

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2009
WIGAN TOWN HALL**



1. Introduction

Edgar Ernstbrunner (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The order of the meeting was changed to accommodate the presentation and members having to leave early.

Item: Disabled Access Issues – John Gurhy will be put on the next meetings agenda as JG was unable to attend.

Present:

Edgar Ernstbrunner	Ramblers Association - Manchester area
John Pimblett	Wigan and District Ramblers Association
Trevor Boardman	Cycle Liaison Group
Peter Burns	Peak & Northern Footpath Society
Judith Burton	British Horse Society
Jackie Roberts	Crankwood Bridleways Group
Barry King	Long Distance Walkers Association
Brenda Gaskell	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group
Ruth Killen	Landowner
Sandra Green	Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Mike Gorse	Alley gates Officer

Officers:

Elizabeth Parry	Public Rights of Way Officer.
David Scrivens	Assistant Rights of Way Map Officer.

2. Apologies

John Gurhy	Disability Forums
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3. Update alley gating: Sandra Green & Mike Gorse

3.1 MG & SG introduced themselves to the group and explained the role of the Alley gates team. MG gave each member a copy of the 'Guide to installing Alley gates on Private or Public alley ways'. The group was asked to comment on this booklet.

ALL

MG explained that gating orders only go ahead after extensive consultation. EE was concerned that routes that are important but have lots of crime maybe closed. MG reiterated the fact that there is extensive consultation by way of letters to residents and advertising in the local newspapers to let as many people know as possible. A PACT survey (Partners & Communities Together) is carried out along with looking at alternative routes.

SG advised that it's not just alley gating that is dealt with within the team. Alley gates have only just been moved to the anti-social behaviour team and there are a number of other areas that they look at regarding anti-social behaviour issues.

MG stated that if a back alley is unadopted and gated then they have no powers to enforce problem issues, they are purely a private matter.

EE suggested the gates be removed if the neighbour acts irresponsibly. MG agreed with his comments.

BG gave an example of the backs leading off Warrington Road in Abram which was one of the first areas to be gated. Users now have to use the dangerous main road. This was a major cause for concern.

EP advised that this particular scheme was done under regeneration and not under alley gating; SG stated that they couldn't comment on such matters, but takes the point of the problems caused due to the gating of these backs.

BK gave a couple of examples of recent gating orders going through in Leigh that would restrict access for residents to open access land. The impact of these orders is causing concern.

MG explained that there is now a 6 to 8 week notice period before any gating order is considered. MG showed the group a map of proposed gating orders & advised that EP now has a planned program of gating orders for various areas. All proposed orders are now shown on the Wigan Council GIS system but can only be accessed internally at the moment.

PB advised that it might be beneficial, before gating, to look at routes that are used by children going to school, cyclists and so on that are safe routes.

EE confirmed that overall Wigan is more helpful when comments are made about gating areas than most other Authorities.

4. ROWIP

4.1 EP advised that there was no interest with regard to the ROWIP officer post internally and this will now be advertised externally very soon.

4.2 EP updated the group on the Hindley schemes. Hindley footpath No's: 11 & 12, work has already started on these footpaths. There are a few ecological issues that need addressing e.g.: vegetation and proximity to water courses; however works have been agreed between the Ecologist and Contractor.

4.3 Martland Park south commenced today on the southern routes. There will be a delay with the northern side as ecological surveys will need to be undertaken with specific regard to Great Crested Newts and Water Voles and these surveys can't commence until the Spring.

4.4 A positive meeting took place in October with British Waterways regarding various sections of the canal towpath. Dover Lock at Bamfurlong, Crankwood Road, Dover Lock towards Plank Lane and the Whelley Loop crossing were discussed.

In view of the cuts in finances available it was agreed that British Waterways would break up schemes into smaller sections and calculate there costs, thus perhaps enabling some works to be undertaken as smaller pots of funding become available.

4.5 Crankwood Road, the Councils Legal Division has been investigating the status of the road and has looked at the vast amount of information gathered by Members of the LAF and also Officers. Legal have advised that they will be seeking independent advice from a Barrister on the matter.

4.6 EP also advised that the Lowton St Mary's Line has been looked at and discussed with colleagues in Environmental Planning. EP has also spoken with colleagues in the Bridges Section as they were looking at doing some maintenance work to the bridge carrying the East Lancashire Road. This may have needed to be in filled, however the decision has been taken to carryout remedial repairs to the underside of the structure. In principle there does not appear to be any problem with the route, however the initial access off Brancaster Drive needs to be resolved.

5. Minutes of the last meeting

5.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

6. Matters arising

6.1 Item No: 4.1 – EP advised that Emma Barton the Acting Local Transport Plan & Road Safety Manager was due to do a presentation to the HUG but this had been put on hold due to the necessity for a presentation on the Greenheart Access Strategy.

EP

6.2 Item No: 4.2 – Definitive Map & Statements. EP stated that Exegesis is coming up on the 9 December to update the system. The Statements are just one aspect of works to be carried out.

6.3 Item No: 4.5 – Railway Street. EP confirmed that an e-mail had been sent to Network Rail but unfortunately no response was forthcoming. EP has been informed that Development Control have served an Enforcement Notice stating that the owners of the gates must keep the gates unlocked at all times and the removal of any notices deterring users of the footpath. The Notice comes into effect on the 14 December and they have 14 days to comply.

7. Gating Orders

7.1 EP advised that she had attended a brief meeting with the Alley gates team and has been invited to attend a Neighbourhoods Team meeting.

EP stated that there is a proposed Gating Order for Snowden Avenue in Worsley Mesnes. EP has expressed the ROW Teams objections to this Order which would result in a cul-de-sac footpath, Wigan No: 73. Additional concerns are that there is no alternative route and that the initial consultation was not very well conducted and formal complaints reported to the Police and Council Helpline all came from one property.

7.2 EE questioned the recent Gating Order for Etherstone Street, Leigh and has therefore entered a holding objection to this Order. BK advised that the Group needs to look at this in more detail. There is concern for access from Wintergreen Close as well.

ALL

EP advised that 10 objections are necessary in order to get the matter referred to Cabinet.

8. English Access Forum/NW Regional LAF'S

8.1 EE advised that there was concern that Natural England was not taking the English Access Forum seriously and DEFRA have been involved in trying to solve the problem. Overall DEFRA have not been that helpful and the EAF is not being fully recognised. EE advised that he had missed the last North West Regional LAF meeting.

EE

9. Appropriateness of surfacing on multi-user routes

9.1 EE advised that the e-mail sent from the Countryside Services should be circulated with the minutes.

10. Draft DEFRA Guidance on DDA in relation to gates and stiles

DS

10.1 Guide sent to group members with previous minutes. Group to comment on the document in due course

11. Any other business

ALL

11.1 BG was concerned of reports that the new 40 ton double trailer lorries will be allowed on the roads. What does Wigan Council think of these proposals? BK/GH advised that the publicised stunt that took place and which was shown on national news was a deliberately ploy by the owner of the lorry to get arrested so that the matter could be heard in court; as a test case.

11.1 BK advised that Shevington Parish Council own pitches close to the war memorial and it has been reported that some horse riders have churned them up. Due to this, the pitches are unusable.

JB was upset by what had happened and advised that she does a lot of work in Shevington, with this in mind, JB will try to find out who is doing this. JB advised that notices will be issued to livery yards to advise them of the problem.

JB

12. Date and venue of next meeting

12.1 It was agreed that all future meetings will be held at Wigan Town Hall. The next meeting will be on Wednesday the 3 March 2010. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided from 5.30pm with official business starting at 6.00pm.