

**MINUTES OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING – 2/21
17 FEBRUARY 2022**

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Attendees

Lyndon Bracewell (LB)	Cycling interest
Gordon Bunker (GB)	Motorised use of minor highways and byways interest
John Cuthbertson (JC)	Social inclusion interest
Cllr Julian Grubb (JG)	North Worcestershire Councils interest
Rowena Hayward (RH)	Representing Worcestershire County Council PRow
Peter Hughes (PH)	Business interest
Tony Kerbey (TK)	Secretary
Bobbie Matulja (BM)	Chair
Sandra Starkey (SS)	Youth interest
Lindsey Umfreville (LU)	Farming interest
Helen Armstrong (HA)	(National Trust – Eight Hills Regional Park Project)

Notices – TK informed attendees that the meeting would be transcribed (to allow production of minutes only) – no dissenters.

ITEMS

1. Apologies

Cllr Alan Amos	Councillor interest and WCC Cabinet
Cllr Linda Robinson	Councillor interest
Mike Everitt	Walking Interest (post-meeting)
Glyn Thomas	Walking Interest (post-meeting)

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chair asked members to declare any personal or business interest in the listed agenda items – no declarations were made.

3. Confirmation of Minutes.

The Chair asked members to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting 22 July 2021 – carried.

4. Actions.

There were no outstanding actions, but the Chair asked for the completion date of the Chair's letter of support to the WBL Greenway Project to be recorded as 17 December 2021.

5. Matters Arising

- **National Landscapes Review** – The Chair asked members if they would prefer to submit comments by email, for compilation by the Chair, or hold a specific sub-group to discuss the LAF’s response. There are a few contentious issues including an increased use of Traffic Regulation Orders which could be of concern to motorised users. Members unanimously supported an exchange of emails (a separate consultation email was distributed by the Chair 17 Feb 22 asking for initial responses by 4 March 2022). **ACTION** - Chair to collate comments and circulate a draft of the WLAF response by 19 March 2022 for final amendments by 25 March 2022. Response to be made to DEFRA by 9 April 2022. RH mentioned that the Public Rights of Way team would be contributing to a separate response to DEFRA from WCC. LB asked if the LAF could be appraised of the County Council PRow Department’s response.
- **Sabrina Way Abberley Missing Bridge** – As the Chair and Mike Everitt are in discussion with the PRow Operations Manager, Phil Coulson, it was decided not to go into detail at this meeting.
- **BHS Gates Trial** - To be covered in the PRow report.
- **Dedicated PRow Enforcement Officer**- To be covered in the PRow report.
- **The Countryside Code for Land Managers** – This part of the code was updated in line with the Visitors’/Users’ section of the code on 8 February 2022 [Natural England launches new Countryside Code for land managers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-launches-new-countryside-code-for-land-managers)

6. External Speaker

The Eight Hills Regional Park Project – National Trust – Presented by Helen Armstrong

HA provided a detailed and interesting presentation on the concept and progress of the Eight Hills Regional Park Project (a concise version of the associated PowerPoint slides are attached to these minutes). Questions were taken covering:

- The extent of existing Rights of Way and permissive access (LU).
- Potential impact of the project on property/land prices and incentives to provide access (PH).
- Impact of the proposed SW Birmingham Green Belt review and local development pressures (Chair and PH).
- Past experience of low uptake by landowners in Countryside Stewardship schemes due to size of landholding requirement and the difficulty in creating long routes across multiple land holdings. (Chair).
- The proposed trial of a new approach to delivering additional “paid for” access. It was agreed that HA would be invited back to provide an update when the approach and the financial model have been finalised and the trial is underway (Chair).

- Impact of the upcoming National Landscapes Review (see item 5).
A Regional Park has no statutory designation – in the hierarchy it sits between National Parks / AONBs (which do), and Countryside Parks (which don't). It is therefore unclear whether the Regional Park designation will offer the same tighter rules and/or protection from development.

The Chair offered to write a letter of support to HA and the Project – all members in favour.

ACTION – Secretary to confirm address and PoC for letter.

ACTION – Chair to write letter of support.

Helen Armstrong can be contacted via: helen.armstrong@nationaltrust.org.uk

RUNNING ORDER CHANGED DUE TO AVAILABILITY OF SECOND SPEAKER

7. Public Rights of Way Team Report

RH provided an update on the activities of the WCC PRoW team. The report is attached for LAF members but will not be published on the website. Questions were taken covering:

- Increased use of PRoW by people new to the countryside and conflict with landowners (Chair).
- Query re. the absence of backlog figures from the report, plus scale of the defect and maintenance backlog (Chair).
- Number of temporary closures, particularly those that have been long-term (for over a year) (Chair).
- Following the recent appointment of a dedicated enforcement officer the Chair asked for an update on progress with enforcement issues at the sub-group (Chair).
- DMMO workload following repeal of the Deregulation Act 2026 cut-off date for DMMO Right of Way additions based on historic evidence (Chair).

8. Internal Speaker

Motorised Use of Public Rights of Way – Presented by Gordon Bunker – WLAF Member for Motorised use of minor highways and byways interest

GB provided a thoughtful and in-depth presentation on motorised users of Rights of Way, the code of conduct, relationship with other users and wider challenges (PowerPoint slides are attached to these minutes). Questions were taken covering:

- The potential increase in Traffic Regulation Orders implied by the National Landscape Review (Chair).

9. Items for Noting

Open Spaces Society comments on the ELMS ([OSS Webpage](#)). Please see additional ELMS links below:

[Environment Secretary's speech](#) to the Oxford Farming Conference outlining more information on the new environmental land management schemes, DEFRA published three new documents:

- [Outcomes from Environmental Land Management Schemes](#)
- [Local Nature Recovery: more information on how the scheme will work](#)
- [Landscape Recovery: more information on how the scheme will work](#)

10. Topics for Future Meetings

- **ROWIP Development.** The Chair raised a formal question to RH about lack of progress with the new ROWIP and suggested writing a letter to WCC asking for an explanation about the delay. Majority in favour; one abstention. **ACTION** – Chair to write letter to WCC.
- **De-Regulation Act and impact on PRoW.** Still awaiting guidance from central government.
- **WCC Sustainable Transport Projects overview and update.** **ACTION** – Secretary to approach Sustainable Transport team to see if they are willing to update the LAF on their activities at the meeting in July 2022.
- **Results of BHS Gates Trial.** Some gates are established and available for riders to test. Phil Coulson can provide details of the landowner on request.

11. Any Other Business

JG will be stepping down as a councillor and representative of the Northern District Councils at the next election and bade the LAF farewell. The Chair offered her thanks for his valuable input over the last three and a half years.

12. Date of Next Meeting/s

LAF Sub-group – Virtual meeting – 24 May 2022

LAF Main Meeting 7 or 20 July 2022 (awaiting member responses).