

## **Leeds Local Access Forum**

**Tuesday, 14th July, 2009**

**PRESENT:** Mr. M. Willison (Chair), Councillor C. Fox, Councillor J. Illingworth, Mr. J. Pearlman and Mr. S. Wood.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Mr. P. Bowers, Legal Services
- Mr. B. Buckenham, Countryside and Access Manager
- Mr. Roger Kirkham, Crime Reduction Coordinator
- Miss. L. Pilgrim, Governance Services

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. P. Maude.

### **2 Election of Chair**

Dr. M Willison was elected Chair of the Leeds Local Access Forum for the year 2009/10.

**RESOLVED:** Dr. M. Willison in the Chair

### **3 Election of Vice Chair**

Mr. S. Wood was elected Vice-Chair of the Leeds Local Access Forum for the year 2009/10.

**RESOLVED:** Mr. Wood in the Vice-Chair.

### **4 Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcome two new Members of the Forum Councillor John Illingworth and Mr. Jerry Pearlman who were both attending their first meeting.

### **5 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor J Illingworth declared an interest as he was the Director and Company Secretary of Kirkstall Valley Park and also the Company Secretary of Dig2Ride.

### **6 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Leeds Local Access Forum held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes be approved.

## **7 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

In relation to minute 59 the letter regarding the inclusion of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) in the Local Development Framework (LDF) had not be sent.

**RESOLVED:** That the letter regarding to the inclusion of the ROWIP in the LDF be sent.

## **8 Gating Orders**

With the agreement of the Forum, the Chair changed the order of the Agenda to take the item on Gating Orders first. The Crime Reduction Coordinator presented to the Forum a report on the proposed Gating Order for Leasowe Garth, Hunslet, Leeds. The report had previously been presented to the Chair for consideration in between meetings however there had been concerns that the crime statistics for the area had not been included in the report and there also appeared to be issues which could be resolved without the use of a Gating Order. Members were provided with a background to the area and the reasons for the Gating Order. The following issues were discussed:

- The introduction of the gate would be fairly straight forward as it was easy for officers to identify who would be entitled to have access keys.
- It was anticipated that the residents would use the new social area created under the Order.
- The alternative routes proposed did not mean a significant detour to for those without access to the path.
- In relation to youths congregating around the nearby off-licence work had been undertaken to deal with the crime and disorder resulting from this. Test purchases had taken place at the premises and the shop owner had been warned by the police in respect of this matter. Despite this and other measures taken the youths continue to congregate in this area.
- There had been two objections to the application however the Crime Reduction Officer was of the understanding that these were only minor objections.
- The path was not a route used to access other areas but was used as a rear access to the premises.
- Members questioned the ownership of the land and the requirement to have a Gating Order where the path was privately owned. Officers were aware that whilst the ownership of the land did not fall with the local authority they were responsible for the maintenance of the path and it was also included on the List of Streets.
- The information provided to Members that the main problem in the are was from 13:00 hours to 01: 00 hours. Officers advised Members that in Leeds consideration was given to whether time limited Gating Orders would be suitable however it was generally believed that a non-time restricted order was more appropriate.

- Members noted that the crime statistics for the area had improved over the last year due to increased policing levels however this level would not be maintained.
- There was no barrier to accessing the alternative routes.

Members thanked the Officer for providing more information on the application and agreed to support for the application for a Gating Order for Leasowe Garth. The Officer informed the Forum that there were a number of Gating Orders that were in the process of being reviewed and a report would be provided at the next meeting of the Forum. Whilst there were issues relating to the funding of Gating Orders within the Department there were continuing applications and expressions of interest for gating orders where funding had been identified from other sources such as ALMOs and the local Area Management Boards.

**RESOLVED:** That the Gating Order for Leasowe Garth be supported and that a report Gating Orders Review be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

## **9 DEFRA GUIDANCE**

Members of the Forum received a copy of the new DEFRA Guidance to Local Access Forum's together with a letter from DEFRA explaining the changes to the document.

**RESOLVED:** That the new Guidance be noted.

## **10 Site Visit - St. Aidan's**

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009 the Forum conducted a site visit to the St. Aidan's former open cast mine which was currently in the process of being returned to public use following the cessation of mining. The planning permission which had been granted for the mine had required that 10 km of paths were restored to the site once it was decommissioned. The paths would be a mixture of footpaths and bridleways with some paths only having permissive rights due to the propensity for flooding. Once the paths were completed and the relevant orders were obtained it was proposed that the site would be leased to the RSPB who would manage the site. The site was also designated washland and had been designed so that the area flooded in an anti-clockwise direction in a managed way. The site was proposed to have links to other recreational areas to the north, south and east of the site such as the Aire Calder Navigation and the Kippax Linesway.

Members were initially driven around part the site but were also given the opportunity to walk along some of the proposed paths. Members wished to formally extend their thanks to Officers in the Parks and Countryside Department for arranging access to the site and for the provision of a number of different maps. The visit was extremely interesting and Members were in agreement that once complete the site would be a significant asset for those in Leeds and especially for those in the local area. Members were able to see that careful consideration had been given to the location and types of paths to be created. It was noted that there were still some outstanding issues in relation to the cross slope on some paths. Officers had been concerned that the current gradient of the path could prevent access for those with mobility

issues. UK Coal were concerned that if the path was flattened it would create a water channel which would affect access, create Health and Safety and maintenance issues and could also require additional drainage work. Members noted the concerns of both parties and had walked one of the paths during their visit. The area cut out for the path was larger than the two metre width required and Members felt that it may have been possible to create a path on one side which would lose some of the cross slope without the need to cut into to the path. However Members also suggested that Officers and UK Coal looked into obtaining advice from an organisation or individual with knowledge of disabled access in case the slope of the path prohibited access.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That UK Coal and Leeds City Council Officers be thanked for organising the site visit.
- (b) That the proposed paths layout of the site be supported.
- (c) That Leeds City Council Officers and UK Coal seek advice from an individual or organisation with knowledge in respect of disabled access in relation to the cross slopes of some of the paths.

## **11 Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Consultation**

The Forum considered the consultation document on the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme. The Assistant Countryside and Access Manager informed Members that his office had been contacted in relation to the document and had made representations. The Forum supported the document and noted that any proposals should ensure that public rights of way, access and linkages were maintained. The proposals presented the opportunity for certain paths to be improved and that the maintenance of paths in the flooded areas should be considered. The Forum also noted that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan had not been included in the list of References.

**RESOLVED:** That the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme be supported subject to the recommendation that the ROWIP be included as one of the documents on the list of References and that any proposals ensure that public rights of way, access and linkages are maintained.

## **12 Consultation - New Generation Transport Scheme**

Members considered the consultation document on the New Generation Transport Scheme for Leeds. On the information presented to Members there appeared to be no significant impact on public rights of way although there was some ambiguity regarding the potential loss of cycle lanes. Officers had also commented on this application and agreed to bring their responses to the next meeting of the Forum.

**RESOLVED:** That Officers bring to the next meeting of the Forum details of their responses to the New Generation Transport Scheme for Leeds.

### **13 Rights of Way Update**

The Assistant Countryside and Access Manager provided Members with an update on the publishing of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Whilst the document was available on line the document was yet to be printed and circulated. The Assistant Countryside and Access Manager was unsure of how many and how the document would be circulated. The ROWIP was in the process of final proof reading before being sent to the printers which was anticipated to be in the near future.

The following issues were discussed:

- Members noted that the capacity to zoom in to particular areas of a map on the document was limited but noted that Officers were reviewing what information was available online, such as the Definitive Map and what improvements could be made.
- As Members were aware there was no funding attached to the projects identified in the ROWIP and that alternate avenues of funding were always considered.
- Whilst the ROWIP was a strategic and long term document there was provision for the ROWIP to be reviewed throughout its lifetime to incorporate other projects as they arose.
- The Chair noted that when the ROWIP was approved by the Executive Board in February 2009 a resolution had been made to ensure that relevant Ward based maps detailing the Rights of Way network were made available to ward Members. Officers were requested to ensure that this information was passed on.

**RESOLVED:** That the update be noted.

### **14 Correspondence from DEFRA**

The Forum received, for information, copies of correspondence from DEFRA which included a letter from the Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs and Issue 39 of the Access Newsletter.

**RESOLVED:** That the correspondence from DEFRA be noted.

### **15 Forum Matters**

The Secretary to the Forum provided Members with an update on some outstanding matters in relation to the Forum. In terms of expenses provision had now been made for Members to claim for their expenses associated with the Forum. A briefing note would be circulated to Members shortly explaining the procedure, what and how much they could claim for.

In relation to car parking the facilities at the rear of the Civic Hall had been designated as use for Leeds City Councillors only. There were alternative car parking facilities nearby and Members would be able to claim expenses in relation to this.

At previous meetings Members had expressed an interest in further training and there were two new members to the Forum and Officers agreed to make arrangements to bring forward to the next meeting of the Forum.

Members noted that whilst there were new Members on the Forum there were still a number of vacancies especially in relation to owners or occupiers of land within the authority. Officer outlined the attempts that had been made to improve interest in the Forum but agreed further measures were needed. Whilst some groups or people had been approached individually this had produced only a limited response. The Regulations which established Local Access Forums requires that an advert is placed in a local newspaper to advertise vacancies. Officers were not aware whether any budget was available to pay for the advert but agreed to take steps to ensure that the Forum's statutory obligations were met in an effort to increase the Membership of the Forum.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That measures be taken to secure funding to advertise for new Members of the Forum as per the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 Regulations.
- (b) That training for Members be developed.
- (c) That the new car parking and expenses provision be noted.

**16 Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

**RESOLVED:** The date and time of the next meeting of the Leeds Local Access Forum was agreed as 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.