

Minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum  
 Wednesday 18 June 2008  
 Wigan Town Hall



		<b>Action</b>																														
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>																															
	<p>Edgar Ernstbrunner (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Vicky Bowskill, Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer. VB then gave a brief introduction and what the new role involves.</p> <p><b>Present:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Edgar Ernstbrunner</td> <td>Ramblers Association - Manchester area</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trevor Boardman</td> <td>Cycle Liaison Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peter Burns</td> <td>Peak &amp; Northern Footpath Society</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Judith Burton</td> <td>British Horse Society</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eileen Rybka</td> <td>Standish &amp; District Bridleway Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Barry King</td> <td>Long Distance Walkers Association</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dave Allen</td> <td>Long Distance Walkers Association</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Edna Booth</td> <td>Leigh, Atherton &amp; Tyldesley Bridleways Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jackie Roberts</td> <td>Crankwood Bridleways Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brenda Gaskell</td> <td>Leigh, Atherton &amp; Tyldesley Bridleways Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Edna Booth</td> <td>Leigh, Atherton &amp; Tyldesley Bridleways Group</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caroline Hurworth</td> <td>Natural England</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Officers:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Elizabeth Parry</td> <td>Public Rights of Way Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David Scrivens</td> <td>Assistant Rights of Way Map Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vicky Bowskill</td> <td>Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer</td> </tr> </table>	Edgar Ernstbrunner	Ramblers Association - Manchester area	Trevor Boardman	Cycle Liaison Group	Peter Burns	Peak & Northern Footpath Society	Judith Burton	British Horse Society	Eileen Rybka	Standish & District Bridleway Group	Barry King	Long Distance Walkers Association	Dave Allen	Long Distance Walkers Association	Edna Booth	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group	Jackie Roberts	Crankwood Bridleways Group	Brenda Gaskell	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group	Edna Booth	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group	Caroline Hurworth	Natural England	Elizabeth Parry	Public Rights of Way Officer	David Scrivens	Assistant Rights of Way Map Officer	Vicky Bowskill	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer	
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<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>																															
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<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>																															
3.1	<p>Item No. 5.1 paragraph 10 – Should read ‘PB also suggested’.</p> <p>The minutes were then accepted as a true record.</p>	<b>DS</b>																														

## 4 **Presentation by Caroline Hurworth ‘Natural England’**

- 4.1 CH introduced herself and explained the role of Natural England and its involvement with user groups including Local Access Forums.

### **Natural England’s profile**

- A Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)
- A merger of English Nature and parts of the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service
- Approximately 2500 employees based at over 50 regional offices
- Headquarters in Sheffield
- North West region has 6 Offices (but this is being reviewed)

### **Natural England’s role in the public sector**

- Natural England created to coincide with the second phase of the England Rural Development Programme (RDPE) – Environmental Stewardship as a key tool.
- It will be a distinctive public body committed to both people and the environment

CH also stated that Natural England will strive to be fully independent and trusted, build consensus and lead opinion, be a catalyst for others and take action and be a powerful champion for the natural environment. Partnerships are at the heart of their work. Natural England are approaching the natural environment in an integrated way and will be working with farmers and land managers, national, regional and local government, other conservation agencies non-governmental organizations businesses, communities and individuals and also partners in the academic and scientific communities.

### **What does this mean for our access and recreation work?**

- National teams are still formulating new Natural England policies
- Regional Delivery Agreement containing some targets for provision and promotion of access to the natural environment.
- Real challenge to maintain the profile of access and recreation against competing priorities e.g. delivery of agri-environment schemes, nature conservation.
- Continuation of internal access, recreation and education working group (RARE).
  - Cross team representation
  - ‘soft’ project management approach for access and recreation delivery
  - Co-ordinated approach

## **Regional access and recreation priorities for 2008/2009**

**Environmental Stewardship** – Targeting specific areas/regional mapping when encouraging applications for the scheme, following consultation with local access authorities. Continue to monitor and advise on existing agreements.

**CRoW** – Managing and reviewing restrictions, promote dedication (initially our Natural Native Reserves, NNR's), undertakes monitoring, assessment and reassessment and administer the Access Management Grant Scheme (AMGS) to selected authorities.

**Sustainable Transport** – Support work of LDTP, joint working with Northern Rail, develop sustainable transport proposals within the emerging regional parks.

**Pennine Bridleway** (National Trail) - implementation, management, monitoring and marketing.

**Access to Nature** – Administering the 'ATN' grant scheme, promote within the region, provide advice and support to applicants.

## **Regional access and recreation priorities 2008/2009**

**RoWIPs** – Ensure targeting maps for Environmental Stewardships take account of RoWIP targets where possible, continue to monitor progress of their production, set up new working group to represent the access authorities and their work in this area, promote the documents within local teams as a delivery aid, to assist with stakeholder liaison and for awareness of emerging issues. 70% of ROWIPS have been completed by councils across the country.

**Coastal Access** – Disseminate information to colleagues and stakeholders as appropriate, assist with data gathering as required.

**Discovering Lost Ways** – Major refocus following review, Natural England to establish stakeholder working group, Government will not proceed to implement sections 53-56 of the CRoW Act until the group has reported. Natural England to disseminate national advice to local surveying authorities when required, and stay in communication with stakeholders over the way forward.

**Local Nature Reserves** – Reactive work, reviewing dedications and management plans to ensure they incorporate wider NE objectives.

## Natural England and Local Access Forums

- Raise the profile of LAFs with in Natural England and encourage colleagues to tap into their expertise.
- Help to develop and support a regional LAF chairs network.
- Attend specific meetings as required.
- Disseminate information from national teams as required.
- Continue to involve LAFs with CRoW access work (consultations on long term directions, statutory reviews)

EP asked what the Environmental Stewardship involved? CH explained that this is for farmers, land managers and to get ideas on how to enhance the landscape and environment. Further information can be found on [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk).

BK mentioned sustainable transport and how much funding is available at Natural England to implement these changes. CH explained that the contact at Natural England for Sustainable Transport in the North West is Clare Warburton who would be able to answer questions on this.

EB asked for more information regarding the Equestrian Access Forum. CH explained that this forum was not set up by Defra. There are a number of groups involved such as British Horse Society, Byways & Bridleways Trust (BBT), South Pennines Packhorse Trust etc. CH advised EB to contact BHS to obtain further information on the forum.

CH also gave further information on the Stakeholder Working Group and Natural England's involvement in changing legislation. More detailed information can be found at [www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Access/DLW](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Access/DLW).

### **When will the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) start work and what will it do?**

The terms of reference and membership of the group are currently being finalised and it is hoped to hold the first meeting in July. All individuals whose names were put forward will be contacted as soon as these details are confirmed. Natural England will provide secretarial support for the group, which will be independently chaired, and have a balanced representation between the main affected stakeholder sectors: - Local authorities, users and land managers.

The aim of the group is to identify the issues and difficulties associated with recording pre-1949 public rights of way that are not shown on the definitive map and come up with an agreed package of strategic reforms to address these. This will involve looking at the evidence in support of propositions being made. The wider stakeholder community will have an opportunity to provide such evidence and in turn, will be kept informed of the progress the group is making.

## **Natural England's Involvement in changing legislation.**

No direct involvement other than our role which is to work with and advise Defra/Government as evidenced by CROW Act, Coastal Access etc. We probably sit on various policy groups alongside Defra but as a rule these

also include reps from the Local Government Association/Institute of

Public Right of Way. The Rights of Way Review Committee sits at the top of this and the (former DLW) Stakeholder Working Group will sit under this. There are links on the web to the remit of that group. We are represented on those by national policy officers.

EE then thanked Caroline Hurworth for a very informative meeting.

### **5 Matters arising**

- |     |  |                             |
|-----|--|-----------------------------|
| 5.1 | Item No: 4.1 - EP advised that the Claims Register is up and running on Wigan Council's internal website but are now waiting for Central I.T. to put it onto the main system and will contact them again for an update.  | <b>EP</b>                   |
| 5.2 | Item No: 4.2 - EP confirmed that an updated version of the logo for the Local Access Forum letterhead had been created and was shown to the group. The group gave a few more ideas one of them to have 'Wigan Local Access Forum' over the top of the LAF logo. EP to ask Dave Green to create a few more examples with larger text and bring them to the next LAF meeting for consideration.  | <b>EP</b>                   |
| 5.3 | Item No: 4.3 - EB raised the issue of signage on Pennington Country Park. EB had noted that the signage needs to reflect that it is a multi user track and care should be taken as not to frighten the horses. EP advised that an e-mail has been sent to Peter Alker at Pennington Flash and is awaiting a reply.   | <b>EP</b>                   |
| 5.4 | Item No: 4.5 - Leigh Guided Busway – EE asked the group for comments for a letter to be written to Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive to get an update on the scheme and specifically on bridleways and to ask any questions of concern. BK advised that it looks as if funding from the Congestion Charge scheme will go towards the Leigh guided busway and there will be a consultation period from the 7 July 2008. BK advised that the group should submit ideas or objections at this stage of the process. EP also advised that further information will be sort internally for this project. | <b>ALL</b><br><br><b>EP</b> |

5.5	<p>Item No: 5 – Alleygating – EE advised that the LAF group is not receiving gating orders and should be consulted. DS/EP to contact Legal Division and ask that EE as chair of the LAF get copies of all Orders. DA reiterated that the LAF needs to introduce itself to all Department Heads and that we should be involved in Alley-Gating at the initial stage rather when Orders are already made.</p>	<b>DS/EP</b>
	<p>DA also stated that the Alley Gating Manager should attend these meetings to discuss gating orders.</p>	
	<p>PB read a reply letter from John Hutchison, Community Safety Team manager from Neighbourhood Services regarding alley gating. A copy will be sent to the group with the minutes. PB also advised that a large plan of an area to be gated would be useful for the group to look at.</p>	<b>DS</b>
	<p>EE acknowledged that Wigan Council do follow procedures correctly with regard to alley gating.</p>	
	<p>EE also requested a list of contact details for all Departments.</p>	<b>DS</b>
5.6	<p>Item No: 6 – ROWIP – EP advised that Vicky Bowskill is currently working on three key areas:</p>	
	<p>Short term priorities – Vicky has highlighted some action points from the ROWIP objectives and has produced a table for the group to comment on. The table was distributed to the group. EP advised that it would be useful if the group would indicate priorities and identify key routes by name and which are regarded as priority. Also highlighted was the Action point relating to the LAF: work to publicise the LAF and increase membership.</p>	<b>ALL</b>
	<p>Secondly VB has identified a set of criteria from the ROWIP and LTP objectives and while checking through the DMMO applications has come up with a list of 8 claims to be prioritised.</p>	
	<p>Thirdly to set up an Officer Steering Group.</p>	<b>VB</b>
	<p>VB is also looking at improving and updating the Council's Rights of Way web pages in terms of the ROWIP &amp; LAF, and is looking at the creation of new information leaflets.</p>	
	<p>EP also advised that three additional small signs have been created. Signs circulated to the group.</p>	

The signs advise the following:

- 1 Please keep to the path, leave gates and property as you find them, take all your litter home, keep dogs under control, and consider other users.
- 2 If you want to report a problem with the footpath / bridleway then please contact us – phone & email shown
- 3 Report problems of incidents with motor bikes and vehicles – Police details given.

If the group is aware of specific areas that would benefit from such signs please let us know.

EE requested plans be made available to the group that show Claimed routes that are in the process of being accomplished.

**VB**

DA advised that from the LAF guidance booklet it states that the LAF should create an annual report. EP advised that we would need to look at what other authorities are doing to achieve this and suggested that VB look at some websites.

**VB**

- 5.7 Item No: 7 – Greenheart – JR explained that the Steering Group for this project decide on what decisions are made. The LAF has no one on the Steering Group panel therefore we cannot comment on such things or get our views across. EP advised that she would speak with Gary Harold to get a LAF representative to attend meetings.

**EP**

EE suggested that someone from the Greenheart Steering Group should be attending the LAF group anyway.

## **6 Access Management Scheme**

This item was requested by EE.

- 6.1 EP explained that there is approximately 35 hectares in Wigan Borough that were identified as new 'open country' as opposed to Common Land. Most of this is the Bickershaw North site. When grants were originally offered the insignificant amount per hectare, plus the amount of paperwork required to claim anything was disproportionate, in addition to the fact that proposals were already being made with regard the development of the Bickershaw north site which made the process not worthwhile.

## **7 Register of rights of way problems**

- 7.1 EE advised that the general public do not know of current issues relating to footpaths that may have a problem. Therefore it is important to have a list or register of highlighted problems so that the public can view and check if a Right of Way is passable and safe to use.

EP stated that it should be pointed out that the vast majority of problems reported are by individual users of the network and landowners and not by recognised groups. Some want to remain anonymous and others do not want any updates. The vast majority of incidents are dealt with but there are some issues that are not addressed; currently there are a couple of outstanding issues that we are discussing with Wigan & District Ramblers Group. EP also

explained that not all enquiries are recorded within the Rights of Way computerised management software (CAMS) this is due to enquiries coming in via various means and may not get logged onto the CAMS system. There is also an issue with the complaints that are already on the system that have been dealt with but not removed. This should be resolved once the Inspection Regime is fully operational. There have been delays due to the re-organisation that has been taking place between the former General Highways Section and the Highway Maintenance Groups which means there may be a change in who carries out the inspections.

On a positive note it is anticipated that the re-organisation and the changes affecting the inspections, will lead to a more up to date computer system and that Crystal Reports may be printed in future to show such issues with footpaths.

## **8 Definitive Map and Statements**

- 8.1 EE stated that with regards to requesting a copy of the Definitive Map along with Statements, he advised that these should be made available to the general public because copyright does not apply to these documents.

EP advised that there has been some discussion on this and it was generally agreed that whilst every authority is under a duty to make the map and statement available for the public to see, they were not under any obligation to copy all the statements. It was also pointed out that this may be in breach of copyright rules; as the statements could be deemed to be the intellectual property of the Council and therefore covered by copyright, in addition as the statements were drafted decades ago the description often given is out of date and therefore might mislead the public.

EE advised that they are willing to pay an appropriate charge for the list

EB also advised that a copy of the Map and Statement would be helpful in libraries and other Town Halls in the borough.

EP stated that the CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) will be updated later this year therefore the changes made may help with this issue.

## 9 Any other business

9.1 ER explained that the routes that are on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan need to be checked and has suggested a meeting be set up with Vicky Bowskill to look at the routes carefully and what they link up with.

9.2 JB was concerned about the surface on part of the disused railway line in Standish where a resident has put reclaimed material on the ground containing glass. This is stopping horse riders, dog walkers and other pedestrians using the footpath.

EP advised that the path in question is not a Public Right of Way and not within the ownership of Wigan Council.

BG suggested that this equates to illegal tipping and should not have been allowed in the first place and should be passed onto Environmental Health.

9.3 EP presented to the group a planning application which, if successful, would result in the closure of a well used footpath off Merlewood Drive, Tyldesley. The Chair tabled the motion to the group. The group authorised the Chair to object to the application on behalf of the LAF.

The following items were circulated to the group:

- Natural England Board meeting 13/02/08
- 'Discovering Lost Ways'
  
- E-mail from Mike Furness, Waymark Magazine.
- Discounts for LAF subscription to 'Waymark' 05/02/08
  
- Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Chairmen & Natural England. Sheffield 24/01/08

ER/VB

- Letter from DEFRA. Introduction from Jonathan Shaw MP to Local Access Forums in England. 14/01/08
- Copies of Trevor Boardman's letter to Martin Kimber January 2008. Re: 'Connect 2' Sustrans Grant Support. Group should have already seen this.
- Brain Warren, Project Planner, Environmental Services
- Reply letter to Trevor Boardman re: 'Connect 2' Sustrans Grant Support. 11/02/08
- Letter from the Ramblers Association.
- Richard Granville, Campaigns Officer. Re: Access management Grant Scheme.
- Cumbria Local Access Forum Annual Report 2007
- Access Newsletter (Issue 30) English Coast & Draft Marine Bill  
Access Newsletter (Issue 31) EFRA draft Marine Bill  
Access Newsletter (Issue 32) Wildfire special  
Access Newsletter (Issue 33) Marine Bill established
- Planning Application Merlewood Drive, Tyldesley
- Natural England (Access) Forum minutes

## 10 **Date and venue of next meeting**

- 10.1 The next meeting will be held at Leigh Town Hall on Wednesday the 17 September 2008. The group agreed that the time of the meeting would change and official business would begin at 5.00pm with refreshments from 4.30pm.