

## DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 at 6.30pm in Committee Room 3 at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

### PRESENT: -

Mr M Freer (Chairman)  
Mr D Woodruff (Vice-Chairman)

Mr T Antill, Mr D Bates, Mr A Cutler, Mr D Davies, Mrs C Freer, Mr R Vickers, and Mr N Williams.

### Officers:

Mr J Butler – Development Group Engineer, (Directorate of the Urban Environment) and Miss K Fellows – Democratic Services Officer, (Directorate of Law and Property).

### Also in Attendance:

Mr Gameson, (Vice Chairman of the Local Access Forum for Stafford/Wolverhampton).

### 23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mr R Burgess and Mr Yeates.

### 24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Antill and Mr Woodruff declared personal interests in relation to agenda item no. 5 – Cycle Barriers on the Stourbridge Arm of the Stourbridge Canal, as Mr Antill was the founder and remains a member of Monarch's Way Association and Mr Woodruff was a cyclist and as such was interested in opening the barriers referred to in the report.

Mrs C Freer and Mr M Freer declared personal interests in relation to agenda item no. 8(b) – H23 – Gainsford Drive to Coombes Road - due to their capacity as members of Halesowen Abbey Trust.

### 25. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the Forum held on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

The deletion of the words "all information would be gathered together" and the substitution therefore of the wording "the commencement of information gathering would begin" in the first paragraph, fourth line of Minute number 11 – Matters arising from the Minutes.

The deletion of "Mr. Ford" and the replacement with "Alan Radford" in the

first paragraph, second line of Minute number 15 – Planning Applications – Coombeswood H23 – Chancel Way to Amber Way.

26. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

In relation to minute number 6 – Allowing Disabled People to Access New Urban Developments, Mr Woodruff reported that details of the function and role of the forum had been forwarded to Ms Bothroyd Representative of Access in Dudley.

In connection with minute number 7 – The Bridleway off Turls Hill Road/Setton Drive, Mr J Butler reported that the asset management meeting had now taken place with one of the Boroughs eight highway inspectors and plans had been put into place with street care to start actively maintaining paths in the borough.

In connection with minute number 9 – Re-Location of Sporting Facilities in Coombswood, it was confirmed that revised plans and planning application had been emailed to members. In particular, discussions took place in relation to:-

- The timescale for decisions relating to planning applications;
- The length of time left for the forum to comment on the revised plans and how best to deal with the response;
- The consideration of access issues when determining planning applications.

AGREED

That a Sub-Committee be formed comprising of the Chairman, Mr Antill, Mr D Davis and Mr Woodruff in order to deal with the Forum's response to the revised plans and application relating to Coombs Wood Sports and Social Club.

Mr Butler advised that the prescribed time limits for reaching decisions in relation to planning applications were either eight or thirteen weeks, depending upon the complexity of applications.

In relation to access issues, planning officers should always make a site visit, when issues relating to access are likely to be more visible and considered, however as Engineers site visits are not always considered necessary, access issues may not always be considered by them.

In relation to minute number 21(c) – Any Other Business, Mr Butler provided a verbal update indicating that in relation to closure of the path leading from Keates Close onto the recreation ground, police investigations had been completed, and from the information available, there was no evidence to support the closure of the path. This information had been passed onto the interested parties that afternoon.

27. CYCLE BARRIERS ON THE STROUBRIDGE ARM OF THE STOURBRIDGE CANAL

Mr Woodruff presented the report, referring in particular to the protests regarding the RADAR barriers on the council towpath impeding cyclists' progress. Amendments to the report were circulated at the meeting. In relation to general points to be considered, particular reference was made to:

- The agreement between Stourbridge Navigation Trust, British Waterways and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to use the towpath as a cycle route;
- The previous upgrading of the cycle path, to provide a multi use facility for the public;
- That cycling was a minority activity on the Dudley towpaths, albeit a sizeable one, and that pedestrians outnumber cyclists by three to one.
- That cyclists should accept towpath barriers and adjust their speed accordingly, as speeding cyclists posed a danger to residents and other path users.
- That the health, safety and welfare of those who live and work permanently on the canals, and those who live in adjoining properties should be of paramount importance.

Mr Woodruff circulated a statement and proposed decision to the members, and proposed that the forum's advice should be:-

- The status quo regarding the barriers on the towpath be maintained;
- The route from Richardson Drive, through Rushall Close and Smallshire Way be adopted as soon as practicable into the Borough's network of cycle routes;
- On all walking and cycling maps produced by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, the type and position of any barriers be clearly marked, to enable any map user to plan their journey accordingly.

## AGREED

That the advice of the Forum be adopted in accordance with the proposals outlined above and that Democratic Services email the Forum's advice to the following:-

- The Dudley Cycle Forum:ian.withey@dudley.gov.uk  
AND: don.macdougall@dudley.gov.uk
- The Lead Member for  
Transportation:cllr.angus.adams@dudley.gov.uk
- Lynda Waltho MP:WALTHOL@parliament.uk
- Road Safety:don.macdougall@dudley.gov.uk  
and:wendy.howard@dudley.gov.uk
- DUE:ian.withey@dudley.gov.uk
- The cycling  
champion; cllr.mike.attwood@dudley.gov.uk
- The Stourbridge Navigation Trust: The secretary is Chris  
Dyche at:christopherdyche@hotmail.com
- The Staffs and Worcs Canal Society: The president is

- Mike Grant at:president@swcs.org.uk
- British Waterways: Tony Harvey is the general manager for the west  
midlands:Tony.Harvey@britishwaterways.co.uk
- Stourbridge Cycling Club: The chairman is Terry Rowntree:terry.rowntree@stourbridgecyclingclub.com
- Dudley Friends of the Earth:guy.sheppard@blueyonder.co.uk
- Stourbug:stourbug@yahoo.co.uk

28. ACCESS IN DUDLEY SUB-COMMITTEE

Following discussion it was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

29. ROWIP RESPONSE

A response to the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan was circulated at the meeting, and it was reported that Ms Perkins, Transportation Officer, had advised that the previous meeting of the sub committee had raised some important issues that required further discussion in order to progress the draft plan. Ms Perkins had circulated proposed dates for a future meeting to the members. It was

AGREED

That the Sub-Committee comprising of Mr T Antill, Mr D Davis, Mrs C Freer and Mr D Woodruff, arrange a further meeting with Kelly Perkins to discuss further, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

30. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(a) Coombswood H23 – Chancel Way to Amber Way.

Consideration was given to this matter.

(b) H23 – Gainsford Drive to Coombs Road

It was reported that the path referred to was extremely narrow and came to a pinch point at one end, posing security risks for ramblers. There followed discussions relating to:-

- The possibility of the Halesowen Abbey Trust providing machinery to clear the path;
- Planning applications;
- The Highways Authority statutory duties to protect members of the public by maintaining rights of way;

Mr Butler indicated that he noted the members comments, and thanked Halesowen Abbey Trust for work previously done relating to the provision of machinery and clearing paths. Following further discussion it was:-

AGREED

That, Mr J Butler provide a written report updating the forum in relation to the path to the next meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009.

(c) Plan no. P08/096 – Land Adjacent to 107 Long Lane, Halesowen

Following discussion it was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

31. RELOCATION OF SPORTING FACILITIES IN COOMBSWOOD

It was noted that this matter had been dealt with at minute 26 above.

32. GATING ORDERS

(a) File Cutters Path

Mr Butler reported that the comments of the Forum had been received and this matter would be referred to the Cabinet Member for Transportation, and a decision would be made in February, 2009 either to go back to the beginning of the process for making the gating order, or to continue with the order as made.

There followed discussions relating to the email received from Mr Davis, a business owner who would be adversely affected by the gating order. As the Forum had not seen any evidence to support permanent gating, discussions ensued regarding supporting gating for prescribed hours during the evenings.

AGREED

That the Forum respond to Ms S Bagria, Legal Assistant, stating that they welcomed the report from Mr Davis and noted his concerns about his commercial interest, and would wish to see measures investigated regarding temporary gating and how this would be supervised, with the proviso that the Forum be consulted further.

(b) Murcroft Road/Wychbury Road

Mr Butler reported that when the review of the gating order commences, in April, 2009, the Police, local community, various outside bodies and the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum would be consulted. The consultation and information gathering process would take place over a six month period.

(c) Review of Consultation Process.

The members were in agreement that they believed the most sensible process for consultation would be for the Chairman and Secretary to the forum to be emailed and written to in relation to any further consultations relating to gating orders.

33. FUNDING OF THE FORUM

There followed a discussion in particular relating to:-

- The appointment of a new Lead Officer for the Forum.
- Any surplus forum funds being carried over to the next financial year;
- Utilising funding for site visits;
- Preparation of the Forum's Annual Report;

There was general agreement that future site visits should include a visit to Turls Hill Bridleway, and that relevant Ward Councillors and Officers should be invited to attend.

AGREED

That Democratic Services write to Ms S Orton, Head of Museums, Greenspace and Bereavement Services requesting confirmation that any surplus forum funds could be carried over to the next financial year, release of the budget code in order that site visits could be planned and transport arrangements made, and the up to date position relating to the replacement of the Forum's lead officer.

34. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) Mr Williams proposed that the forum show support for the near completion of restoration and improvements to Leasowes Park, by forwarding a letter of congratulations to the Chairman of Friends of the Leasowes.
- (b) Mr Davies requested the Chairman to write to all those members who had not attended meetings for some time, in an effort to promote attendance to future meetings.
- (c) Mr Gameson invited members to the Annual General Meeting and Ordinary Meeting of the Stafford and Wolverhampton Local Access Forum on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2009 at 10am.

AGREED

- a) That Democratic Services write to the Chairman of Friends of the Leasowes congratulating them in relation to their work at Leasowes Park.
- b) That the Chairman write to members of the forum, who had not attended meetings for some time.
- c) That Mr Gameson forward details of the meeting to Democratic Services, in order that these may be

distributed to Members of the Forum.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

That the next meetings of the Forum be held on:-

- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2009
- Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2009
- Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2009
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2009

All meetings to start at 6.30pm

The meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.

CHAIRMAN