



FLAF06



FLINTSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes - 16th September 2024

Wepre Park

Members – Julian Pellatt, Huw Morgan, Ian Gibbons, Councilor Dave Evans, Alan Neale, Marjorie Thomson, Nia Thomas,

Observers - Ian Hughes, Hannah Arndt.

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

Apologies – Jonathan Hulson, Jeff Shone, Shirley Fermor.

1/ Welcome -

The Chair welcomed everyone to the 6th meeting of the LAF. Introductions were given by all present and apologies received.

2/ Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting 13th May were agreed as written.

a. Matters Arising

IG mentioned an active group called 'Bash the Barriers' he said they are getting a lot of media coverage and asked if this could be a topic for the LAF .

TW responded that consideration was given by the LAF regarding the access barriers last year and work was continuing to establish a way forward. An update could be received by the LAF in the new year, however the Item 5 on the agenda is looking at accessibility policy and would relate to the issue.

TW also highlighted the completed Annual Report that was send to members and hoped that the forum is pleased with it.

3/ Map Consolidation review

SJ gave an overview of the definitive map, he said the original Definitive Map was produced in 1953, the 2nd edition was 1963 and the current version is dated 1978 and has been continually under review since that date. The intention going forward would be to consolidate the map every 5 years.



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JP said this is the legal foundation for any public rights of way and the work the team are doing is essentially important. There will be a corresponding digital copy.

ND and SJ split the forum into 2 groups to discuss some examples of maps that the team had been working on and answer any questions and explain the process to the members.

. **Action** – Officers to engage with members throughout the process.

4/ Ploughing and Cropping

SJ said this is a seasonal issue for the Rights of Way team. Proposed reforms from Welsh Government that would have helped Local Authorities and farmers have never come to fruition. Legislation is fairly rigid with regards to this matter.

The local authority needs to get enforcement letters out while keeping a good working relationship with landowners. Weather issues may prevent landowners from adhering to the legislation, one possible solution may be to offer a temporary diversion. This is a problem year on year.

JP asked if there was anything from preventing the farmer from doing a temporary closure?

SJ said no but it is the expense.

IG another issue is the change of the type of crop the maize is making the footpath unwalkable.

HM said it would be a good idea to have a meeting with the farming unions to try to resolve the issues.

SJ we send letters out to regular offenders but are not always successful.

JP said another thing to consider is permanent diversion.

HM said there is technology available to plot where crop goes so farmers can leave space for the footpath.

MT some fields have been made into one and the fence was supposed to be the line of the footpath. This causes issue for walkers.

ND said we need to make sure all the important information is correct before sending out the notices as this can take a lot of time.

JP said would it be better to introduce a simple policy for officers that could be issued to landowners.

SJ said we do have a policy on ploughing and cropping and it is quite high up in priority.



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Action – Ploughing and cropping policy to be circulated in minutes.

5/ Accessibility on PROW

TW Introduced the item and a draft policy for discussion on accessibility and the authorization and installation of structure on the network. We have draft guidelines, but here is a gap in policy and process. TW invited comment and was open for comments to be email in after members had had time to digest.

HM – asked are stiles considered not appropriate?

JP – A landowner is legally obliged to put a stile on their land should they wish for example for stock control.

SJ – said any new structure has to be authorised by the authority. Ensure that the policy helps as much as possible.

MT – Asked about the difference between stiles and gates. Are you changing all the stiles to gates to make the path completely accessible? Are you signposting the path?

JP – said you have to be careful when referring to a path as completely accessible as you can leave yourself wide open.

TW – we do try to look at putting a gate instead of a stile where we can but there is a lot of factors to consider.

HA – It would be good to have the knowledge before entering a path.

IG – There is a drive to make all of the coastal path wheelchair accessible the kissing gates are a breath of fresh air.

DE – Has come across a few paths on Hope Mountain where he can't get the dog over the gate so this kind of information would be very useful.

JP – Maybe officers could identify footpaths which are gated the whole way through.

SJ – Buckley Heritage Trail is completely gate free.

DC – Whitford path has just been completed wherever possible we always try to change stiles to gate but landowners are coming round to the idea.

JP – No NFU representative on the forum?

TW – They were asked.

JP – Is it worth exploring again?

HM – Would be worth building the bridges as it is useful to have a NFU representative.



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6/ Access service update

TW – Flintshire are facing a substantial financial deficit for next year 2025/26 . Work is still ongoing and this Service is looking at options to reduce its budget spend. TW will provide further detail in the January meeting.

JP – Agreed that once budget proposals are known, it should be fed back to the forum.

AN – would like to see a ball park figure of outstanding issues. Issues are still being reported and not being looked at.

SJ to review the figures in the past 5 years but it is down to the resources why there are still outstanding issues.

NT – How about working with Northop College with help for strimming?

7/ AOB

TW – highlighted the documents which were emailed before the meeting (NRW's new recreation strategy). TW had asked if NRW want to come and give a presentation on this.

JP – said he would like a review of the chairmanship for the next meeting.

SW – would like to draw everyone's attention that the meetings are now on a Monday not Tuesday.

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

The next meetings due - 13th January 2025
7th April 2025