

## THE DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (DBLAF)

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### DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM AGENDA

The next meeting of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum will be held at 1:00pm on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 in Committee Room 4, Dudley Council House, Dudley to consider the business set out below:-

1. Election of Chair
2. Election of Vice-Chair
3. Apologies for Absence
4. Declarations of Interest
5. To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
6. Leasowes Park, Access, Footpath Network, Signage and Interpretation
7. Planning Applications
  - (a) Planning Application – Land off Old Wharf Road
8. Access/Rights of Way Issues and Updates
  - (a) PROW – H124 and H125 Hawne Bank/Park, Belle Vale to Hawne Lane, Halesowen

The DBLAF is an advisory body established under Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to provide advice as to the improvement of public access to land in the Dudley Borough for the purpose of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area. Its views do not necessarily represent those of the Council.

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(b) Stile Improvements – Lapal area – T Pritchard to provide an update

9. Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Future Maintenance Programmes and the Delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

10. Any Other Business

It is requested that Members e-mail Karen Malpass at the address shown on the Agenda cover at least seven clear working days before the Meeting, details of any issues that they would wish to raise under this Agenda Item.

11. Dates of Future Meetings:-

(All Meetings to commence at 1pm at a venue to be confirmed)

- 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

TO: All Members of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum namely:-

Councillor C Barnett      Mrs T Boothroyd      R J Brooks      R Burgess  
Councillor P Lee      Ms A Nicholls      T Pritchard      N J Williams  
Ms S Yeadon

## Minutes of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 at 1.00pm  
In Committee Room 4 at the Council House, Dudley

### **Present:**

R Brooks (Vice-Chair in the Chair)  
R Burgess, T Pritchard and N Williams

### **Officers:**

D Keeley – Countryside Manager (Directorate of Public Realm) and  
K Griffiths – Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance  
and Legal)

### **Also in attendance:**

D Chaffey - Friends of The Leasowes Park

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## 28. **Election of Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year**

### **Resolved**

That the appointment of Chair for the 2022/23 municipal year be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

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## 29. **Appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year**

### **Resolved**

That the appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2022/23 municipal year be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.



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30. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of T Boothroyd, A Nicholls and S Yeadon and D Jacobs, Project Engineer and A Radford, Maintenance Manager.

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31. **Declarations of Interest**

R Burgess declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 11 - Access/Rights of Way Issues and Updates, as a Member of the Halesowen Abbey Trust.

N Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item No 8 – Leasowes Park, Access, Footpath Network, Signage and Interpretation, as a Member of the Friends of the Leasowes Group.

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32. **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, be approved as a correct record.

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33. **Leasowes Green Gateway Project**

The Countryside Manager provided an update to Members on proposals associated with the Leasowes Green Gateway Project. The Leasowes was not only a historic landscape and listed as Grade 1 on the English Heritage list of parks and gardens of historic interest in England but also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

During the update, the Countryside Manager and representative from the Leasowes Park provided an overview of the proposals associated with the project, as set out below:-

- Providing a visitor centre to increase visitor attraction to the site. Discussions with a variety of groups, including the Friends of Leasowes, The Canal Trust and Halesowen Abbey were taking place to draw up plans to ensure a visitor facility was offered. It

was proposed to renovate the building previously occupied by the Wardens prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and incorporate other facilities such as a café shop and visitor toilets. The building was in need of an upgrade, however, with planning restrictions involved with Grade 1 listed buildings, the option to demolish and build a new centre was not a possibility.

- Upgrade the play area and bring up to a standard expected by visitors to allow increase public enjoyment.
- Upgrade or resurface the car parking facilities.
- Improve the entrance off Mucklows Hill. The entrance and general approach to Leasowes was considered uninviting and did not create the right appearance for a Grade 1 listed building. Options to improve the entrance were discussed, together with the safety aspects to the public and wildlife burrowed in the area. Further discussion with Highways was essential to identifying an improvement strategy fit for purpose.
- A further aspiration was to improve the Leasowes Canal. Further discussion with key stakeholders would be undertaken with a view to incorporating any improvements in with the project.

The Countryside Manager referred to the aspirations associated with linking Leasowes Park, Saltwells and Wrens Nest Nature Reserves, together with progress made to date and funding options available.

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34. **9 Mile Walk**

**Action**

**Officer/Member**

That the Countryside Manager be requested to provide an update at the next meeting of the Forum.

D Keeley

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35. **Leasowes Park, Access, Footpath Network, Signage and Interpretation**

N Williams submitted twenty-eight evidence forms which had been collated to support the process of changing the status of the well-used footpath from Manor Lane via Stennels Field East to Leasowes Lane

to a Public Right of Way. The Democratic Services Officer indicated that the forms would be forwarded to the Group Engineer for action.

Ongoing issues relating to Leasowes Lane were discussed, and Members were advised that the property owner had agreed to remove the concrete bollard that was encroaching on Council owned land. A more urgent radical approach was required to ensure the safety of pedestrians and vehicle users. A suggestion of creating an alternative pedestrian route was made, however, with current budget constraints, funding would be a challenge. N Williams indicated that he had circulated a letter to the Group Engineer and D Chaffey and was awaiting a response.

N Williams indicated that following discussions between The Friends of Leasowes Park and the owner of the Golf Club, an agreement had been made to work collaboratively to identify improvements to the entrance road.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to forward the twenty-eight evidence forms to the Group Engineer for appropriate action.	D Jacobs/ Democratic Services Officer
That the item remain on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.	Democratic Services Officer

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36. **Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) – Future Maintenance Programme and the Delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

In the absence of the Group Engineer, Members were advised that the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan would be circulated to the general public for comments in January, 2023 with a view to the document being made final in February 2023.

R Burgess, on behalf of the Forum, highlighted the following comments:-

- The key information, as highlighted by members, as set out in Minute No. 20 of the minutes held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 had not been fully included in the Draft Plan.

- The draft ROWIP was a document that did not strictly follow Government Guidance as intended, and restricted a high percentage of historical information, without producing a meaningful plan of action.
- There was a need to make a fresh and full assessment with particular reference to the improvements of all Rights of Way in Dudley.
- A full detailed and ambitious plan was required to identify all the work that was required to bring all Rights of Way up to a high standard of order.
- Whilst it had not been clear in the draft Plan, most of the expenditure and effort related to tarmac surfaced Urban Public Rights of Way (PROW). Considering that the ROWIP came from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it was clear a separation of expenditure between the Countryside and Urban paths was required, which would then provide evidence of the low level of expenditure used on countryside paths.
- Following a survey of all PROW, it was expected that a schedule of proposed works would be prepared with projected costings to cover the 10 Year Plan Period, which would conform with "A Statement of Action", as set out in Government Guidance.
- Projected costings would no doubt demonstrate that present budgets for PROW maintenance were totally inadequate and would illustrate that there was an urgent need to secure additional funding, either from Council funds or from available outside sources and grants.

The Countryside Manager indicated that any further comments in relation to the ROWIP should be e-mailed to the Group Engineer direct by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022.

### **Action**

That the comments referred to above be considered as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Members be requested to send any further comments to the Group Engineer by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022.

### **Officer/Member**

D Jacobs/All Members

That the item remain on the agenda for an update at the next meeting of the Forum.

Democratic Services

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37. **Planning Applications**

**Planning Application P22/02758 – Marriott Road, Cradley Heath – Diversion of a Restricted Byway and creation of new ways**

Members were advised that the Council was expecting the developer to refresh existing plans, which would require a Section 247 Town and Country Planning 1990 Order. R Burgess agreed to liaise with the Group Engineer following the meeting on aspects within the remit of the Dudley Brough Local Access Forum and provide an update to the next meeting.

**Planning Application – Land off Old Wharf Road**

In the absence of the Group Engineer, Members were advised that there were currently no updates in relation to the application and an update would be provided to Members at the next meeting of the Forum.

**Action**

**Officer/Member**

That R Burgess be requested to liaise with the Group Engineer on matters associated with Planning Application P22/02758 and provide an update to Members at the next meeting.

R Burgess/D  
Jacobs

That an update be provided to Members at the next meeting of the Forum on Planning Application – Lane off Old Wharf Road.

D Jacobs

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38. **Access/Rights of Way Issues and Updates**

(a) **Lower Illey between Path 107 in Dudley and Path 6 in Worcestershire**

Members were advised that the matter was ongoing and required Dudley's Legal Section to conclude their part of the process. An update would be provided at the next meeting of the Forum.



<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
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That the item remain on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum for an update to be provided.	Democratic Services Officer/D Jacobs
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(b) Footpath H115 Site of Hawne Colliery and Footpath 116 Rear of Oil Refinery Shelah Road, Halesowen

R Burgess indicated that he had produced a summary of improvement work required to footpath 115, together with estimated costs associated with the required work. A copy of the information/design document was forwarded to the Maintenance Manager and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to consider funding opportunities.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
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That the Maintenance Manager and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to pursue the required maintenance work, including funding opportunities to footpath 115.	A Radford/Cllr S Phipps
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That the item remain on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.	Democratic Services Officer
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(c) Public Right of Way H124 and H125 Hawne Bank/Park, Belle Vale to Hawne Lane, Halesowen

R Burgess informed Members of the challenges associated with cutting back vegetation on the footpaths since operatives were now unable to use strimmers. As the footpath formed part of the 9 mile route, the Countryside Manager indicated that he would pursue the matter and request that the Ranger involved with the 9 mile route contact R Burgess with a view to clearing the footpaths.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
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That the Countryside Manager be requested to contact the Ranger involved with the 9 mile route and	D Keeley/D Rudge
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request that he contact R Burgess with a view to clearing vegetation on the footpaths.

That the item remain on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.

Democratic Services Officer

(d) Footpath S454

**Action**

**Officer/Member**

The Project Engineer be requested to provide an update at the next meeting of the Forum.

D Jacobs / Democratic Services Officer

(e) Stile Improvements – Lapal Area

Members were informed that there had not been any progress on improving the two stiles on footpath 56 by Lapal House and despite an e-mail being sent to the Maintenance Manager on progress, no response had yet been provided.

The Countryside Manager undertook to investigate whether livestock were grazing in the area and update Members.

**Action**

**Officer/Member**

That the Maintenance Manager be requested to respond to T Pritchard on progress in relation to improving the two stiles on footpath 56.

A Radford

That the Countryside Manager be requested to investigate whether livestock were grazing in the area and update Members.

D Keeley

That the item remain on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.

Democratic Services Officer

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39. **Advertisement for Dudley Local Access Forum Members**

D Keeley provided an update, indicating that an advert had been placed on social media sites through CAPPA. Progress updates

would be provided as necessary.

**Action**

**Officer/Member**

That the Countryside Manager be requested to provide updates as necessary.

D Keeley

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40. **Any Other Business**

Lack of Access to Halesowen Abbey

T Pritchard referred to the ongoing issues associated with the approved plans to convert the Halesowen Abbey barns into homes, with particular reference to the lack of access to the Abbey and restrictions associated with the planning application. It was suggested that Principal Historic Environment Officer involved with the planning application be invited to attend a future meeting to update Members on progress.

Public Rights of Way, Halesowen area report on progress of vegetation clearance and other matters.

R Burgess indicated that the matter had now been resolved.

Replacement rail between Ham Dingle and Monarchs Way

D Keeley informed Members that D Rudge, the Ranger involved with the 9 mile route had replaced a rail that had fallen down between Ham Dingle and Monarchs Way and expressed his appreciation for the proactive work carried out.

Legal Event Modification Orders – Halesowen

Members were advised that the Legal Event Modification Order for Halesowen was making good progress and would be signed shortly. There were five anomalies identified, three were white roads (lanes with no status which previous authorities had failed to record), one from West Drive to Shenstone Avenue and the other was the Canal Bridge and link off Chancel Way, Halesowen.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
That the Principal Historic Environment Officer be invited to attend a future meeting to update Members on progress associated with the Halesowen Abbey.	Democratic Services Officer

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41. **Future Meeting, Date and Time**

Members discussed the possibility of bringing forward the meeting scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 to February, 2023, with a truncated version of the agenda to allow Members to discuss the Right of Way Improvement Plan in detail. R Brooks undertook to discuss the matter with the Chair of the Forum prior to instructing the Democratic Services Officer to change the date of the next meeting of the Forum.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer/Member</b>
That R Brooks be requested to contact the Chair of the Forum to discuss the possibility of bringing forward the 15 <sup>th</sup> March, 2023 meeting to February, 2023, with a truncated agenda prior to instructing the Democratic Services Officer to change the date of the next meeting.	R Brooks/ Democratic Services Officer

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The meeting ended at 2.10pm.