

Somerset Local Access Forum
Minutes For The Meeting Held On
19th October 2017
At Langport Town Hall

SLAF Members Present:

Julia Gadd (Chair Person), David Lovejoy, James Bateman, Suzy Dymond-White (Vice Chair), Hugh Warmington, Patricia Coombes, Alan Carr, Ann Finn, Virginia Jones, Anthony Gray.

SCC Officers Present: Pete Hobley – Rights of Way Service Manager,

Apologies:

Bill Knight, Tara Moore (SCC).

Welcome

Julia Gadd welcomed everyone to the meeting. PH notified the Committee that Bill Knight had tendered his resignation from SLAF.

Minutes From 17th June 2017

Julia Gadd asked everyone present if they were happy with the minutes from the last meeting. The Committee unanimously agreed and voted their approval.

Definitive Map Update

Ginnie Jones and Ann Finn had submitted some questions prior to the meeting.

Pete Hobley raised the first question in regard to resources for processing modifications. The present SCC structure is one Senior Modification Officer – Andrew Saint. Two Investigation posts and 1 legal officer that supports the team. SCC was looking at a Consultancy route to fill the vacant investigation officer post but now the second post will be recruited on a permanent basis.

The second question was how many dedications were processed without in the last five years? Pete Hobley answered that they were mainly on SCC land. The number totalled 7. This broke down as follows: 4 Bridleways, 3 Footpaths one of which was a section 30 by a Parish Council.

The third question - how many applications and modifications had been determined? Pete Hobley responded so far this year there had been 4 applications determined. 2 had been confirmed in this time. Andrew Saint (SCC) will determine 3 by Christmas 2017 and 2 more in January/February 2018. This will meet the target of ten in a year and see an improvement to previous years.

Pete Hobley explained the process with a determined application, where a decision would then be made to make an order or refuse. This would move to the Confirmation stage where any objections would go to the Secretary of State.

Ginnie Jones sought clarification on how many from 'determined' had been opened in the last 5 years.

Pete Hobley confirmed there were 13 confirmations of which there was only one that he wasn't sure whether it had been opened.

Ginnie James said East Riding Council and SLAF in Yorkshire prepared a joint report. The Modification team number was 4 excluding the legal team. They had dealt with 61 public path orders and added 20 KM to the ROW network. Comparing this figure with Somerset County Council work and team.

Peter Hobley said that Modification Officers have other aspects to their role such as FOI's and this work limits their productivity.

The Ramblers Association carry out a series of FOI requests for information across all Local Authorities and the report that is compiled acts as a bench mark.

Wiltshire LAF deal with the Statement of Priorities and perhaps this is something the SLAF could do to help.

There are other Local Authorities who do not have a back log and perhaps reviewing how they do this and taking ideas from this may prove beneficial.

Pete Hobley reiterated there had been a variety of reasons for the back log over the years and they are trying to address this. But open to suggestions.

With Deregulation coming in this may be an opportunity for SCC to look at its policy and make changes.

Ginnie Jones asked how many years or decades will it take to finish the scored application. Pete Hobley did not have that information to give at this meeting.

Herepath Update

The site is popular with numerous groups using it for recreational past times.

There is a fixed price cost to the remedial work and awaiting the Forestry Commission to agree if they will undertake carrying it out.

Three parties are involved (Forestry Commission, The Crown and Somerset County Council).

Presently it is becoming difficult to move the matter forward.

Action: Ann Finn to draft a letter on behalf of the group. She will email this to members for feedback/agreeance and will send to Pete Hobley to forward on.

Unclassified Roads Not On The List of Streets

BHS initiative to audit The List of Streets. Ann Finn had an old List of Streets for the Taunton area in comparison to the updated version of The List of Streets routes had appeared to have dropped off. Pete Hobley asked if she had contacted Andrew Saint on the matter. This was confirmed and Pete Hobley asked Ann Finn to go back to Andrew Saint to investigate further.

Pete Hobley reiterated the only time a route should come off is as a result of an order.

A303 And A358 Schemes

Members to collate their ideas or comments on these proposed options.

Action: Members to email Julia Gadd to collate responses into a report and send to Highways England. Dead line is 07 July 2017. Comments received by Julia Gadd were forwarded to Pete Hobley.

Update October 2017

A358 – The first round of consultation garner lots of feedback. Highways England is looking at the options. Now awaiting the second consultation. Pete Hobley will notify members when a date becomes available.

A303 – Highways England put forward three preferred routes. The statutory stages will provide a good opportunity to respond.

Temporary Diversions

A podcast linked was given in the agenda for Members to listen to.

This was CLA campaign and their recommendations.

A discussion followed with the following points:

- How to regulate what is reasonable for both farmers and members of the public. This would place additional burden on the local authority and likely to attract a fee.
- Farmer's duty of care.
- Somerset County Council take reports of obstructions by members of the public on a case by case basis and whether the obstruction is enforceable.
- Educating people on the dangers of entering fields with livestock.
- Placing certain signage could lead to the farmer being liable.
- Using local resources to get the message across such as Parish Councils and ideas to raise awareness.
- Deregulation Act allows the Landowner a right of appeal if Rights of Way refuse a diversion.

Report From LAF National Conference

Ann Finn attended the LAF National Conference in the Summer. The theme was how LAFS are maintained in the future and their role.

To be an effective LAF required support and they've seen the funding over the years reduce.

Some LAFS no longer call themselves by this title and gone in a different direction.

County of Somerset is diverse with forests, coast and countryside on its door step.

Councils are not aware what SLAF is or what they do. Need to raise awareness.

Visit Somerset is the SCC publication/website used to promote Somerset. There is a Rights of Way access project to promote The Coastal Path which stretches from Minehead across to the County border. With potential to enhancing the rural economy along this route.

Promoting the Countryside, its benefits and staying safe. Visiting/working with schools to raise awareness was also considered.

Action: Starting with a leaflet. A working party of Julia Gadd, David Lovejoy, Suzy Dymond – White and Patricia Coombes to talk after the meeting has concluded and formulate the working mechanism.

AOB

David Lovejoy asked about Somerset County Council's policy for Rights of Way on stiles, as a person had approached him with the query.

Pete Hobley replied there was Rights of Way Improvement Plan and within this an Appendix B – Maintenance Enforcement Policy.

Action Complete: Pete Hobley has contacted the person.

David Lovejoy had a permissive path link arranged in Martock and asked Pete Hobley for information.

Action Complete: Pete Hobley to send permissive path information to David Lovejoy, This has been actioned.

Tree Safety and David Lovejoy requested a copy of Somerset County Council policy that is in place.

Action Complete: Pete Hobley will contact his Manager to see if this was permissible. This matter has been concluded.

Recruitment – Pete Hobley

This winter (2017) would see the end of the 3 year stint for present SLAF members. There would be a recruitment drive for members shortly and a communication to members over the coming weeks if they wish to reapply. Pete Hobley encouraged

people from different sectors to apply as the more diverse the SLAF was the better the Committee would be.

PH clarified that as a new Chair and Vice Chair had been elected during mid-term that providing they were re-elected they could continue within their roles.

Next Meeting: 17 May 2018 2pm to 4pm. TBC