

Cheshire Local Access Forum

Annual Report September 2011 - September 2012



Chairman's introduction

The Forum has met four times this year using different venues around the two boroughs. We have concentrated on trying to ensure the Councils devote sufficient priority to access to the countryside primarily by ensuring the Rights of Way Improvement Plans are implemented.

We have also kept abreast of significant local and regional issues affecting the countryside including the formation of the Canal and River Trust, Delamere Forest developments, the A556 major road improvement scheme and possible legislation changes affecting public rights of way.

Sadly one of our members, the Vice Chairman **John Taylor**, passed away early in the year. We

will particularly miss his contribution on disabled access. I would like to thank all the Forum members and support officers for their continued support and contribution during the year. This will be the last Forum under the Cheshire banner as Chester West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council will be setting up independent Local Access Forums from January 2013.

John White Chairman

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Priorities for 2011-2012

The Forum's work
to investigate issues surrounding
country's
viewpoints:

- ☒ health benefit ;
- ☒ under represented groups; and,
- ☒ funding.



✓ The **health benefits working group** reported on the key findings of British Horse Society research on health benefits of horse riding. The working group also considered the National Institute for Health and Clinic Excellence (NICE) draft guidance on local measures to promote walking and cycling as a form of transport or recreation.

Helen Connolly comments on the health benefits of horse riding.

A common misconception held by non-riders is that a horse rider is just a passenger and that the activity requires effort only on the part of the horse.

A report commissioned by the **British Horse Society** and conducted by the **University of Brighton and Plumptre College** into the health benefits of riding well and truly dispels this myth.

The **Department of Health and Sport England** recommend a minimum of five x 30 minute sessions of moderately intense exercise on a weekly basis. Those responsible for keeping horses can more than fulfil this requirement merely by carrying out their compulsory daily horse care routine. 50% of those surveyed for the report commented that mucking out and grooming was such hard work it made them out of breath.

The metabolic equivalent for saddling and grooming the horse - a relatively sedate activity when compared with, say, shifting hay bales - is 3.5. You would have to cycle at 10mph to better this by just 0.5.

Walking the dog (with you walking as well of course!) has a metabolic equivalent of 2.5, the same as for walking the horse with you on its back! Trotting brings the score up to 6.5, just slightly less than rowing at 7.

Not only can physical health be improved by horse riding, the report has shown that the activity can result in significant psychological benefits as well. The sense of achievement obtained by interacting successfully with a horse and being in a natural outdoor environment has a positive impact on depression, stress and anxiety and self esteem. Some of those surveyed reported that riding and caring for horses had been an important contributor to recovery from mental illness.

Another misconception commonly held by non-riders is that the activity is reserved for a financial elite. Whilst it's true that a horse owner will never have money (or time!) for anything else, we need only to look at our Olympians to dispel this myth, with the gold medal winner of both individual and team dressage coming from a very ordinary background and a member of the silver medal winning event team

likewise. Recreational horse riding reaches out to all social groups with 46% of the report's respondents reporting that they work full time.

It's a girl thing! 93% of the report's respondents were female but this is by no means a bad thing! Women are a social group with below average levels of participation in sport as a whole so their participation as a majority in equestrianism and the fact that 37% of respondents were aged 45 plus (an age group not generally identifying with high levels of physical activity) means that the sport presents a female age profile not matched by any other sport.

The report concludes that horse riding is truly of benefit to everyone and can be enjoyed by anyone; almost one quarter of the respondents had a long standing illness or disability. This did not appear to affect the frequency of or level of exercise intensity and many respondents reported that horse riding had helped them to cope with a variety of health impairing conditions. Those with limited mobility reported that recreational horse riding was a means by which to access the outdoors and participate in physical activity which they otherwise would not be able to.

Never too old! As proven by the fact that over 50% of respondents aged over 65 rode at least three times a week.





- ✓ The **under-represented groups working group** considered ways to encourage access to the countryside, devising ideas to take forward.

The working group also identified the need to improve information to encourage access, for example, through:-

- targeting work with children as a means of reaching adults;
- finding 'challenge and reward' incentives to visit the countryside;
- utilising new media to reach younger people; and,
- emphasising the viability of existing public transport systems as a means of access.

- ✓ The **funding working group** identified financial resources available to each Council's Public Rights of Way team and the effect of spending freezes and staffing reductions across the years.

Items of interest

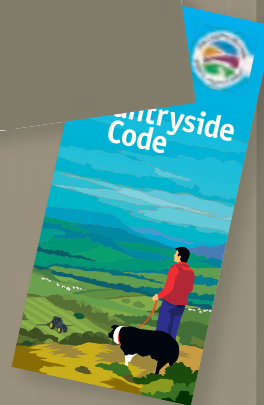
- The Forum received a presentation by Julie Sharman, Head of Regeneration (North) at British Waterways, to inform members about the **creation of the Canal and River Trust during 2012**.
- The Forum continued to **monitor the delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)** projects, the development of the new ROWIP of Cheshire West and Chester Council, and annual reports for each authority.
- Jamie Matthews, Transport Strategy Officer for Cheshire West and Chester Council, briefed the Forum on the **consultation for the new Cycling Strategy** for the Council.
- The Forum considered the **Forestry Commission's pre planning application consultation** on proposals to improve and develop visitor facilities in Delamere Forest. The Forum also considered the **Independent Panel on Forestry's final report** which advised government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England and on the role of the Forestry Commission in implementing policy.
- The Forum received a presentation on the changes being made to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's **Interactive Mapping system**. The online mapping tool includes information collected and photographs of path furniture.
- Forum member Neil Collie prepared a detailed presentation on the **Highways Agency's A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Environmental Improvement Scheme consultation**. The Highways Agency was consulting on junction layout and the de-trunking of the existing road. Following the presentation and ensuing discussions, the Forum submitted a formal response to the consultation, aspects of which have been taken on board in the changes made by the Agency following the consultation.
- The Forum debated and responded to a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) **public consultation on a proposed package of changes to the processes for recording, diverting and extinguishing public rights of way**, having also considered the Country Land and Business Association's report entitled 'The Right Way Forward: The CLA's Common Sense Approach to Access in the Countryside'.
- Representatives from Natural England attended the Forum to explain the Forum's role in the **Paths for Communities** funding stream, a number of applications to which were being prepared across Cheshire.



North West Local Access Forum Chairmans' Forum

Briefings from the North West Local Access Forum Chairmans' Forum included:

- coastal access in Cumbria;
- Natural England's new Countryside Code leaflet;
- fighting wildfires on moorlands;
- disabled access to the countryside;
- temporary fencing on Open Access land;
- the roles of Natural England;
- emergency services in remote areas;
- the 10 year review of Open Access land maps; and,
- a demonstration of 'Huddle' an online networking tool for LAF members.



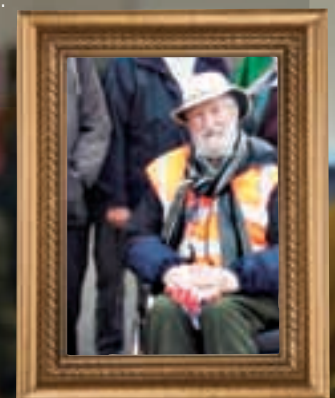
John Taylor

Forum members were saddened to learn that fellow member John Taylor died in early 2012.

John, who held the position of vice chairman of the Forum, had been a member of the Forum since its inception as Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum back in 2001.

As well as his input to the work of the Local Access Forum, John was involved in many aspects of life within his local community in Crewe: he was a member and former director of the Disability Resource Exchange, a Trustee of the Community Volunteer Service, a committee member of Dial a Ride, a committee member of St Barnabas Church in Crewe and also had roles at Senior Voice and Wulvern Housing.

A minute's silence was held at the March meeting of the Forum in John's memory. Neil Collie was appointed to the position of vice chairman for the remainder of the Forum's year.





Membership

Member

Robert Anderson

Rhoda Bailey

Neil Collie, Vice Chairman

Helen Connolly

Andy Gildon

Dale Langham

Kay Loch

Andrew Needham

Keith Osborn

Keith Pennyfather

John Taylor, Vice Chairman

John White, Chairman

Kath Wurcbacher

Area of interest

Accessibility

Councillor, Cheshire East Council

Walking

Horse riding

Community involvement

Cycling and walking as sustainable transport

Councillor, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Land management, local authority procedures

Land management

Walking and sustainable transport

Land management, accessibility

Walking

Horse riding



The Future of the Local Access Forum in Cheshire

This is the last annual report of the joint Cheshire Local Access Forum. From 2013, two new and separate Forums are being established, one covering Cheshire West and Chester Council's area and one covering Cheshire East Council's area (excluding that within the Peak District National Park which is covered by the Peak District Local Access Forum).

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