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## Agenda Item No. 7

### **Cross Boundary Visit between Sandwell and Dudley Local Access Forums on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2010**

The Indian summer that had been forecast for Saturday did not materialise but at least it kept dry. We met at the car park on Warrens Hall Park at 10.30 am. There were three officers from Sandwell, which was hugely encouraging and shows real dedication. John Scott, the Chair of Sandwell LAF and his wife, Joyce, accompanied them. They are enthusiastic and lively walkers, for whom walking is, and has been a way of life. It was tremendous to see five members of Dudley LAF take part in the walk, with David Davies, whilst not able to do the walk, putting in an appearance to show his moral support.

The six-mile circular walk, put together by Gurdip Nagra, Sandwell's lead officer, was an entirely new experience for the participants from Dudley Borough LAF. We travelled through Warrens Hall Park, passing Cobb's Engine House, leaving the boundary of Sandwell and entering Dudley's area of responsibility, passed Bumblehole Visitor Centre (sadly the target of an arson attack in recent months). There were a considerable number of walkers along the route, mainly with their dogs. Numerous fishermen had pitched around the various pools and they were thoroughly enjoying their chosen sport in peaceful surroundings.

Sadly the panoramic views were somewhat obscured by the mist which didn't clear, but one could see the potential. Part of the walk took in urban streets. One area of footway, which had been divided for cyclist and pedestrian use, was the subject of considerable discussion. The area for pedestrians was on the curbside and less than 2 ft wide. The overwhelming opinion was that this was not a good idea. It would not be adequate for individuals in mobility scooters, or wheelchairs. Neither would it be suitable for pushchairs, especially with accompanying toddlers. Additionally, it would be difficult and hazardous for dog walkers. It was considered that it would have been better for the walkers to be furthest away from the roadside with a more commodious width allocated. Hopefully this observation can be taken into consideration when designing dual use footways, which are basically a good idea?

Whilst traversing the Dudley side of the park, a young man on a mini motorbike sped past us. There was no number plate so little chance of identification. John Scott did point out to the motorcyclist that what he was doing was illegal. Also under a bridge, not too far from Bumblehole, were three large mounds of tipped building rubble, which should be removed.

The walk was invigorating and covered varying terrain. At the moment this is not a completely way-marked walk and we are not sure that Sandwell intend to make it one. However, as part of their Rights of Way Improvement Plan, (ROWIP) in which they intend to make site-specific improvements, there will be improvements to this route and to paths radiating from it.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the experience and hopefully a joint walk based upon Mousesweet Brook will take place in the future. This was Sandwell LAF's third cross-boundary excursion, something we on Dudley LAF are very keen to build on. With this in mind we are meeting with Officers of Worcestershire County Council in November.

In summation we would affirm this type of cross-boundary participation as a way of further enhancing and encouraging the huge benefits that can be attained from using our public rights of way.

#### **Sandwell Council Officers in attendance:-**

Gurdip Nagra - Public Rights of Way Officer  
Zoe Wilson - Public Rights of Way Officer  
Andy Thorpe - Senior Transportation Planner

**Sandwell Local Access Forum:-**

John Scott – Chairman

Joyce Scott

**Dudley Local Access Forum:-**

Mick Freer – Chairman

Malcolm Pearson

Nick Williams

Sue Yeadon

Carole Freer

David Davies

**Carole Freer**  
**11<sup>th</sup> October 2010**