

# **SOMERSET LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MINUTES FOR THE MEETING 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2013 AT NORTH PETHERTON COMMUNITY CENTRE**

## **SLAF Members attending:**

Greg Jones – Chair; Penny Richards – Vice Chair; Peter Kidner; David Perris; Anthony Trollope-Bellew; Hugh Warmington; Patricia Coombes; Julia Gadd; Ann Finn

## **SCC Officers attending:**

Pete Hobley - Rights of Way Service Manager, Andy Stevenson – Rights of Way Volunteer Co-ordinator, Lisa Portman and Emma Parsons – Joint Secretary to SLAF

### **1. Welcome, Apologies and Notes of absence:**

Apologies accepted from Paul Heal, Wendy Welland, Cllr David Hall, Cliff Puddy and Roger Conway.

Members introduced themselves for the benefit of Lisa Portman and Emma Parsons who are the new Secretaries for SLAF.

2. a) Minutes from the meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013 were agreed and signed off as a true record.  
b) Matters arising – Anthony Trollope-Bellew was elected as the Member representing West Somerset District Council, in replacement of Cllr Morgan. Cllr David Hall is no longer the relevant Cabinet Member at SCC – Cllr Harvey Siggs is now the Cabinet Member for rights of way.

Peter Kidner asked if British Horse Society Modification Order applications had now been accepted by SCC. Ann Finn confirmed that they had been.

**ACTION: Chair to contact Cllr David Hall to ask if anyone else would like to attend on his behalf, such as Cllr Siggs.**

3. There was a presentation from Neil Constable of Natural England about the Coastal Access Scheme, specifically the consultation for the route between Brean to Minehead. See attached presentation slides.

**ACTION: Lisa and Emma to circulate the consultation details once received from N.E and to ascertain which Members wanted to form a Working Group. All Members to be given an initial 2 weeks to respond.**

### **4. Surfaced Rights of Way consultation**

Pete Hobley outlined the proposal by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, SCC to save £47,000 by amending the way

some Rights of Way are maintained. Some are currently maintained to highways standard for a number of historical reasons and it's been suggested that they should be reverted to the standard of a right of way. This was a suggested proposal from the Highways Service Review of 2012.

There was some debate about whether SCC would still be adhering to its legal obligations, if surface standards were reduced and also whether in the long run, it was cost effective for SCC. Pete Hobley responded that SCC would still be meeting its legal obligations. In terms of whether it was cost effective in the long term, Pete Hobley said this was unknown. Hugh Warmington added that it was not SLAF's responsibility to conclude whether it was SCCs legal obligation, all SLAF needed to consider was whether it was necessary to maintain rights of way above the minimum standard? In addition there was a discussion about the legal status of some routes and questions about whether some BOATs for example, should be reclassified as highways. At this stage David Shears who attended as a member of the public, gave some background historical information about how some RUPPs and BOATs had been classified in Somerset. Routes to some dairy farms had been tarmaced in the 1960's (through one off Government funding to Councils) because of the introduction of milk tankers. Since then they have been maintained to Highways standard but are not always classified as highway. In conclusion, the Chair suggested that SCC needed to examine the historical status of each route to ascertain whether it was appropriate to maintain to Rights of Way or highway standard.

Members agreed to support SCCs proposals as outlined in the paper.

**ACTION: Emma and Lisa to send response on behalf of SLAF to Pete Hobley.**

5. a) The Chair recently attended the S.W Chairs Action Group. The main feedback from the Group was that most LAFs meet just twice a year and are struggling to respond to consultations etc. Those LAFs in Unitary Authorities manage to meet 3-4 times a year, partly because they have to deal with planning applications.  
  
b) Feedback from other members – Roger Conway recently attended the launch event for wheelyboats (feedback originally sent to Members on 16<sup>th</sup> August).
6. List of consultations received by SLAF since May 2013. The Forum examined the list
7. **AOB**
  - a) **RoW Resources**

Peter Kidner questioned the ongoing reduction in RoW resources and the impact of this. As an example, he had reported an obstruction on a footpath on 2 occasions and was waiting for it to be resolved. Pete Hobley said that there may be a loss of another warden as total cuts of £55,000 needed to be made in the next 3 years. There was a discussion about the possible impact of cuts and that SCC had to be mindful of meeting its statutory duties.

Hugh Warmington had made an inquiry to upgrade a footpath to a bridleway and was told that SCC no longer have the finances to do this. He questioned whether the Bridleways Association could contribute to the cost of this.

**ACTION: Pete Hobley to investigate whether Bridleways Association are able to assist.**

Ann Finn questioned whether there was any progress with the modification orders she had submitted. Pete Hobley responded that RoW receive more applications than they can determine. Previously the department had 5 modification officers and now are reduced to 1 who determines approx. 8 per year.

Penny Richards questioned whether SCC use volunteers to help. Pete Hobley explained that the PPLO (Parish Paths Liaison Officer) scheme makes successful use of volunteers. Pete Hobley advised that Richard Philips has replaced Laurence Smith as Senior RoW officer in the Modification team and he has previously had experience of utilising volunteers.

**ACTION: Pete Hobley to investigate increased use of volunteers within the Modification team.**

#### **b) PPLO Workshops**

SCC have organised a series of workshops for PPLOs to meet their area warden. SLAF members are invited along also – invitations were sent on 16/10.

**ACTION: Members to RSVP to Emma and Lisa in the first instance.**

The date of next meeting will be Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Venue to be confirmed.

## Summary of Actions Arising

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Update/Outcome</b>
13.2.2	Chair to contact Cllr David Hall to ask if anyone else would like to attend on his behalf.	Chair emailed Cllr Harvey Siggs on 18/10/13.
13.2.3	Lisa and Emma to circulate the consultation details once received from N.E and to ascertain which Members wanted to form a Working Group. All Members to be given an initial 2 weeks to respond.	Lisa emailed consultation link to members on 18/10/13 and queried which members wanted to form a working group. 5/11/13 - Greg and Roger have agreed to meet to form a response.
13.2.4	Emma and Lisa to send response on behalf of SLAF to Pete Hobley.	Lisa emailed SLAF official response on 18/10/13.
13.2.7a	Pete Hobley to investigate whether Bridleways Association are able to assist with modification orders and investigate increased use of volunteers within the Modification team.	
13.2.7b	Members to RSVP to Emma and Lisa re PPLO workshops.	Invitation sent to members on 16/10/13