

Minutes of the meeting of the Local Access Forum

Wednesday 17 September 2008

Leigh Town Hall



Action

1 Introduction

Edgar Ernstbrunner (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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
Eileen Rybka	Standish & District Bridleway Group
Jackie Roberts	Crankwood Bridleways Group
Barry King	Long Distance Walkers Association
Brenda Gaskell	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group

Officers:

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

2 Apologies

Vicky Bowskill	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer
Dave Allen	Long Distance Walkers Association
Edna Booth	Leigh, Atherton & Tyldesley Bridleways Group

3 Minutes of the last meeting

- 3.1 Item No. 4.1 - Natural England Presentation. EB had been in contact and had noted that on page 4 with the paragraph starting with 'EB asked for more information' that this was incorrect. EB advised that she had actually asked the following:-

Action

'How much liaison there would be between Natural England and the Equestrian Access Forum'.

EB has also advised that she did ask a couple of questions not shown in the minutes:

"When will the Stakeholder Working Group start work and what will it do?" "When will the appointments be made for the Stakeholders Working Group".

The minutes were then accepted as a true record.

4 Matters arising

4.1 Item No: 5.1 – EE asked for an update on the Claims Register. EP advised that she had been in contact with Steve Hubbard in the IT department and he will get back with an update as soon as possible.

EP

4.2 Item No: 5.2 - LAF Logo; there was a number of variations produced by Dave Green – Three logos were shown to the group and it was agreed that the bottom logo on the sheet was acceptable showing Local Access Forum in black over the logo. EE requested a copy of the logo by e-mail.

DS

4.3 Item No: 5.3 - EP circulated a photograph of the current sign at Pennington Country Park which stated the following:-

"Caution. You are now approaching a play area along a multi-user track. All drivers, horse riders and cyclists must proceed with caution at all times and give way to pedestrians."

ER was concerned that all users should be courteous and respectful to other users, not placing the emphasis on any one user group to give priority to another.

TB highlighted that the play area is split over a multi-user route which can be very busy at times and this surely is a concern.

JR also advised that the swing on the play area is too high and can agitate problems on the path when horses are passing.

JB reiterated the fact that giving way to pedestrians can cause problems because it gives them the impression that they have precedence.

EE advised that the signage should read as an example that this is a multi-user route and everyone should proceed with caution.

- 4.4 Item No: 5.4 - Leigh Guided Busway - EP had contacted GMPTE regarding the issue raised in the previous minutes. The following reply had been received from Steve Bostock Programme Manager at GMPTE:-

‘Juli Wileman has asked me to reply to you as I am now managing the Leigh-Salford-Manchester (LSM) Busway Programme.

I can appreciate that your Group/Forum members will be anxious with regard to details within the Guided Busway proposals and the consultation process and you are correct in saying that staff manning the exhibition would not be aware of details of any given scheme. However, provision of a multi-user path is one of our commitments and there are no plans to remove it from the project.

Clearly, if construction of the Guided Busway does not commence before August 2010 our powers would lapse and yes, a fresh Order would be required and we would need to go through the whole consultation/inquiry process again. You will appreciate that this is not something we are willing to contemplate. Funding for the Guided Busway and other parts of the LSM proposals is separate from the TIF bid, and therefore we are not dependent on the outcome of the consultation process or the referendum (albeit funds would be used if successful). As such, the LSM will go ahead, at least in part, whatever the outcome of the consultation/referendum process. For this reason we have confidence that we can start construction before the Order lapses in 2010.

I hope this answers your queries but if you need any further information please get in touch.’

Steve Bostock
Programme Manager - Leigh-Salford-Manchester Busway
GMPTE
2 Piccadilly Place
Manchester M1 3BG.

Direct line 0161 244 1784
Office fax 0161 244 1307
Mobile 07050 186834

JR advised that she had attended a Township meeting which mentioned that the busway was still on the cards to be completed. BG was concerned that all that was said is that it would become a cycleway.

EP advised that if anyone has concerns about the detail of the Leigh Guided Busway then they should write to Mr Bostock at the GMPTE to clarify matters.

BK was pleased that we had got something in writing but it was important that a start needed to be made by 2010 so things would have to move on.

- 4.5 Item No: 5.6 – ROWIP – EP gave an update on behalf of Vicky Bowskill in her absence with regard to the ROWIP and circulated some information.

The following items detail the main projects VB is currently working on under the ROWIP, this is not an exhaustive list but covers the main points.

DMMOs

Of the 27 claims we have on file 8 scored highly when measured against the objectives of the ROWIP and have been prioritised to be dealt with under the ROWIP. They are;

Standish – Old Line
Standish – A49 link to Standish Old Line
Standish – 60 & 63
Standish – 49
Standish – 57
Ashton – Willow Grove to Lily Street
Hindley – Railway Street
Leigh – 127, 130, 149, 148 & 147

Proposed Bridleway Routes in the South West of the Borough.

A map showing the routes mentioned above along with the draft leaflet for landowners was circulated to the group.

As identified in the ROWIP there is a particular lack of bridleway provision in the south west of the borough which needs to be addressed. Following meetings with representatives from various bridleway groups VB has identified a number of routes that are a priority for being upgraded to definitive bridleway status, these are shown in bold on the plan.

These are provisional desire lines at this stage and not set in stone, I have tried to keep on council land as far as possible to facilitate successful dedications, however there are also sections that cross private land and the outcome of these will depend very much on the individual landowners.

VB is also aware that there are many other routes that users consider a priority, however we have to start somewhere and this is a starting point that can be built on in the future, working to create a connected bridleway network. These routes would effectively link Pennington Country Park, Bickershaw North, Three Sisters, Wigan Flashes, Low Hall Park, Amberswood Common, the Whelley Loop, Top Lock and Haigh Hall Country Park.

Public Rights of Way: A Guide for Landowners/Occupiers

A draft leaflet has been written giving guidance to landowners/occupiers of land crossed by public rights of way. Many of the problems encountered on rights of way crossing private land come from misunderstandings of the law relating to rights of way and this leaflet is designed to address that. A copy was provided for comment, please let VB have any feedback by **Wednesday 8th October**.

ALL

Website Updates

The information page relating to the ROWIP and an extended edition of the guidance notes for landowners/occupiers has been prepared and will be published on the Rights of Way web pages in due course. The Health Walk series has also now been added to the website.

If you would like to discuss these or other items VB's contact details are as follows:

ALL

Vicky Bowskill
Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer
01942 488010
v.bowskill@wigan.gov.uk

EE thanked VB for the updates on the ROWIP.

BK mentioned that some of the routes close to the Dover Lock area are flooded and impassable and the footpaths close to Hindley Prison are too narrow to become usable routes. These issues would have to be addressed before any attempt to use them as a multi-user route.

	Action
<p>EP advised that at this preliminary stage we just need to identify routes that would help link other routes with consultation with the User Groups. VB will be attending future LAF meetings to discuss the ROWIP and any other issues that might be of concern.</p>	
<p>JP asked if there was any update on the Railway Street claim in Hindley as planning permission has been refused. JP also stated that he had appealed against the decision.</p>	
<p>EP advised that she had written to Network Rail regarding this claimed route and we are currently awaiting a reply.</p>	EP
<p>EE asked if the Railway Street claim is now at the top of the list due to its importance as a route. EP advised that it is still way down the list to be addressed as there are other claims above this.</p>	
<p>EE stated that he will write to the Chief Executive regarding claims register in due course.</p>	EE
<p>4.6 Item No: 5.7 – Greenheart – JR advised that she had been at a meeting which discussed Greenheart and was advised that the Steering Group look into any issues surrounding this project. JR also noted that Joanne Harrop is still working on Greenheart although funding had been due to run out for the rest.</p>	
<p>JR advised that someone from the LAF or HUG should attend the Steering Group meeting to find out what is happening because of all the conflicting reports.</p>	
<p>TB advised that he has been involved with the Steering Group but had not received any mail for a while. TB will endeavour to contact the Group to see what is happening with Greenheart.</p>	
<p>EP will also speak with Gary Harold for more information and also organise a Greenheart Presentation to clarify the specific management, aims, the make up of the Steering Group, consultation process and how to become a member.</p>	EP
<p>5 English Access Forum/NW Regional LAF'S</p>	
<p>EE advised that he had attended the first meeting of the English Access Forum a few months ago. A letter was circulated from Duncan Graham the Chair of Cumbria LAF. EE explained that there were a number of problems that arose. One of the issues was the fact that Natural England wanted to take control of the forum. Duncan Graham has been in discussions with Natural England and this seems to have been sorted out.</p>	

	Action
Natural England advised that there was only limited funding for the North West Regional LAF. Wigan LAF is part of the North West Regional LAF structure and they will be monitoring each LAF to find out its effectiveness.	
EE raised the issue of LAF Annual reports and that this will be raised at the first North West Regional meeting to be held in October. Minutes will be available in due course. The next English Access Forum meeting will take place on the 23 September 2008. EE will give future updates to the LAF.	EE
6 Gating Orders	
6.1 Item No. 5.5 - Alley Gates - EP advised that she has spoken with our Legal Department and they are of the opinion that LAF members are on the consultation list, however it may be that they are listed as representing their particular user group. EP asked anyone if they wanted to be put on the list. EP also advised that it would be useful to put Wigan Local Access Forum in your address details.	ALL
BK requested to be put on the consultation list.	EP
EE asked if a plan of the overall areas to be gated has been completed as mentioned at the previous meeting. EP advised that it would be unlikely to get such a plan at this time and have had no update from Neighbourhood Services.	
DS gave contact list of all the heads of departments to EE as requested.	
7 LAF consultation on major network changes	
7.1 EE advised that he has objected to the Public Path Diversion Order of Haigh footpath No:18 (part) on behalf of the LAF.	
EE advised that the objections were made on technicalities as well as the route itself at this stage, and that the route should be for the use of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. EE asked the LAF to endorse his objections and they agreed.	
TB stated that if the footpath be made into a bridleway and surfaced appropriately then he would have no objections to the diversion. EE would be in favour of this if this was forthcoming.	

BK confirmed that he was in support of the objections to the diversion. The Long Distance Walkers association have used this route for a long time and it is a very good route. Unless the diversion is done correctly with an appropriate surface then the diversion route, in places, would be water logged and impassable to some users.

EP explained that there were a number of objections to this order, so there would be discussions with legal in due course.

EP

There was some concern regarding receiving details of orders and EP said she would speak to IT colleagues and see if it was possible to have Public Path Orders put on the Right of Way website.

8 Definitive Map and Statements

- 8.1 EP advised that she has now received confirmation from Legal that there is no copyright issue with regard to photocopying the statements.

There are approximately 200 pages of Definitive Statements and the Council currently charges 18p per A3 sheet; £36 + officer time.

Once the LEMO's are completed then computerised sheets will be generated, at the moment these are done by producing a report for each individual PROW: approximately 1300 @ 10p per A4 Sheet – However the software designers for the CAMS system have confirmed that with the existing version of the software, a report cannot be printed off which highlights all statement entries. We have received an assurance that in the latest upgrade this will be possible and it will be set up on our system when we have the upgrade later in the year.

PB wanted to advise that the computerised plans sent to the anomalies Working Group by DS would be perfect for use as a Definitive Map.

DS explained that the same system, Countryside Access Management System, would be used to create the mapping for the updated Definitive Map once it is complete.

9 **Any other business**

Action

- 9.1 LAF Membership - EP advised that as a consequence of VB's remit to increase membership of the LAF, it has come to our attention that for the majority of LAF members' renewals are due along with nominations for a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Brenda Gaskell – up April 2009
Andy Glover – up February 2009

EP also advised that Barry King, who expressed membership for one year from January 2008, expires in January 2009.

DS circulated a form for group members to fill in to continue their membership and to nominate a Chair and Vice Chair for the meetings.

JP advised that he would be in favour of EE to continue as Chair as he is involved with the English Access Forum and the North West Regional LAF Forum.

EE would accept to be Chair if no one else wanted to be nominated. The group agreed that EE be nominated as Chair.

JP suggested that there is an annual review of the Chair and Vice Chair positions.

ALL

EP to put this issue on the agenda for the next meeting and anyone who has not handed in their forms at this meeting can they be returned by Wednesday 8 October 2008.

ALL

- 9.2 EP advised the group that there will be a presentation at the Highway User Group on the 22 October 2008 on the Flood alleviation scheme to be carried out on the River Douglas at Coppull Lane, Wigan.

- 9.3 BK was concerned about the signage for the public footpath and Whelley Loop at the Strangeways Public House on Liverpool Road Hindley. One sign is very large and the Public footpath sign is very small and can be very confusing to users. BK suggested that there should be some kind of standard shape and size for signage and that all departments should consult on this.

EP confirmed that VB will be setting up an Officer Steering Group for the ROWIP. This was an issue that could be put on the agenda.

VB

9.4 JB had noted that an article in the Wigan Observer about 2 weeks ago which showed new plans for regeneration at Haigh Hall and wanted to know if there was to be a bridleway created through the area as part of this scheme?

EP advised that no information had been forthcoming on this and will endeavour to contact Stuart Murray, Executive Director of Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust to find out more information.

Action

EP

10 Date and venue of next meeting

10.1 The next meeting will be held at Wigan Town Hall on Wednesday the 3 December 2008. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided from 6.00pm with official business starting at 6.30pm.