

DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Wednesday 21st May, 2008 at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 4 at the Council House,
Priory Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Mr M Freer (Chairman)
Mr D Bates, Mr D Davies, Mrs C Freer, Mr J Vickers, Mr N Williams and Mr D Woodruff.

Officers:

Mr J Butler – Group Engineer: Traffic and Transportation and Mr D Jacobs – Project Engineer: Traffic and Transportation (both Directorate of the Urban Environment, Dudley MBC) and Mr P T Furidze, Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Law and Property, Dudley MBC)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mr T Antill, Mr A Cutler, and Mr A Yeates.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared an interest in relation to Coombeswood Canal Trust in view of his general involvement with that group and the Coombeswood area.

3 MINUTES

AGREED

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 19th March, 2008, be approved as a correct record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In connection with Minute No. 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes, Mr Woodruff reported that he had been in contact with the local Stourbridge radio station; 'The Bridge' and an appearance slot would be confirmed shortly.

AGREED

That progress, towards a possible appearance on the local Stourbridge radio station, be noted

In connection with Minute No. 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes, the Forum was informed that, in relation to the discussion at the last meeting on the possibility of securing representation on the Forum of local canal interests, a letter had been sent to the Coombeswood Canal Trust inviting them to nominate a representative. A response to the invitation was awaited.

AGREED

That progress made to invite the Coombeswood Trust to nominate a representative to the Forum be noted.

In connection with Minute No. 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes, Mr Woodruff reported that, in relation to the Penfield estate-Withymoor railway bridge, a replacement bridge would cost about £200 000.

In connection with Minute No. 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes, Mr Woodruff reported that the meeting of the sub-committee to consider the report on gating orders that had been submitted to the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services, would be held shortly.

The Forum was also informed that a date for a meeting involving the three Ward Councillors for Coseley East, to discuss the proposed File Cutters Gating Order was yet to be arranged.

Following further discussion, it was

AGREED

That Mr Butler pursue with the Ward Councillors arrangements for the meeting referred to and that it be noted that, following consultations with the Cabinet Member for Transportation, if such a meeting had not been arranged by 1st July, 2008, the Gating Order would be progressed.

In connection with Minute 9 – Membership and Publicity, the Forum was informed that the Marketing and Communications (Marcomms) Section had agreed that details of forthcoming meetings be sent to Katherine Finney 2-3 weeks before a Forum meeting so that a press release could be prepared.

In connection with Minute 10 – Allowing Blind People to Access New Urban Developments, the Forum was informed that the Council's Access Officer, Mr Walton, had accepted an invitation to attend the Forum's meeting to be held in September 2008.

5 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

a. Treherns Farm

Mr Jacobs reported the Council's response with regard to Public Path Orders at Treherns Farm. He referred to Points 1 to 7 of the report submitted and responded to questions from the Forum.

The Forum expressed the view that it did not agree with the Council's response in all respects, especially the matter of access through the farm building, and following further discussion, it was

AGREED

That Mr Jacobs' report, setting out the Council's responses to the issues raised by the Forum's sub-Committee at its meeting held on 1st February 2008, in relation to proposed orders at Treherns Farm, be noted.

b. Coombeswood

Following on from concerns raised at the meeting of the Forum on 19 March 2008, the Technician Engineer had investigated the matter and established the following: -

- H23 - Chancel Way to Amber Way – the fencing and gates that had been installed across the highway were currently the subject of discussions between the Council and the adjoining property owners. The Forum would be advised of the outcome of these discussions as appropriate.
- H23 – Gainsford Drive to Coombes Road – the fencing appeared to have been installed along the edge of the line of the footpath and was situated on the edge of the embankment. The path was still usable and the fence appeared to have removed the danger of anyone slipping down the bank.
- Path H21/24 – The path required attention, the drainage ditch cleared, and the vegetation cut back to a minimum in order to make the path more user friendly. Estimates for the cost of necessary works would be sought and it was hoped that, subject to funding restrictions, something would be done in the current year to improve access.

AGREED

1. That the information reported to the Forum in relation to paths at Coombeswood, as set out above, be noted.
2. That Mr Butler investigate the issues raised in relation to problems at the site and, where, appropriate, continue to liaise with Council colleagues and private owners such as St. Modwens to ensure that action is taken.

3. That the Forum be advised, as appropriate, of any action taken in relation to these matters.

6 GATING ORDERS

a. File Cutters Path - Update

The current position in respect of this matter had been referred to earlier in the meeting.

7 RIDGE SCHOOL SIGNAGE

The Forum noted that although the sponsor of this item was not in attendance, the issue at hand related to appropriate Special Extinguishment Order signage at the Ridge School public footpath. A request was made for the exact wording of the signage to be advised to all members of the Forum before the sign was put up.

AGREED

That Mr Jacobs circulate the exact wording of the proposed Special Extinguishment Order to be displayed at both ends of the public path at Ridge Hill School.

8 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

An update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was reported on behalf of Ms Perkins, the Public Rights of Way Access Officer.

It was reported that the ROWIP was now with the Council's Marketing and Communications Section for finalisation. The document would be submitted to the Forum as part of the wider consultation process.

AGREED

That the update in respect of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan be noted.

9 CYCLING IN DUDLEY - UPDATE

AGREED That this item be no longer included on agendas as consideration would duplicate the work of another body.

10 BARRIERS TO ACCESS LAND

Mr Woodruff informed the Forum that he had prepared a presentation regarding access on and along the canal network. In view of technical problems this item could not be considered at this time.

A general discussion followed regarding canal access and the Forum was of the view that, a representative of any one of the regional bodies involved in looking into access on and along the canal network, be invited to a future Forum meeting to give a presentation on the canal network and access issues.

AGREED

That a representative of any one of the regional bodies responsible for access on and along the canal network be invited to give a presentation to a future meeting of the Forum.

11 REMOVAL OF FOOTPATH SIGN ON FURNACE HILL – UPDATE

In relation to an issue raised at the previous meeting of the Forum, an update from Mr A Radford, Technician Engineer, was received.

The Forum noted that a letter had been sent to the resident of 26 Furnace Hill requesting permission and co-operation for the installation of a footpath sign to the gable end of the property to replace two signs that were recently removed by an unknown person. The Forum expressed the view that it was possible that whoever had removed the footpath signs did not want the public utilising the footpath.

During the ensuing discussion, a number of solutions, such as mounting the footpath sign on a lighting column, surface marking and a letter to all residents in the area to co-operate in catching the culprit, were discussed. The Forum noted that action was required to ensure the footpath was properly sign posted so as to prevent the loss of the public right of way path through disuse.

AGREED

That the update received with respect to the replacement of the footpath sign at Furnace Hill be noted.

12 CONTACT WITH OTHER WEST MIDLANDS FORA

The Forum noted the need for closer contacts with similar bodies in the region to share best practice and experiences.

AGREED

That avenues for greater co-operation with similar bodies in the region be explored in order to increase the effectiveness of the Forum.

13 PROVISION OF DEFINITIVE RIGHTS OF WAY MAPS TO FORUM MEMBERS

Mr Jacobs reported that it would not be pragmatic to give each member definitive rights of way maps for the whole Borough. The Forum was informed that the provision of such maps was hampered by the fact that the maps were out of date; in most cases they consisted of four to six large maps drawn to different map scales and map publications and that not all public paths were marked. Definitive maps were circulated to demonstrate the point. Mr Jacobs informed the Forum that due to the constant development, any definitive maps supplied would not be reflective in many cases of the on site situation. He suggested that, with the Forum's agreement, he could provide maps of individual members' areas which show their local public paths.

AGREED

That, subject to the understanding that any maps provided would not be the definitive maps, Mr Jacobs provide public rights of way maps of individual members' areas to Forum Members.

14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates of future meetings previously publicised should have stated that the November meeting was to take place on Wednesday 19th November 2008 and not Wednesday 18th November 2008 as indicated.

AGREED

That the next meetings of the Forum be held at 6.30pm in Committee Room 3, if available, at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley, on:
Wednesday 16th July, 2008
Wednesday 17th September, 2008
Wednesday 19th November, 2008

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

CHAIRMAN