

DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Tuesday, 14th May, 2013 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 4
at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

PRESENT:

Ms T Boothroyd (Chair)
Mr R J Brooks (Vice-Chair)
Mr D Bates, Mr R Burgess, Mr P Greenaway, Ms A Nicholls, Councillor Partridge, Mr N J Williams, Councillor J Woodall and Ms S Yeadon.

Officers:

Mr D Jacobs – Project Engineer, (Traffic and Transportation), Mr D Keeley – Countryside Manager, (Both Directorate of the Urban Environment), and Miss K Fellows Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

47. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Mrs J Lea.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms S Yeadon and Mr R Burgess declared an interest in Agenda Item Numbers: 4 and 9(b) – Coombeswood Green Wedge and Access/Rights of Way Issues – Coombeswood Green Wedge as the Chair of Friends of Coombeswood Wedge and as a Member of Friends of Coombeswood and Coombeswood Canal Trust respectively.

Mr D Bates declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9(a) – Access/Rights of Way Issues – Footpath in Woodsetton as a Member of the Woodsetton Charitable Trust.

49. MINUTES

AGREED

That the Minutes of the Forum held on 5th March, 2013, be approved as a correct record.

50. COOMBESWOOD GREEN WEDGE

Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager gave a brief verbal update in relation to the progress regarding the transfer of the conservation land from St Modwen advising that the Council were awaiting a response from St Modwen in relation to a final set of queries regarding the land.

He also reported that Ms H Edwards, Park Warden, was undertaking various surveys in relation to wildlife on the site.

Ms Yeadon advised that a representative from the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust was to attend the site during the course of the following week in order to discuss possible funding applications with Ms H Edwards.

AGREED

That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

51. THE NATIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CONFERENCE

Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager advised that he had attended the National Local Access Forum Conference on 27th February, 2013, outlining the various workshops that he attended indicating that the general consensus had been that the Conferences should continue together with more structured support offered to Local Access Forums by Natural England.

The Countryside Manager encouraged those present to attend future conferences and undertook to circulate details of the next conference to Members.

AGREED

That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

52. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair gave a brief outline in relation to the Annual report of the Forum and, following further discussion, it was agreed that a feature of the report would be Cotwall End and that Mr Greenaway, Mr Burgess and Ms Yeadon would assist with the preparation of the report.

AGREED

That the Chair, Mr Burgess, Mr Greenaway and Ms Yeadon meet to prepare a draft Annual Report of the Forum for discussion at a future meeting.

53. TRAINING

Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager outlined details for registration of volunteers in relation to training for the operation of hand and power tools. Volunteer applications were circulated to those present at the meeting together with the return address for the applications.

AGREED

That the information reported on be noted.

54. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Although it was noted that no new Planning Applications had been received, it was further noted that a possible planning application in relation to the Caledonian Works, Lye, Stourbridge may be submitted as the site was currently on the market for sale. Following further discussion it was agreed that should an application be made, Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager would investigate the status of the pasture land at the bottom of Wood Lane, Lye, Stourbridge.

Councillor Partridge advised Members that local groups could register areas of land as Community Interest areas and this would enable those groups to be notified should the land be marketed for sale in the future.

AGREED

That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

55. ACCESS/RIGHTS OF WAY ISSUES

(a) Footpath in Woodsetton

Following the report submitted by the Woodsetton Charitable Trust to the last meeting of the Forum outlining the position regarding a Section 106 Agreement that had been entered into by the original developers in relation to the provision of two footpaths, Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager read out a briefing note to Members on behalf of the Council's Principal Obligations Officer, Development Control, detailing the criteria for enforcement of a Section 106 Agreement and advising that this was felt to be disproportionate in this instance due to a change in ownership of the land and the substantial reduction in the development to four houses.

Mr Bates also referred to the owner of one of the properties on the site purchasing further land which he was utilising as a vegetable garden, advising that this land formed part of a right of way.

Following further discussion, Mr Jacobs, Project Engineer, Traffic and Transportation, advised that he would make arrangements to meet Mr Bates on site in order to investigate this matter further.

AGREED

That the information reported on be noted.

(b) Coombeswood Green Wedge

A report of Mr R Burgess was submitted on proposed Public Rights of Way.

Mr Burgess presented the report submitted, requesting that the paths referred to in the schedules and maps referred to in the report submitted in relation to Coombeswood Green Wedge and Leasowes including the Southern Green Belt be made definitive rights of way in order to preserve those paths for the future.

Following further discussion it was agreed that Mr Jacobs, Project Engineer, Traffic and Transportation, in conjunction with Mr Burgess, Mr Williams and Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager would consider the request to make the paths definitive rights of way and would submit a response to the report to a future meeting of the Forum.

AGREED

That Mr Jacobs, Project Engineer, Traffic and Transportation, be requested to submit a response to the report referred to above to a future meeting of the Forum.

56. GATING ORDERS

It was noted that there were no Gating Orders to be considered.

57. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Members requested that the following be added to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan:-

- The footpath behind High Arcal School, Sedgley to Eve Lane;
- The Swanbrook Path up to the west side of High Arcal School;
- H26 Pottery Farm to Mucklows Hill.

Photographs of improvements carried out under the Rights of Way Improvement Plan were circulated to Members.

The Chair urged those present to continue to supply details of those paths that required improvement to future meetings of the Forum.

AGREED

(a) That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

(b) That the Chair be requested to refer the footpaths referred to above to Ms K Perkins, Transportation Officer, requesting that these be added to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Brooks advised that he had attended an Environment Agency meeting when improvements to watercourses were discussed. Mr Brooks advised that the report commissioned was now available in relation to how improvements could be achieved and he would continue to attend meetings on a quarterly basis.

The Chair advised that she was particularly interested in access to watercourses for those with disabilities and those with young children using pushchairs. She requested that she be provided with a hard copy of the report.

Mr Keeley, Countryside Manager referred to a letter received from Natural England providing details of Local Access Co-ordinators and a thank you letter received in relation to improvements carried out to the path linking Meredith Road with Tennyson Road, Lower Gornal.

AGREED

- (a) That the information reported on be noted.
 - (b) That Mr Jacobs, Project Engineer, Traffic and Transportation, be requested to provide a hard copy of the report of the Environment Agency regarding improvements to access to Watercourses to the Chair.
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59. DATE OF FUTURE MEETING

Noted, that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on:-

- Tuesday 16th July, 2013

The meeting will commence at 6.00pm

The meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.

CHAIR