

FLINTSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
MONDAY, 20TH JANUARY 2014

Minutes of the fiftieth meeting of the Flintshire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Mold on Monday 20th January 2014.

PRESENT: Dr. J. Rosenfeld (Chair)

Mrs. A.J. Chamberlain, Mrs. V. Darby, Mr. B. Harrison, Mr. N.J. Howell, Mr. D.M. Hýtch, Mr. M.W. Moriarty, Mr. P.J. Richards, Mr. E.G. Williams and Miss J.O. Williams.

APOLOGY: Mr. H. White.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. D.M. Davies, Principal Solicitor, Flintshire County Council and Secretary to the Forum; Mr. G. Hughes, Regulatory Services Manager; Mr. P. Mitchell, Natural Resources Wales; and Miss. S. Thomas, Committee Officer.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the forty ninth meeting of the Forum held on 30th September 2013 had been previously circulated to members.

Members expressed their appreciation at the prompt circulation of the draft minutes following the meeting.

Matters Arising

Minute Number 1 - Matters arising from previous minutes - Wales Coastal Access Improvement Plan

The Chair said that the issue of lack of Welsh Government (WG) funding had been raised regularly at the Local Access Forum Chairs' meetings. Although a grant was to be made available next year in relation to the Coastal Path, the amount was not yet known.

The Chair reported that a Green Paper on access and green spaces was due out for consultation.

Minute Number 1 - Matters arising from previous minutes - Progress Report on Cycling Provision in Flintshire

Mr. Garry Hughes, Regulatory Services Manager, advised that this matter was currently in the hands of the Bridges Section of the Trunk Roads Agency who were awaiting an instruction from WG to provide a specification of the work needed to the bridge.

Minute Number 5 - Destination Management Group

The Secretary explained that following agreement on the Forum representatives at the Destination Flintshire partnership meetings, it had been established that Mr. Neville Howell and Miss Janet Williams had originally been appointed as representative and substitute respectively on the Council's Destination Management Steering Group at the Forum meeting on 15th April 2013. The Chair proposed that this original arrangement be confirmed, which was endorsed by the Forum.

It was agreed that the Secretary would confirm to the County Council the decision that Mr. Howell would be the Forum's representative on the Destination Management Steering Group, with Miss Williams acting as substitute.

Minute Number 6 - Natural Resources Wales Review of Local Access Forum Working Practices

The Chair said that he would report back to the Forum on this matter following discussion at the next meeting of the Local Access Forum Chairs' meeting.

The Chair to report back at the next meeting.

Minute Number 8 - Possible Future Agenda Items

Presentation of Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) live - Mr. Hughes advised that the system was set to become live within the next two weeks and that he would notify the Secretary of the actual date. The Chair suggested that the Forum receive a presentation at an appropriate time when the system was fully operational.

In response to the suggestion that this might generate interest from other bodies such as town and community councils, the Secretary advised that the presentation would be arranged for Forum members only for that one item. The Chair pointed out that anyone else could seek their own presentation. Following discussion, it was agreed that the presentation would be arranged for 2 p.m. on a Monday afternoon on a date to be agreed.

Planning consultation regarding Aberdo Quarry, Brynford - the Chair sought views on a draft response which he had prepared. It was agreed that, subject to conditions proposed to be attached to the permission, the Forum would not oppose the application.

It was agreed that Mr. Hughes would liaise with the Secretary on a suitable date for the CAMS presentation to the Forum (at 2 p.m. on a Monday). The Secretary to formalise the draft response in relation to the Aberdo Quarry application.

2. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Mr. Hughes made available copies of the Annual Report and agreed to provide the Secretary with an electronic version for circulation.

He referred to previous discussions regarding a possible link between Mold and Argoed, parallel to the Mold Bypass, and was pleased to report that the Trunk Roads Agency had agreed to the use of the embankment to site the missing link on the basis that this was properly maintained. Mr. Hughes confirmed that the route would be maintained by the County Council, although the costs were subject to negotiation. When asked about the formation of a voluntary group to assist, he agreed to liaise with Jon Hill, Footpaths Inspector, to assess what was required. The Chair thanked Mr. Hughes for his perseverance on this matter.

Mr. Hughes made available documents detailing progress on Definitive Map work, including a list of places and footpath numbers.

Referring to discussion at the previous meeting where Mr. Kevin Sutton, Highways Strategy Manager, had agreed to confirm the date of the next meeting of the ROWIP Working Group and to circulate the minutes to the members concerned, Miss Williams asked if a copy could also be shared with the Forum. The Chair agreed but pointed out that the Working Group was not part of the Forum and therefore not required to report back. Mr. Hughes agreed to pass the request on to Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Howell reflected on previous discussions at the Working Group where it had been hoped that Mr. Sutton would formulate proposals regarding the interface between the Group and the Forum. Whilst Mrs. Sally Chamberlain recognised the impact on officer time, she referred to concerns about the lack of regular meetings and availability of minutes for the Working Group. Mr. Hughes felt that this was not a regular problem but agreed to liaise with Mr. Sutton. Mr. John Richards agreed that the minutes would be useful and that a thorough review of meeting arrangements might be required. The Chair said that monitoring the ROWIP was a key role of the Forum and hoped that Mr. Sutton would take on board the concerns regarding the effectiveness of meetings.

It was agreed that Mr. Garry Hughes would e-mail the Annual Report to the Secretary and report back to Mr. Sutton the other issues raised by the Forum. The Chair would write to the Director of Environment inviting a discussion about the future relationship of the Forum and the County Council's Working Groups.

3. PROGRESS REPORT ON CYCLING PROVISION IN FLINTSHIRE

Mr. Hughes advised that construction of phase 1 of the cycleway between Sandycroft and Airbus was nearing completion and would be available for use after this week.

The continued success of the Burton Point scheme was reported, with monthly usage figures currently averaging 3,000 per week in line with expectations for this time of year.

Mrs. Vera Darby referred to a website being used by some cyclists to record their speed along the route. Mr. Hughes responded that he believed that issue related to the cycleway along the Dee. Mr. David Hýtch was aware that some work had been carried out on that route to discourage speed riding.

Mrs. Chamberlain commented on the Talacre to Ffynnongroyw scheme which was designated for cyclists and walkers, and expressed her disappointment that this would not be open to equine use, as she considered that it could quite easily be adapted for such use. The Chair pointed out that funding might include restrictions on usage of some routes.

Mr. Hýtch spoke of the need to be creative so that as many routes as possible could be “multi-use” to maximise their benefit. He added that, whilst the contributions from officers at meetings was much appreciated, it was unfortunate that an update had not been made available in response to the three issues raised at the previous meeting.

Mr. Hýtch went on to say that a more proactive overview was required on planning to ensure that the right infrastructure was in place to promote Flintshire. He cited as examples the promotion of greenway routes, although he acknowledged that the chances at the moment of their coming to fruition were not good; the overbridge at Northop for the route from Mold to Flint where progress had been marginal; and use of the Dee Estuary to fill in the gaps to create a link for a route which would then run all the way to Holyhead.

The Chair agreed that a long-term strategic view on the route was required and suggested that a short written update be sought from Mr. Sutton regarding the three issues arising from the previous meeting to which Mr. Hýtch had referred. The Secretary suggested that he write to the Director of Environment to relay the concerns about the incomplete route along the Estuary and to seek a formal response regarding the aspirations of the County Council to complete the route.

Miss Williams commented that motorcyclists were prevented from using restricted byways and called for the cycle route to be designated as such. She felt that the County Council needed to give greater consideration to the provision of routes for carriage drivers.

In relation to the Talacre to Ffynnongroyw scheme, Mrs. Darby was disappointed that, despite support from two local landowners to allowing a section of the public footpath to be used by horse riders, County Council officers had refused on the basis that the path was not wide enough and with no provision for a Pegasus crossing on the A548.

Following a suggestion by Mr. Howell that officers provide a brief written report in response to requests for updates prior to each meeting, whilst noting the point made, the Chair felt that the current practice of a verbal update was more timely and beneficial to all.

In response to a query raised by Mr. Howell regarding the use of mobility scooters and wheelchairs on multi-access routes, the Secretary advised that restrictions were in place and that generally most, but not all, disability scooters were allowed access. Mr. Bryan Harrison said that motorised wheelchairs were not allowed access.

The Forum noted the position and it was agreed that the Secretary would contact the Director of Environment to relay the concerns raised and to seek a formal response on the County Council's aspirations to complete the route along the Dee Estuary.

4. ROWIP EQUINE SUB-GROUP

Mrs. Darby raised concerns about the lack of availability of agendas and minutes of the Sub-Group and reported that, following the previous meeting, she had received notification from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) of £12,000 allocated for potential equine development projects along the Coastal Path and within the coastal zone. Despite making enquiries, she had been unable to ascertain any detail about plans to spend this money. Following comments made by members of the Forum, the Secretary agreed to write to the Director of Environment for clarification. Mr. Paul Mitchell of NRW said it was his understanding that the coastal access funding was to be made available for the 2014/15 financial year. Miss Williams said that she would be disappointed if the funding was targeted only at horseriders.

Mrs. Chamberlain expressed her appreciation to County Council officers regarding the provisions of the new Pegasus crossing near Gronant which was being well used and was much appreciated.

It was agreed that the Secretary would contact the Acting Head of Countryside Services for clarification on the funding to be made available from NRW.

5. ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2013 AND CONSULTATION ON WHERE THE ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2013 WILL APPLY WITHIN WALES

Mr. Sutton had been unable to attend the meeting and so was unable to make a presentation about the 2013 Act. However, a copy of the consultation document issued on 6th November 2013 had been circulated with the agenda. The Chair briefly summarised the Act's main provisions and then sought the Forum's views as to whether or not the list of built-up areas in Flintshire was complete and logical, with a final response to be submitted to WG by 28th January 2014.

In response to a comment from Mr. Richards about the need for town and community councils to be consulted, the Chair pointed out that the consultation was a national exercise in which any organisation could contribute, and that the documents were publicly available on the WG website. The Secretary added that the Forum had not been approached directly to take part in the consultation exercise and that he had accessed the documents online.

A number of views were expressed by members of the Forum:

- Buckley should be changed to “Buckley - Mynydd Isa – Mold”;
- No reference in the document to Saltney or Hawarden;
- There was a question as to how cross-border areas, such as Caergwrle, would be dealt with by Councils;
- Sections should be defined by town/community council area;
- Need to consider locations of individuals in relation to their employers and services - suggest consultation with major industries and employers in Flintshire;
- Consideration of future plans such as the Northern Gateway site at the former RAF Sealand.

It was agreed that the Chair would liaise outside the meeting with Messrs. Harrison and Howell to prepare a response to the consultation, which the Secretary would then provide to the membership.

It was agreed that the Chair, Messrs. Harrison and Howell would arrange to meet to agree a response to the consultation which would then be shared with the Forum.

6. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Howell advised that Mr. Howard White had e-mailed the Chair regarding the missing link between the Coastal Path and Offa's Dyke. Mr. Hughes confirmed that funding had been provided in order to identify the appropriate link.

In response to comments regarding the Countryside Services budget, the Chair explained the intention for the Acting Head to attend the next meeting in April when he would be in a position to clarify what budgetary provision might be available for projects in the next financial year.

Mr. Mike Moriarty asked about funding for repairs to the Coastal Path following the recent storms. Mr. Hughes confirmed that funding was available from NRW.

Following the earlier discussion, Mr. Richards suggested a future agenda item on a formal review of Sub-Groups. The Chair said that, as the Sub-Groups were set up by the County Council, officers could be invited for their views on how to proceed. The Secretary suggested writing to the Director of Environment to ascertain his views.

It was noted that Tom Woodall would report to the next meeting regarding future projects and it was agreed that the Secretary would write to the Director of Environment regarding the future management of the collaboration between the Forum and the Sub-Groups.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Copies of the Countryside Code and specific user code leaflets, which had been developed by NRW, were circulated by the Chair.

Mr. Hughes mentioned that he had attended a presentation at the end of the previous year concerning protecting public rights of way and putting de-regulation into practice. Whilst the advice only applied to England at present, he felt that members of the Forum might find the information of interest.

Mr. Hughes went on to report on a statement issued by Welsh Government which meant that from 1st April 2014, there would be no Regional Transport Plan funding made available to County Councils. This would be replaced by a single Transport Plan for the whole of Wales and individual Councils would be expected to submit bids within that document.

Miss Williams circulated copies of promotional leaflets on carriage driving routes which had been produced with funding from Cadwyn Clwyd. This was the first leaflet of its kind in Wales. Miss Williams was pleased to report on positive discussions with the Highways Section about the erection of carriage driving signs along some of the routes.

The Forum noted the various matter.

8. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the forthcoming Forum meetings were scheduled for:-

Monday 7th April 2014
Monday 7th July 2014
Monday 6th October 2014
(all meetings to start at 2 p.m.)

9. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and finished at 4.00pm.

.....
Chair