

**Telford & Wrekin Local Access Forum**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 12pm**  
**Via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Naomi Wrighton (NW), Katrina Baker (KB), Alex Ford (AF), David Hopkins (DH), Malcolm Skelton (MS), Fiona Stevenson (FS), Carolyn Healy (CH), Amber Bicheno (AB), Gabriella Parkes (GP)

**In Attendance:** Andrew Careless (Senior Rights of Way Officer) (AC), Gemma Crossley (Rights of Way Officer) (GC), Katie Wilde (Development Management) (KW) and Phoebe Barnett (Legal Assistant) (PB)

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence:**

Richard Spencer-Cotton.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **3. Introduction**

Andrew Careless, Senior Rights of Way Officer, TWC, informed the meeting that the previous Chairman, Anthony Francis Jones, had resigned from the LAF.

Unfortunately, Fee Stevenson had also offered her resignation before the meeting.

It has been some months since the last LAF meeting and this is now an opportunity to look at the Forum and its role into the future.

Secretarial services for LAF have moved from Democratic Services and we welcome Katie Wilde to the role. KW will be taking the Minutes and providing the Agendas for future meetings.

#### **4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor C Healy and seconded by Naomi Wrighton that Katrina Baker be Chairman, all were in favour and thus it was

**RESOLVED that Katrina Baker be elected as Chairman**

It was proposed by Katrina Baker and seconded by Councillor Healy, all were in favour and thus it was

**RESOLVED that Gabriella Parkes be elected as Vice Chairman.**

KB and GP thanked everyone for their support.

#### **5. Date for Next Annual General Meeting**

A discussion regarding future meetings will take place at the end of the meeting.

## **LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

### **1. Thanks and Appreciation**

KB recorded a vote of thanks to the retiring Chairman. Anthony had been a member of the Forum for some time and had led it as the Chairman with commitment and dedication. Sincere thanks and much appreciation were also recorded to Fee Stevenson.

Their knowledge and experience will be missed and it is hoped that they will keep in touch.

The Local Access Forum can be a useful way of combining Rights of Way with Access and other areas of work relating to transport and travel. This is an ideal opportunity to look at the role of the Forum into the future.

### **2. Update from the Rights of Way Team**

Additional funding provided by the Council over the last 3 years – 300k to improve the RoW network within the Borough. A huge number of jobs had taken place into 3 figures which have ranged from signposting to major construction of surface paths. Picked a few examples for a presentation to show the breadth of work done covering a number of areas, showing the value of funding spent. Balance across all users being improved over Footpaths to Restricted Byways.

- Chetwynd RB reopening - was virtually impassable for 25 years+, very baldy overgrown, major RoW and forms part of strategic connection with RoWs in North Telford, Shropshire and Staffordshire, 1km of lane blocked by overgrowth, major project over weeks to clear
- Bolas Bridge replacement - important strategic link in network for Waters Upton and adjoining parishes crossing River Meese, number of other footbridges lined up in area to be refurbished
- Limekiln Woods steps - key link for routes such as T50 and Hutchinson Way as well as themed walks promoted by Council and partner organisations, repair old steps in disrepair and tidy up boardwalk crossing water
- Newport Canal towpath ramp and lock - link from Edgmond to Newport, provides sustainable transport link for developments leading into town, heavily used, key is access for less abled/disabled users, contribution from Newport Town Council funded work, steps replaced with ramps and footpath improved
- Granville Country Park access - ongoing, only phase 1, money from s106 for development, improve main route through and some primary accesses into park, some promotional work to be done in house but significant improvements made for accessibility, LNR and well used recreational area

### **3. DMMO Applications**

GC informed the meeting that of the 125 applications 120 had now been determined and decisions had been sent out. Work to create the orders has started and there are currently 4 out to consultation now. 10 have been made, with two receiving objections so information on these will be sent to the Secretary of State to make the decision. It is thought to do a few each week and keep continuity.

KB responded that the work involved is appreciated and it is understood that this is a big task, so their commitment and perseverance is appreciated.

#### **4. Funding**

CH explained that the core funding for 2024/25 would still be available and that TWC is trying to utilise other sources of funding, such as S106 contributions etc. to ensure that access to green spaces is available for recreational benefits. Partnerships with town and parish councils is also important - this is not just about money but also about people – CH thanked all members for the efforts in local areas, and explained that TWC is looking at how to develop more community engagement and parish path partnerships in order to stretch the limited resources further.

KB thanked TWC for the additional £300,000 funding available during the last year and congratulated officers on the schemes that it has helped to complete. Consideration can be given as to how we could enhance the LAF in order to be aware of other funding opportunities and partnerships to assist the work across the Borough?

AF asked AC about the HS2 windfall –  
We have no answers at the moment but we can investigate this. CH confirmed that whilst the amount is known, how it will work to include Rights of Way is not yet known.

#### **5. Members**

All Members had an opportunity to introduce themselves and their organisations (if applicable)

MS – Wellington Walkers are Welcome (WWW)

Encourage Wellington as centre for walking, reasonably active path maintenance team, deal with problems within a 3 mile radius, varying from clearing to litter picking; keep tabs on things beyond control and abilities; knowing what's going on in other areas of Telford would be helpful.

Been involved in T50 with establishing the 23 Coronation walks, there are couple of waymarking posts left to install.

Involved in local plan consultation to submit recommendations or concerns.

AC responded in that the LAF has a statutory duty to be consulted on some planning and development matters. This can include significant planning applications and should have included the Draft Local Plan Consultation.

It was agreed that a small planning sub-group be created to look at significant planning applications. This will be discussed with Val Hulme, Head of Planning & Development, in order that this can be a useful part of the statutory consultation process.

KB will contact the Strategic Planning Team to enquire how LAF can be included in the future Local Plan Consultation stages and to invite a representative to attend the next LAF meeting.

AB – Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

Concerned with matters around Ironbridge. They take reports directly from members of public (including things not on SGCT land) and confirmed it would be useful to know who owns surrounding land.

DH

Dave was a councillor and remains interested in local area. He has concerns around roads and pedestrians and cyclists, especially at the roundabout near to Madeley Court School with lots of students crossing, route with lots of use, concerned about safety and doesn't seem to be focus on active travel from one rural area to another through more residential areas.

KB confirmed that the LAF can be conduit that links relevant organisations, departments and people - even if not a LAF matter? We will look at the terms of reference, the role for LAF is possibly bigger than currently. We will look at how other authorities make LAF successful.

CH reassured members that TWC is doing work around the Madeley Court Island which will deal with the issues raised, This work will be linked to the power station development as it is acknowledged that there will be additional traffic and this is an opportunity to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, too.

CH - someone from Active Travel team could be member of LAF?

GP – A member of Tibberton Parish Council and works for Harper Adams University. From footpath and bridleway point of view and apply to cyclists too, PC concern seen new development plan but don't feel ROW was issue there, could review from LAF point of view? Provide comments as group? From Newport point of view seen a lot of new developments and pedestrian access doesn't seem to be linked or considered. If group had way of commenting on developments at preplanning phase then would improve developments from pedestrian point of view.

NW – Friends of T50 - Coronation Walks

There hasn't been a meeting of the LAF for a while and we missed an opportunity to comment on the Draft Local Plan.

The 23 Coronation Walks are available and proving popular. Friends of T50 are involved in Telford Walk Week. Working with TWC and SGCT and Gorge Museums, there will be other activities and there will be walk leader training available for volunteers.

KB responded in that we are all busy people so it is important that our meetings are useful and we feel that we get something out of them for them to be worthwhile. We will continue to support the officer team and together we will make difference for local communities.

AF – Sustainable Travel Planner, NHS

From PRH point of view there are 3,500 staff, but cyclist numbers are low compared to Shrewsbury. A benchmark should be 15 cyclists a day. We have seen an uplift with the Silkin Way improvements and signage. There were 30 enquiries last year about cycling to work. NHS is providing another cycle shelter at PRH and will be taking part in the national event called Big Green Week (10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June) - sustainable travel and biodiversity. There are 4 or 5 walking routes within 20 minutes around the hospital site including Apley Woods any volunteers that could lead staff on lunch time walks would be appreciated.

MS thought that WWW may be able to assist.

AF has commented on the new proposed train service from Wrexham to London (which misses out Wellington station) this will affect staff.

It would be good to have alternative routes which are signposted to encourage walking to work as well as for exercise.

## 6. Terms of Reference

KB introduced the Terms of Reference and confirmed that now is a good time to revisit them to ensure that they meet the needs of the LAF in order that we can support communities and encourage working together to improve rights of way and consider other access matters across the Borough.

A copy of the current ToFR will be circulated with the Minutes and members are asked to take a look at them as this will be included on the next Agenda for consideration.

## 7. Date of the next meeting

10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

11am

On Microsoft Teams

Face to face meetings may be considered in the future.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their important contributions to a successful meeting and closed the meeting at 1.30pm

Chairman: ..... *KM15024* .....

Date: ..... *10/4/24* .....