

**MINUTES OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING
14 FEBRUARY 2024**

HELD AT THE COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, WORCESTER

Attendees

Lyndon Bracewell (LB)	Cycling Interest
Gordon Bunker (GB)	Motorised use of minor highways and byways interest
Philip Coulson (PC)	Representing Worcestershire County Council PRow
John Cuthbertson (JC)	Social inclusion interest
Stephen Glazzard (SG)	Motorised use of minor highways and byways interest
Julian Grubb (JG)	Waterways Interest
Tony Kerbey (TK)	Secretary
Bobbie Matulja (BM)	Chair
Linda Robinson	Councillor Interest (Southern District Councils)
Sandra Starkey (SS)	Youth Interest
Glyn Thomas	Walking Interest

Notices – Procedure in the event of a fire, trip hazards in the meeting room and toilets location.

ITEMS

1. Apologies

Georgina Britten-Long	Landowner Interest
Peter Hughes (PH)	Business interest
John Jeffrey (JJ)	Parish Interest
Mike Rouse (MR)	County Councillor and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport

2. Declaration of Interests

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

3. Confirmation of Minutes.

The Chair asked members to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting 28 June 2023 – **carried**.

4. Actions.

The only outstanding action related to the Canal and River Trust's policy on Bat-friendly Lighting. CRT cannot be compelled to provide the information so we should consider the action **closed**. However, TK will continue to press the matter with CRT.

5. Matters Arising

Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2023 – 2028. The Strategy was published 13 February 2024 and is available at [WGIS](#).

Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Issues and Options Consultation – The Final Chair response letter was distributed a week before the meeting. The response was agreed by all members present. TK sent signed e-version of letter to the Chair, 15 February 2024.

Malvern Hills National Landscapes Position Statement on Renewables and Consultation - The Final version of the response form was distributed a week before the meeting. The response was agreed by all members present.

Green Lane Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) E-mail – The LAF briefly discussed the email and GLEAM's aims. PC assured the meeting that GLEAM's campaign will not affect WCC policy.

Resignation of Howard Turvey (Vice-Chair and Community Interest) - The Chair announced HT's resignation due to ill health. The Chair has sent a card of thanks to HT for his long service to the LAF.

Vice-Chair Vacancy – The Chair asked for volunteers to cover the Vice-Chair position; none were forthcoming at the meeting. LR offered to stand in for the Chair at a meeting on an ad-hoc basis if required.

6. Speakers

The Heart of England Forest – Ros Anscombe, Community Partnerships Officer & Toby Fisher, People Engagement Manager. Ros Anscombe delivered a wide-ranging presentation covering the structure, history and activities of the Heart of England Forest (a pdf version of the slides is included in the main presentation distributed with these minutes).

For general enquiries Ros can be contacted via: ros.anscombe@heartofenglandforest.org

For access issues contact Toby Fisher at: : toby.fisher@heartofenglandforest.org

Questions were taken covering:

Access for disabled visitors – JC asked what provisions were made for disabled visitors, with an emphasis on routes and gates. Toby Fisher explained that the charity hadn't yet tackled access for disabled visitors as much as it should have but would take JC's comments on board.

Access to Heart of England Permissive Paths from PRoW – GT asked about connections to and from the charity’s permissive routes and the wider PRoW network. GT suggested that voluntary help might be available from the Ramblers Association work parties. Ros agreed to raise the issue internally.

General Access – LR attended an open day at the Heart of England Forest site in her ward but was a little disappointed that there was no planned public access to the site. She offered the opportunity to collaborate with the charity using Divisional Councillor funding if access could be improved with a view to joining up routes through other organisations’ land such as Worcestershire Orchards. **BM** asked why the charity were reluctant to dedicate formal Public Rights of Way rather than permissive routes. Some organisations, such as the British Horse Society can help with funding but usually only when the path has equestrian rights and is added to the Definitive Map. Ros and Toby said that permissive paths allow the charity some flexibility but agreed to raise the two issues internally.

Equestrian Access – **BM** asked about equestrian access to the charity’s sites. Toby Fisher admitted that not much had been done regarding equestrian access but was happy to work with the British Horse Society to investigate improvements.

7. Public Rights of Way Team Report

PC and TK provided an update on the activities of the WCC PRoW team. A PDF version of the report is attached for LAF members. Statistics are valid up to the end of January 24. Questions were taken on: long-term closures relating to land slippage/erosion and large construction projects.

8. Feedback from the Active Travel Stakeholder Working Group - JC & LB outlined the last working group meeting which covered the Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and attempted to establish a draft manifesto. Nothing of detail to report.

9. Items for Noting

Access payments under the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) – update at [Gov.UK ELMS](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environmental-land-management-scheme-2024)

10. Topics for Future Meetings

- Worcestershire LNRS Progress
- ROWIP Development
- De-Regulation Act and impact on PRoW
- BHS Gates Trial Results
- West Midlands Circular Walk
- NT 8 Hills Regional Park Project
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11. Any Other Business

Membership - Renewal of membership for GB and JG. Both agreed to renew from their respective run out dates.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Possible dates for the sub-group (via teams) are:

- Wed 22 May 2024
- Wed 29 May 2024

Possible dated for the next main meeting in the Woodland Room are:

- Wed 3 July 2024
- Wed 10 July 2024