Institute for Health and Clinic Excellence (NICE) draft guidance on local measures to promote walking and cycling as a form of transport or recreation. The guidance considered the health impacts of increasing walking and cycling and the wider environmental and economic impacts arising from promoting walking and cycling as a form of transport. Consultation on the draft guidance had run from 24 April to 19 June 2012. It was expected that the final guidance would be published in October 2012.

He also reported that the Ramblers had taken over the running of the Walking for Health programme from Natural England.

17 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES AND ANNUAL REPORT

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

The report for Cheshire East outlined details of the progress to date on the following current projects:

- Crewe to Nantwich Greenway
- Seven Sisters Lane, Ollerton
- Gritstone Trail – crossing of A54
- Long Distance Horse Ride – Cheshire Cheese Loop and Heritage Loop

- Promoted routes added to discovercheshire.co.uk
- 2012-2013 ROWIP and LTP cycling projects

The report for Cheshire West & Chester had been revised to show the progress against the projects identified in the Five Year Delivery Plan for 2011-16. Progress on the following projects was reported:

- Random survey of 5% of the ROW
- Provision additional information on ROW Network on interactive mapping
- Fault Reporting System to be available online
- Development of easily identifiable branding

Copies of the Cheshire West and Chester Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2016 were distributed to Forum members and it was agreed that the Statement of Action would be discussed at the next meeting. **HB**

18 FEEDBACK FROM NORTH-WEST REGIONAL LAF CHAIRS' MEETING

The Chairman reported on the issues discussed at the lastest meeting of the North West Regional LAF Chairs. The main topics were:

- Costal Access – update on Cumbria route
- New Countryside Code
- Paths for Communities
- Moorlands – fighting wildfires
- Pennine Bridleway
- Future of Lake District and Cumbria LAFs
- NICE consultation on promoting walking and cycling

The guidance for Path for Communities application stated that Local Access Forums are a valuable source of information, advice and support and suggested that applicants took the opportunity to engage with their Local Access Forum and reflect the outcome on their application form. Genni Butler reported that in Cheshire East there was proposal at pre application stage for public rights of way within Public Open Space in Dane Meadow, Holmes Chapel and a number of other proposed applications. Adele Mayer reported on two applications in Cheshire West - creation of a section of footpath in the parish of Barrow to link Barrow Lane with Chester Road, and creation of a right of way in Delamere from the station to Stoneyford Lane.

The Forum noted the projects and supported the applications in principal.

19 OUTLINE OF RECRUITMENT/RE-SELECTION PROCESS FOR LAF MEMBERS

Members were reminded that their term of office expired in December 2012 and informed that they would be invited to re-apply for a further 3 year period and indicate their intentions at the time of the September meeting.

The result of this exercise would indicate the number of positions to be recruited to in order to comply with The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 which required the Forum to have between 10 and 22 members.

It was also noted that the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair would be up for election at the Annual General Meeting in December. The Regulations required that the holders of these positions should reflect a balance of interests with regards to countryside access i.e. one from a user group and one from a land management perspective.

20 : REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Neil Collie asked if the dates for meetings in 2013 would be on the same basis as this year. The dates would be confirmed at the next meeting. **GB/HB**

21 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Cheshire Local Access Forum would take place on Friday 21 September 2012 at the Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.