

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM  
WEDNESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010**



**WIGAN TOWN HALL**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Edgar Ernstbrunner (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Present:

Edgar Ernstbrunner

Barry King

Jackie Roberts

John Pimblett

Ruth Killen

Trevor Boardman

Brenda Gaskell

Peter Burns

Ramblers Association – Manchester Area

Long Distance Walkers Association

Crankwood Bridleways Group

Wigan and District Ramblers Assoc

Land Owner

Cycle Liaison Group

Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways  
Group

Peak & Northern Footpath Society

Officers:

Elizabeth Parry

Katie Jackson

Rights of Way Officer

RoWIP Officer

**2. APOLOGIES**

Judith Burton

John Gurhy

British Horse Society

Disability Forums

**3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

3.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

**4.1 Item 4.3 – Railway Street**

EE enquired if there is a claim on Railway Street

EP stated that yes there is a claim; however Network Rail has previously stated that they have no intention to dedicate a footpath. However there have been unofficial talks with the landowner and there could perhaps be a way to achieve a route.

**4.2 Item 4.4 – Gating Orders at Snowden Avenue**

BK asked for an update on this; however EP hadn't received an update on the gating order.

**4.3 Item 4.5 – Astley Bridge**

EP has a copy of the safety audit report for Astley Bridge which states that it is unsuitable for horse riders and cyclists. EP is waiting for a meeting with Peter Wickett from the Transport Strategy Team and Bridges to take place.

BG asked if it would be possible for horse riders and cyclists to use one side and pedestrians use the other, however this would involve crossing at blind spots. BG also mentioned that Lovers Lane has been resurfaced and that the new surface is too slippery for horses.

EP suggested checking the resurfacing list on the Highway Maintenance section of the Councils website to check if any routes to be surfaced are well used horse riding routes.

Horse riders could then contact the Highway Maintenance Team (Construction Group) to discuss surface options for those routes.

4.4 **Item 5 – Barriers at Windermere Estate**

EE stated that he had written to WALH and that the barriers had now been altered and that John Gurhy is happy with the outcome

4.5 **Item 6 - Crankwood Road**

EE questioned the statement in the minutes from the last meeting that Crankwood Road is a private road with no public rights, and asked why hadn't anyone put in a claim for the route or asked the landowner to dedicate.

EP stated that people had used it freely and saw no need to put in a claim for the route.

EP informed that meetings with Councillors and landowners regarding work on Abram no.30 lead to investigations into the status of Crankwood Road and subsequently a Barristers opinion being sought. The Barristers opinion was that Crankwood Road has at least footpath status and further investigations should be carried out to see if higher rights exist. This led to a period of public consultation between July and October 31st with landowners, interested parties and user groups. Information received during this time has been collated and is waiting to be assigned to a Solicitor in the Legal Division which is currently undergoing a reshuffle. EP will push for the Barrister to see the evidence and the ROW team will then proceed as to her advice.

JR visited Mrs Hibbert and had a meeting with her about Crankwood Road

JP has been visited by Mrs Hibbert and she brought with her all the correspondence from Wigan Council. Mrs Hibbert will allow all users with permission but will not dedicate Crankwood Road

JR stated that a 4x4 vehicle had recently driven along Crankwood Road and when it was unable to continue past Lee Lane Farm the driver became violent towards Mrs Hibbert. The driver then turned around and smashed through Mr Roberts's gate which had been closed during the time that the driver was further along Crankwood Road. The driver has now been caught.

4.6 **Item 9.5 – Guidance for All Users** EE asked about this, however EP hasn't had time to look further into the possibility of having a guidance page on the website.

4.7 **Item 11.9 – Three Sisters to Wigan Flashes** TB has now officially withdrawn his complaint in writing regarding the width of the route between Three Sisters and Wigan Flashes

4.8 **Item 12.6 – Level Rail Crossings** EP hasn't an inventory of the number of level crossings in Wigan and is unaware if any will be closed.  
BK stated that it is in Government plans to electrify the Chat Moss line in 2016 and they will therefore be looking at all crossings.

## 5 Spending Review

- 5.1 EE asked how the spending cuts have affected Wigan.
- 5.2 EP stated that 18 months ago the Rights of Way Team moved from Construction Group in Engineers to Environmental Planning under Gary Harold and Mike Worden in Planning and Transport Strategy Service.
- 5.3 EP advised that there is a meeting this evening (8<sup>th</sup> Dec) to finalise the new structure. It is believed that the 7 departments of the Council will merge into 3: people, places and enablers. ROW will sit in Places under Economy and Highways will be under Environment.
- 5.4 EP stated that consideration is being given to merging the Service areas of Development Control and Building Control with Planning and Transport Strategy; therefore the two Heads of Service, Penny McGinty and Mike Worden will have to apply for one position.
- 5.5 EP mentioned that the Highways and Transport Management Service; which ROW was formerly under, are proposed to be move within the new Environment Division and ROW under Planning & Transport Strategy will be within the new Economy Division. There was some concern expressed about ROW moving away from Highways, as most of the work is covered under Highway legislation.
- 5.6 EP stated that Steve Normington has previously worked at a Yorkshire Authority where Rights of Way worked in a countryside services setting. There is the possibility of an Open Spaces – Rights of Way Team, in which David Scrivens and Dave Broome may be Countryside Officers.
- 5.7 BG asked if the LAF as a group could put in a request for Rights of Way to remain in the same division as Highways
- 5.8 BK mentioned the online consultation that is currently available on the Council's homepage. This allows the public to choose where they would make cuts. The profile of Rights of Way has been raised tremendously over the last 2-3 years and it is important to keep the profile high, therefore if there is anyway to put our views forward on this consultation we should.
- 5.9 EE asked if there were any plans to abolish Rights of Way Officers at Wigan
- 5.10 EP stated that staff are reasonably secure as is the ROW budget; however she isn't aware of the budget figures for the next financial year.
- 5.11 EE stated that the Ramblers Association had attempted to apply pressure on Bolton Council but failed. On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 2pm at Moses Gate Country Park a protest walk will be held. So far Bolton is the only Local Authority to make such severe cuts. They were wrong to make these cuts and the Rights of Way network will suffer because of them.
- 5.12 EE advised that Rochdale is also cutting one post and the remaining Officer will have

further responsibilities. It is important to make it clear to Local Authorities that Rights Of Way are a statutory duty and should be maintained and free from obstructions.

- 5.13 EP stated that the Milestones Statement is key to this in Wigan. EP sent the draft to Gary Harold, Mike Worden, Mark Tilley and Steve Normington as well as the LAF. LAF members feedback will be discussed at item 9

## 6 **ROW Anomalies/Obstructions: Ashton 25 & Golborne 3**

- 6.1 EP circulated copies of various documents relating to the two footpaths and stated that the railway crossing was formally closed, however the footpaths linking to the crossing were not. The email from Network Rail states that they are against having crossings at these points.

- 6.2 JP and EE are opposed to extinguishing the Rights of Way

- 6.3 TB stated that people are cutting the wire fencing and crossing the electrified line, which is dangerous.

- 6.4 EE stated that the statements are incorrect and presumes that Legal Event Modification Orders would be required to alter them.

- 6.5 EP advised that this is correct.

- 6.6 EE asked if Local Authorities were consulted on the Railways Act

- 6.7 EP stated that they were

## 7.0 **Bickershaw North**

- 7.1 TB has concerns that Bickershaw North isn't being developed. The bridleway was given up and a new bridleway on the old railway line was to supersede it. What progress has been made with this?

- 7.2 EP stated that funding was pulled on the North site after the Coalfields Programme reassessed the Bickershaw North and South sites and chose the South as the priority. The North site needs to be re looked at in view of what has happened and if the site isn't being used then the bridleways will need to be re instated.

- 7.3 TB feels that they should be put back or an alternative provided

- 7.4 EP thinks that an alternative is doubtful, especially on the old railway line as this is owned by Peel Holdings.

- 7.5 BG asked if the suspension of the bridleways on the site could be removed

- 7.6 EP advised that the bridleways were never legally closed and have now fallen into disrepair.

- 7.7 BG mentioned that the Council have blocked the entrance to the bridleway on Bolton

House Road.

- 7.8 EP will arrange a site meeting with BG and JR to look into the various issues in the area
- 7.9 EE stated that LAF members need to ask the Council to write to Peel and pursue this and users need to consider their options.

EP

8.0 **Main points from the Regional Chairs LAF meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

- 8.1 EE advised that this had been superseded by the Chairs meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Minutes of this were provided with the Agenda.
- 8.2 EE had attended Gating Orders training in Preston which was informative and showed Wigan to be better than other authorities.
- 8.3 EE discussed the letter from Duncan Graham; Regional Chair, which portrayed a gloomy outlook for the England Access Forum. However the North West Local Access Forum is still supported by the North West Natural England Office.
- 8.4 PB stated that he couldn't access the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey via the link in the letter.

- 8.5 EE will try to get the direct link from Christine Entwistle and pass to KJ to circulate with the minutes
- 8.6 BK stated that LAF's are localism in action and that they should fit in with the Governments Big Society plans as they are made up of user groups who know their area and who can feed up to Government.
- 8.7 EE stated that Natural England see the England Access Forum as a consultative body and not one to take action on their own initiative.

EE  
KJ

- 8.8 EP stated that the Localism Bill should put emphasis on the importance of LAF's
- 8.9 BK stated that there have been a number of occasions where Wigan LAF have given ideas to the Council
- 8.10 EE stated that in the case of the England Access Forum, Natural England won't listen and the group are unaware of who to contact or what options are available.
- 8.11 EP suggested the new channels of communication should be explored
- 8.12 EE stated that with regard to the EAF he agreed with EP that new channels should be explored.

9 **Milestones Statement**

- 9.1 EP stated that this time she had altered the Milestones Statement a little. EP has tried to highlight the achievements over the past 5 years including new funding opportunities

and new additions to the ROW network. The report aims to be a more upbeat and positive strategy to promote the work of the ROW team.

- 9.2 EP asked for feedback from LAF members
- 9.3 PB feels that there should be an enforcement policy
- 9.4 EP stated that there is a need to have an enforcement policy, however there isn't an enforcement officer to implement the policy.
- 9.5 EE asked if the Definitive Map had been consolidated in 2008 as stated on pg6
- 9.6 EP stated that yes it had and it was a process which she started with in 2002 when she joined Wigan Council
- 9.7 EE asked why the former County Borough Area has been delayed
- 9.8 EP stated that this is due to restricted resources, however when she has spare time EP is going through Wigan Paths on CAMS where Council agreement to dedicate has been made, preparing details for site inspections.
- 9.9 PB enquired about the Rights of Way Strategy in LTP3
- 9.10 EP stated that a Rights of Way Strategy has been written by ROW Officers in Greater Manchester which she hopes will be included in the main LTP3 document with each authority's main targets listed as appendices.
- 9.11 JR stated that the LAF need to write a positive response to the Council regarding the Milestones Statement and to whom any comment should go to.
- 9.12 EP stated that feedback would be appreciated, and a response should be addressed to Steve Normington
- 9.13 EP suggested that any comments that LAF members may have should be fed through to EE who can then send a letter on behalf of the LAF.
- 9.14 EE suggested 10<sup>th</sup> January as a deadline for him to receive comments.

## 10 **ROWIP Implementation Progress**

- 10.1 KJ informed that the second phase of the Martland Park scheme had been completed, as had three out of four sections of Wigan 91, a safe route to schools in Winstanley.
- 10.2 KJ circulated plans of the proposed multi-user route on the Leeds Liverpool Canal Towpath between Bamfurlong Bridge and Plank Lane Bridge. British Waterways staff have carried out a risk assessment of the route and have agreed to allow a multi user route – pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
- 10.3 KJ met on site with Judith Burton to discuss any issues, Judith's recommendations for the route were then passed onto British Waterways

- 10.4 KJ stated that the route shown on the offside of the canal between Smiths Bridge and the track by Chadwicks Farm that leads to Crankwood Road is currently being assessed for its suitability.
- 10.5 KJ stated that at Bamfurlong Bridge the stepped access onto the canal towpath will be widened and a ramped access with landing platforms will be created.
- 10.6 Dover Bridge will be reopened for cyclists and pedestrians, British Waterways will pay for the repairs required, and horse riders will cross over the road and rejoin the towpath at the gated access along Warrington Road.
- 10.7 At Smiths Bridge horse riders will leave the towpath, cross the access road and continue along the towpath, hopefully all users will be able to cross Smiths Bridge to the offside of the canal and head back towards Chadwicks Farm, Crankwood Road and the bridleway network, beyond this is dependent on British Waterways assessment.
- 10.8 At Gerard's Bridge all users will go underneath the bridge. In places where horse riders are required to dismount signs and mounting blocks will be installed
- 10.9 Funding for the scheme is from the North West Coalfields Communities Regeneration Programme and Groundwork has been commissioned as the Principal Contractor. Future Jobs Fund teams will be carrying out the labour and will be recruited and supervised by Groundwork. Funding will also be made available from the LTP Capital Programme.
- 10.10 BG congratulated the ROW Team on their work to achieve a route along the canal towpath
- 10.11 KJ stated that reports to dedicate the Red Rock Line between Red Rock Lane in Haigh and Chorley Road in Adlington had been drafted, and the first had been submitted to senior management for approval.
- 10.12 KJ advised that a site meeting with an Environmental Project Officer from Lancashire County Council had been arranged to discuss dedicating routes to link up to the Red Rock Line
- 10.13 KJ stated that 8 out of the 10 Health Walks produced by the ROW team are located within Greenheart and that they will be published in the Wigan Courier over the coming months, to promote the use of ROW for walking in the Borough and Greenheart.

## 11 **Any Other Business**

### 11.1 **Footpath Closure – Abram no. 32**

EP circulated a plan of the proposed closure

- 11.2 EE thanked the highways department for approaching the LAF on this matter and suggested that an alternative route could be provided around the perimeter.

11.3 **Parsonage Way**  
EP stated that approval has been granted for outline planning permission and details relating to the bridleway / multi user route will be covered in the Reserve Matters in the full application. Part of the linear park by the brook is part of the flood plan, so liaison with the Environment Agency is required.

11.4 **LDF**  
PB has emailed Dave Round regarding the Local Development Framework, to voice his concerns over the possible development of an industrial area at Land Gate.

11.5 EP asked for a copy of PB's email to be sent to her

**PB**

12 **DATE AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**

12.1 The next meeting of the Local Access Forum will be held at Wigan Town Hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2011. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided from 5.30pm with official business starting at 6.00pm.