

DRAFT  
Minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum

Date: 02 September 2009  
Venue: Leigh Town Hall



**Action**

**1 Introduction**

EE welcomed the group.

**Present:**

Edgar Ernstbrunner	Ramblers Association - Manchester area
Trevor Boardman	Cycle Liaison Group
Judith Burton	British Horse Society
Peter Burns	Peak & Northern Footpath Society
Jackie Roberts	Crankwood Bridleways Group
Brenda Gaskell	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group
John Gurhy	Disability Forums

**Officers:**

Elizabeth Parry	Public Rights of Way Officer
Vicky Bowskill	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer

**2 Apologies**

John Pimblett	Wigan & District Ramblers Association
Barry King	Long Distance Walkers Association

**3 Minutes of the last meeting**

3.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

**4 Matters arising**

4.1 EP advised that the presentation by Emma Barton of the Local Transport Plan Team that had been arranged for this meeting had been postponed due to the number of uncertainties regarding LTP3 at this time. It was suggested that EB give a presentation at the next meeting of the HUG on 28<sup>th</sup> October 09, at which time more information will be available.

**EP / EB**

	<b>Action</b>
<p>4.2 4.4 – Definitive Map &amp; Statement. EE asked for an update and EP advised that the Council is investigating the possibility of a move to the ESRI Arcview mapping system to make this possible. This seems likely but as yet no timeframe has been confirmed. Some limited information on PROW is available on the School Travel Maps on the Council’s public website at the following address.  <a href="http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/EducationLearning/SchoolTravel/SchoolTravelMap.htm">www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/EducationLearning/SchoolTravel/SchoolTravelMap.htm</a></p> <p>EE asked about progress on making the Statements available on line and EP advised that it is hoped that this issue can be resolved as part of the annual service visit for the Countryside Access Management System in December.</p>	<b>EP</b>
<p>4.3 4.7 – Wigan Flashes and Haigh Hall. JR had provided a draft letter to EE as requested but this had not yet been sent. The issue of multi-user access to Wigan Flashes has been addressed by Gary Harold at the HUG so a letter is not now necessary at this time. This will be looked at again at a future meeting depending on any action forthcoming from the Council in this regard.</p> <p>No draft letter had been provided regarding Haigh Hall and JB will chase this up.</p>	<b>JB</b>
<p>4.4 4.9 – Towpath. EE asked for an update and VB advised that this is still waiting on a meeting with British Waterways to progress.</p>	<b>VB</b>
<p>4.5 7.4 – Railway Street. EP advised that nothing further has happened since the last meeting. EP did have a meeting with Network Rail staff regarding another matter and took the opportunity to raise this. There was mention of a possible link on Network Rail land to replace the route that has been blocked, EP to follow this up.</p>	<b>EP</b>
<p>4.6 7.5 – Whelley Loop canal crossing. This is waiting on a response from British Waterways regarding options for improving the crossing over the canal.</p>	<b>VB</b>
<p><b>5 England Access Forum / NW Regional LAF</b></p>	
<p>5.1 England Access Forum. Tension exists between the EAF and Natural England, who do not appear to be taking the EAF seriously. Difficulties in EAF functions have arisen due to NE procedures, as a result of which no further meetings have been fixed and the future of the group seems uncertain.</p>	

5.2 NW Regional LAF. The uncertainty regarding the EAF is affecting the NWRL as, should there be no EAF to feed in to, the purpose of the NWRL will need to be redefined. The next meeting is booked for the end of September in Preston.

Action

## 6 Gating Orders

6.1 This issue of Gating Orders has been raised at the EAF in the past with concerns regarding how easily authorities can make orders. NE felt it unlikely that any push for primary legislation would meet with success. The group felt that, on the whole, Wigan is not creating problems with their approach to Gating Orders.

EE asked if any LAF members had issue with any Gating Orders they had received. PB mentioned there had been a couple and EE asked if anyone with concerns could bring them to his attention so objections can be given on behalf of the LAF as a group.

All

6.2 EE requested that further feedback be provided on the decisions made on Gating Orders following objections. EE enquired whether there is a register of Gating Orders, as required by law, and if so how this can be viewed. EP to make enquiries and advise the group accordingly.

EP

6.3 PB asked whether any maps showing Gating Orders and possible protected routes are available. EP advised that Paul Whitemoss had given a presentation to the HUG and advised that the Gating Order policy had been updated. No copy of this has yet been seen so EP to make enquiries and request a presentation from Paul Whitemoss at the next LAF meeting if possible.

EP

6.4 EP advised that she had been asked to raise an issue regarding an unrecorded alley between Lulworth Drive and Long Lane in Hindley. A Councillor is putting pressure on to close this alley by Gating Order due to problems with anti-social behaviour. Whilst this is not a definitive right of way the PROW team is aware of a local demand to keep this route open. There have only been 3 incidents of anti-social behaviour reported in the last 21 months.

JB pointed out that, from the map, only four houses are affected, weighed against the much larger number of households that currently benefit from access along this route. JG raised the issue of Council policies being to open up access wherever possible, not to reduce it. EE advised that, from the information available the LAF objects to this closure. The level of reported incidents is well below the threshold at which Gating should be considered and the threshold should be checked in the updated Gating Order policy.

EP

## 7 ROWIP Implementation Progress

7.1 Lowton St Mary's Line, dismantled railway under East Lancs Road. VB had looked at this route but had not prioritised it due to Warrington PROW being unable to do any work to the continuation on their side of the boundary in the foreseeable future. TB / BG asked that the LAF push for works to be done to open up the Wigan side of the route, linking it to the cycleway on the East Lancs Road, in the hope that this will prompt development of the remainder of the route in Warrington. BG has been working towards securing this route for many years. EE advised that the LAF supports this and will pursue creation of this route as a priority. VB / EP will make further investigations into the necessary works to achieve this.

VB / EP

7.2 Dismantled railway between Byrom Lane and Newton Road. This is currently a permissive bridleway and segregated footpath on Council owned land. There is a new school proposed for the site under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) scheme and the route of the permissive bridleway is identified as an access road for the school. EE asked who would be the appropriate officer to contact to ensure the LAF is consulted on all BSF proposals. VB advised that Paul Worthington is the Head of Service for Wigan School's for the Future, his contact details are [p.worthington@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:p.worthington@wigan.gov.uk), 01942 486296.

## 8 Disabled Access Issues

8.1 BG asked about barriers on the dismantled railway improved by LTP between Atherleigh and Leigh Road. Mike Orrell is the lead officer and he was made aware of this issue concerning access for horses being restricted, however no further action appears to have been taken. This can be address when Emma Barton attends to deliver a presentation at the next HUG meeting.

EP

8.2 Crankwood Road. Concerns exist regarding access along Crankwood Road and the new barrier that was installed on the connecting bridleway Abram 30. The barrier does not allow for disabled access and the Council is unable to make changes due to conflict with local landowners who refuse to allow disabled access along Crankwood Road, whilst allowing (sometimes limited) permissive access to all other users. Extensive research has been carried out by JR, VB and others and this has been passed to Legal to advise on how to proceed. The issue of the legal status and rights of access that can be shown to exist on Crankwood Road must be resolved before any action can be taken to address any discrimination that may be shown towards disabled users.

EP / VB

8.3 Borsdane Wood. Following complaints made to WLCT by JG regarding the lack of disabled access at Borsdane Wood a barrier was removed. Whilst this new access is appreciated there was concern from the group regarding the totally open access. Discussion ensued regarding the implications of fully open access versus the minimum necessary to allow legitimate users through whilst still deterring illegal motor vehicles. There is an apparent difference, evidenced by reports made to the police, between real and perceived dangers and levels of illegal use.

Action

8.4 VB circulated an updated version of the draft accessibility policy for consultation, requesting feedback by **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September**. The scope of this policy has been broadened to include permissive routes on Council owned land as well as definitive public rights of way and it is hoped that, following consultation, this can be adopted by Cabinet as Council policy.

VB / All

## 9 Forestry Commission Consultation

9.1 Details of this consultation were circulated to all members with the agenda for this meeting. EE has responded to the consultation on behalf of the LAF. JR has concerns regarding uncontrolled ragwort on FC owned land close to hers and will follow this up with them direct.

## 10 Any Other Business

10.1 EE requested an update on the Claims Register and EP advised there had been no progress. A response is awaited from Steve Hubbard.

EP

10.2 BG asked if there had been anything further on planning applications for the Parsonage site in Leigh. EP advised that she had heard nothing further but would keep the LAF informed on any further information received.

EP

10.3 VB circulated a draft design for a sign to encourage respectful space sharing on multi-use routes. The design currently shows a speeding horse and cycle with the words 'SLOW DOWN on bikes and horses'. It was generally felt that the sign should include a pedestrian with wording to indicate all user groups to show respect for each other. Further feedback requested to be provided to VB by **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September**. Oldham has a similar sign, EP / VB to get further details from them as a comparison.

VB / EP / All

11 **Date and Venue for Next Meeting**

- 11.1 The next meeting will be held at Wigan Town Hall on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided from 17:30 with official business starting at 18:00.