

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2011
WIGAN TOWN HALL**



1. INTRODUCTION.

Edgar Ernstbrunner (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Present:

Edgar Ernstbrunner	Ramblers Association - Manchester area
Trevor Boardman	Cycle Liaison Group
Peter Burns	Peak & Northern Footpath Society
Jackie Roberts	Crankwood Bridleways Group
Barry King	Long Distance Walkers Association
Brenda Gaskell	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group
Ruth Killen	Landowner

Officers:

Elizabeth Parry	Public Rights of Way Officer.
Katie Jackson	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer

2. APOLOGIES.

John Gurhy	Disability Forums
John Pimblett	Wigan and District Ramblers Association
Judith Burton	British Horse Society

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

3.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Item 4.5 Crankwood Road – all the information is now with the Barrister, it was personally handed over by EP and KJ. EP has a meeting with legal on Monday 9th March and will raise the issue then. JR mentioned that the bridleway along the canal will hopefully alleviate the problems along Crankwood Road.

4.2 Item 4.6 Guidance for all users – EP reported that there had been no further progress on this

4.3 Item 7 Bickershaw North – EP had a site visit with TB and JR. The ROW in the area are accessible, and there is the possibility of making use of the dismantled railway on the west of the site as a bridleway. KJ is looking into landownership of the line. TB stated that the Shuttlehillock Road bridleway could be relocated onto the railway line.

4.4 Item 9 Milestone Statement – EB apologised as he hadn't written to Steve Normington in support of the Milestone Statement. EP will email Steve Normington's details to EB.

4.5 Item 11.1 Footpath Closure Abram no.32 – EP has no further info on this temporary closure.

5 SALE OF FORESTRY COMMISSION LAND

5.1 EB advised that the sale of Forestry Commission land had been put on hold

5.2 KJ circulated a plan of Forestry Commission ownership in Wigan

5.3 EB stated that if the sale resumes it will be important to keep the sites within Wigan accessible

6 BRIDLEWAY AT TRAVELLER SITE

6.1 EP gave an update regarding the bridleway, and stated that there are two issues. The travellers are using the bridleway for vehicle access. The fields are managed by planning and housing who are both unwilling to do anything. The second issue is that the travellers have managed to obtain a key to the gate by the Woodcock Drive estate. The planning department will change the lock.

6.2 EB stated that the Council as landowners need to stop vehicle access through barriers.

6.3 EP advised that anything metal installed on site is removed within days.

6.4 EB asked for the item to remain on the agenda for the next meeting so that JG can have input

7 EQUESTRIAN ACCESS

7.1 BG stated that the letters from the British Horse Society circulated with the agenda for the meeting reinforce what Wigan's LAF have been saying for the last 5 years. Wigan's LAF has both British Horse Society representation and equestrians.

7.2 EP asked if the LAF wanted to write to the BHS to mention the work that has been accomplished through the ROWIP in partnership with the LTP team and nominated JB to write to BHS on the LAF's behalf.

8 WIGAN ROW STAFF UPDATE

8.1 EP stated that there is a lot of land under Council ownership that is managed by Environmental Planning – over 600 sites in total in varying sizes. An asset register and risk assessments for the sites have recently been completed which has raised concerns that annual/regular safety inspections are completed, and so there has been a reshuffle of staff within Environmental Planning.

8.2 Under the Voluntary Redundancy, Early Retirement and Flexi Retirement process the two senior officers in Planning Implementation have chosen Flexi Retirement. The Planning Implementation team has now been split between Planning Policy and Environmental Planning. Kathryn Barker has joined the ROW team, so currently the ROW team consists of EP, KB and KJ – until March 31st.

8.3 David Scrivens is no longer in the ROW team, he is now under Simon Calderbank in the Open Spaces team, however DS has been told that he will still continue to carry out ROW work. EP is currently putting a ROW work programme together for the next financial year that includes work for DS; Simon Calderbank's work programme also includes work for DS. This puts DS in a difficult position.

8.4 EP stated that having just one ROW officer will undermine the authority and has suggested closer working through new computer software from Exegesis which combines ecology, tree information and open space information which can help out other service areas. This new software would prevent duplication. EP advised that the emphasis now is on joined up working to ensure that officer time is well spent. EP believes that it is Steve Normington's long term goal to have a countryside maintenance team.

8.5 EP stated that at the moment she is unaware of how much the ROW maintenance budget will be next financial year. The LTP3 budget has been severely hit with only £600,000 allocated to Wigan, which covers everything including staff costs.

8.6 EP believes that the ROW strategy for LTP3 has been successful. EP has worked closely with the LTP manager and both ROW and Greenheart have been included in Wigan's LTP.

9. ROWIP IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

9.1 KJ gave an update on ROWIP progress.

9.2 **Towpath Scheme** – KJ advised that vegetation clearance on the south side of the towpath has started and that physical work will commence week beginning 7th March

9.3 **Wigan 91** – 3 out of 4 sections are complete, the remaining section should be complete soon, as the weather is improving.

9.4 **Holy Family, off Chaddock Lane Tyldesley** – this is an LTP proposal to resurface this path and upgrade to a public footpath. It is a safe off road route to school and a link to local amenities. The land crossed by the path is part owned by Wigan Council, Peel Holdings and a small section is unregistered. Report to declare council owned sections surplus to requirements has been signed off. KJ is waiting to hear from Peel regarding the section in their ownership in order to progress.

9.5 **Red Rock Line** – Report to declare land surplus to requirements has been written. However there are maintenance issues along the route including Maxwell's Bridge which is high risk and the Council are keen to resolve these issues before dedicating a bridleway.

9.6 **Orrell Waterpark** – KJ had a site visit with Peter Alker and walked a number of routes that have potential to be upgraded. Work on some of these routes is now taking place on site and is being financed from the ROW maintenance budget.

9.7 **Lilford Park** – KJ had a site visit with Peter Alker and walked a number of routes that have the potential to be upgraded. KJ is in the process of drawing up a plan of the routes for EP.

9.8 **Health Walks** – the existing ROW health walks are being redesigned for online, to make them easier for people to print out at home. There is also the potential to add new walk routes.

9.9 BG enquired about the Lowton St Mary's Line

9.10 KJ advised that she was drafting the reports but until we could gain access to the land to conduct ecological surveys that the scheme couldn't be progressed any further.

9.11 BK stated that under Planning Law notice can be served on the landowner so that access to their land can be obtained.

9.12 EP/KJ will look into this

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 There were no items raised under any other business

12. **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

12.1 The next meeting will be on Wednesday the 8 June 2011.
Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided from 5.30pm with official
business starting at 6.00pm.