



FLAF07



FLINTSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes - 13th January 2025

Wepre Park

Members – Julian Pellatt (Chair), Huw Morgan, Councillor Dave Evans, John Holiday, Shirley Fermor

Officers in Attendance - Tom Woodall, Derrick Charlton, Natalie Davies, Adrian Hibbert, Jon Hill, Stuart Jones.

Apologies – Marjorie Thomson, Hannah Arndt (AONB observer), Jeff Shone.

1/ Welcome -

The Chair welcomed everyone to the 7th meeting of the LAF. Apologies were received.

2/ Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting 16th September 2024 were agreed as written.

a. Matters Arising

TW informed the forum that Sarah Hampson had decided to resign from the group. She reflected that work commitments make it difficult for her to find time to attend but also, she has felt that the forum is not considering equine issues enough. Attempts were made by the Chair and Secretary to reconsider her decision however she was not persuaded to stay.

British Horse Society has been approached to recommend any suitable local contact who may consider joining the forum.

3/ Access Barrier Update

TW summarised the background to this item and referred members to the previous discussion on the matter in 2023.

Over 2024, FCC commissioned a feasibility study looking at options for improving accessibility on the Wales Coast Path. Working together with North Wales Police, local user and communities, FCC have decided to remove all A-frame barriers and have already actioned the removal between Saltney and Connah's Quay dock.



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The remaining A-frames will be removed over the course of this year and to continue to review and monitor the effect. There has already been reports of motorbikes on the Saltney section.

There are still calls from some campaign groups to remove **all** barriers (inc. chicane style). These barriers were installed as part of the cycle network to safely manage cyclists, predominantly on access points to the highway. Streetscene & Transportation are currently reviewing their need and use.

JP – Good to hear of effective liaison between police and FCC

JH – New users are delighted they can now use the routes. Sustrans are encouraging public to report incidents to the police so they can keep a log.

JP – Can notices be places at on routes asking users to notify police of incidents?

TW – Research shows that placing eyes on notices can help reduce antisocial behaviour. Connah's Quay dock is looking to install CCTV as a deterrent.

HM – If so many people report incidents, will A-frames be reinstalled?

TW – If there is a safety concern, FCC may have to consider options.

DE – Good work removing A-frames to date. Chicanes are needed for safety reasons. Are there timeframes for the removal of the rest of the A-frames?

TW – in the next financial year 25/26

JP – Good that response by council, there is no overall solution, it is a question of balance. Everyone involved, police etc. need to stay on board.

4/ Budget update

TW provided an update on the recent work to establish a balanced FCC budget for 2025/26 and its impact on the access team.

The Access & Natural Environment Service was asked to look at options to contribute towards reducing the overall predicted budget gap. Areas of focus looked as staffing and vacancies, fees, charges and income, reduction in revenue budgets. The aim was to look at around a 10% reduction.

Service review is complete and will remain unchanged, retaining front line.

To increase income will be a review of parking charges at Wepre.

Over the past few years, the Access budget has been retained but unfortunately will now have to be considered with a proposal to reduce the budget from £110k by £14k.



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It is considered a low risk as we receive AIG funding which has been secured for the next 2 years and we will continue to work to find additional external funding.

JP – Well done for protecting budget as it is. Do you have a full cost recovery policy for works carried out in Access, e.g. Diversions etc.?

TW - Yes but it's not consistent. Fees are set and rise with inflation each year. As each case is different it will cost us more to find an accurate costing so set fees are used.

SJ – Further detailed the costings and outgoings.

JH – We should be able to emphasise that funding in this area will help the public health at large.

HM – NHS Bristol has done a study and found that for every £1 spent on access it has saved the NHS £17.

DE – Regarding Wepre car park charges, will the income come back into the park?

TW – Under the legislation, there are only specific areas of the council that revenue from car parks can be used on, one of these is a deficit in funds, however it is expected that the park will benefit from the introduction.

SF – Will street parking become an issue?

TW – A traffic regulation order will also come into force to restrict parking in the vicinity of the park entrance to manage the knock-on effects.

DE & HM – What about Greenfield?

TW – That is a more complex model. They are smaller car parks, and they are less used. The area is more community orientated, and the Trust require an income for the valley so that will be left as it is.

SF – Loggerheads has an annual fee, will there be similar?

TW – Yes, to start it will be £50 for the year to park at Wepre alone, no other sites.

5/ Access Service Update

a. Access Improvement Grant Quarter 2 works report

DC – We have had confirmation of a further two years funding, although not the detailed amount.

Pictures of improvements were shown, eg. Kissing gates and board walks.

JH – KGs aren't suitable for all.



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JP – Yes but they are better than a stile, there is a broad spectrum of disabilities and they allow more access for some.

TW – We also need to consider landowner, terrain and livestock etc. there is a flow chart of considerations that has been shown to the group before.

JP – Reasonable consideration should be given but it is not mandatory.

Group discussed specific locations on images.

b. Network Issues Quarter 2 statistics

SJ Gave a summary of the data. Improving access for all types of user. We're chipping away at longstanding issues.

The Footpath Inspectors and their contractors are doing a great job.

JP – gave thanks to the Officers, great effort with a limited budget.

Action – SJ to distribute data summary

6/ Review of chair

TW – We are mid-term of a three-year LAF and timely to consider the position of the Chair. There is no definition on how long someone can serve, one LAF is considering a rolling chair for each meeting, some have had a set chair for decades. FCC would prefer one chair for the set term to maintain stability, but it is the forums decision.

JP – Wouldn't support a rolling chair but it is for the forum to decide.

HM – Asked JP if he would be happy to continue.

JP – Yes.

SF – Why is there not many members at the meeting today?

TW – Maybe because it is the winter? Neville Howell and Sarah Hampson are the only resignations. We have 11 members so that is ok. It's a challenge finding the right day to hold a forum on. September was almost a full house. DC has asked farming union for representation.

DE – Would prefer a consistent chair throughout the term and would like JP to continue.

SF – Agreed



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JH – Agreed.

JP to remain chair of forum.

7/ AOB

DE asked regard recent flooding issues and whether there was any adverse effect on the network

DC – WG have also asked for details of any issues arising from the storms. Generally issues include fallen trees and surfaces washed away.

DE – Do we have money to sort the issues? Is there a list?

Action – DC to distribute list compiled for WG

JP raised a point regarding the proposal for a new National Park and highlighted comments from the recent LAF Chairs joint meeting – ‘No need for another layer, further dilution of reduced resources. It causes additional costs and more bureaucracy’.

TW – FCC has formally debated the proposal following the recent consultation. Although the boundary aligns with the current AONB area in Flintshire, members were not in support on the basis that there is not enough information to inform of financial, governance and planning aspects. Until there is more detail, FCC cannot support it.

JH – Who suggested it in the first place?

TW – WG. In the Labour manifesto.

JH – I thought it would provide environmental protection.

TW – Landscape is already protected by AONB.

HM – LAF should be in support BUT NRW engagement events couldn't answer questions. There are 6 documents, each with hundreds of pages, but it doesn't give the answers.

JP – There was a sceptical view amongst LAF chairs at the joint meeting. Something we need to watch and keep up to date on.

JP suggested that there should be some publicity around the removal of A frame barriers and that the LAF welcome the progress made to date and that the chair encourages it's use for health benefits?



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TW suggested that it maybe better to wait until the remaining a frame are being removed and to focus on a press release at the start of spring to highlight the positive benefits of the access to the countryside and promote positive behaviors. It could be aligned with the launch of the booklet.

HM – Does the LAF have the means to do this? We don't have a Facebook page.

TW – It can go on the FCC countryside pages as a release from the forum.

JP – Agreed, it can be through FCC.

SF – It will highlight that there is a forum and might encourage new members to join.

Action – TW to coordinate a spring press release.

There being no other business the meeting closed before 12pm.

The next meetings due - 7th April 2025 at Wepre