

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (OUTSIDE BODY)

Meeting: 14 November 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

David Gosling (Chair) in the chair; Debbi Hall (Vice-Chair); Jonathan Broad, Dave Butler, Kathy England, Phil Featherstone, Liz Morgan, Rachel Stewart, Zoe Smith, Ian Tate and Chris Walsh.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Forum were invited to declare any interest they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- (i) Footpath Along River Goyt (Minute 7 of 11 July 2023 refers)

A member of the Forum provided updates related to the footpath along the River Goyt, at the bottom of Riverdale Farm, where a bank had slid into the river. It was reported that repair costs to the footpath, were likely to be in excess of £1 million. It was also reported that, despite clear sign posting prohibiting access, walkers and cyclists continued to travel along that part of the footpath.

5. GREATER MANCHESTER COALITION OF DISABLED PEOPLE PRESENTATION

A representative of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP) attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the work of the GMCDP.

The following comments were made/ issues were raised:-

- The GMCDP reported that the key issue related to accessibility was train stations as it was often hard to locate the responsible party for train station access and a lack of central government funding had curtailed work to create better access at train stations.
- Following the COVID pandemic, outdoor furniture from cafes and similar establishments had blocked pavements, making access difficult for disabled people.

Greater Manchester Local Authorities did not always have a dedicated access officer to resolve such issues.

- Progress was expected in the coming year on the Bee Network and cycle paths along with other areas with barriers to access, however this had been slow.
- Members of the Forum enquired as to whether the GMCDP carried out any work to do with. In response, the Forum was advised that The GMCDP was engaged in work related to off-road access such as footpaths and bridleways and an outcome was expected in the near future.
- Members of the Forum enquired as to whether the GMCDP acted as statutory consultee for government and local organisations such as TfGM. In response, the Forum was advised that, whilst the GMCDP was not a statutory consultee, it was usually consulted on issues of access for disabled people. The Coalition was of the view, however, that in some circumstances, its involvement amounted to a 'box-ticking' exercise which didn't necessarily represent meaningful consultation.
- Members of the Forum thanked the representative of the GMCDP for their presentation and commented that it was important to bear in mind issues related accessibility for disabled people.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

6. LEGAL REPORT ON OUTSTANDING DMMO

The Head of the Planning and Highways Team provided an update on the handling and progress of outstanding Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs).

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members of the Forum noted the resourcing and administrative issues that had caused a backlog of DMMOs.
- Members of the Forum welcomed the update and requested future transparency and continued updates on the DMMO backlog.
- Members asked whether highways authority numbers or registration applied to DMMOs, as was the case in other local authorities. In response, the Forum was advised that there was no legislative procedure to allocate a number or reference for DMMOs, although this was under consideration. A further update on this matter would be provided at a future meeting.
- The Forum was advised that work was still ongoing to improve the website content, although the overall design of the website would remain unchanged.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

7. MODIFICATION AND REMOVAL OF ACCESS CONTROLS UPDATE

The Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager provided an update on the modification and removal of access controls.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members of the Forum queried the length of time it had taken to modify and remove access controls. The Forum expressed concern that the council had missed an

opportunity for funding from Sustrans for the removal of barriers on the Transpennine trail. In response, the Forum was advised that the council was working with Sustrans.

- Members enquired about the possibility of volunteers carrying out temporary work on the Transpennine Way to create level access. In response, it was stated that this would require consideration by the council.
- Members expressed concern related to the time taken to resolve issues. In response it was stated that resourcing had prevented work being undertaken as quickly as members hoped because there was not a single officer dedicated to this issue.
- Members requested a timetable on the resolution of issues. In response, the Forum was advised that it was intended that some works would take place before the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

8. VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON RIGHTS OF WAY UPDATE

The Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager provided an update on the use of volunteers working on rights of way.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members of the Forum expressed an interest in attending a meeting with the Traffic and Asset Manager to discuss the use of volunteers.
- Members requested that different models be considered for different areas.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

9. RECENT ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager provided an update on recent activity.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members asked when work would begin on the transition of the section of the Ladybrook Valley cycle route from Ladybrook Road to Demmings Lane to become a bridleway. It was stated that there was no current start date but officers undertook to provide an update would be given at the Walking and Cycling Forum.
- Members enquired about an update for the Bramhall 41 East End footpath. In response, the Forum was advised that the council was in the process of gathering funding for the design and the delivery of the footpath, along with intermediary actions for winter.
- Members asked about the footpath along the River Goyt at the bottom of Riverdale Farm. It was stated that no update was available, but a report would be submitted to a future meeting of Marple Area Committee. Furthermore, a business case would be created for improvements rather than repairs.
- Members commented that members of the public had accessed the footpath along the River Goyt using branch cutters, despite it being signposted as closed. The council was aware of the situation and had placed robust signposting to deter that behaviour. Furthermore, this question of an alternative route had been discussed with councillors.

- In the event that the river washed out all the banking to the farm at the footpath along the River Goyt, any response would depend on legal obligations.
- Members enquired as to whether there was a risk assessment had taken place related to the risk of the River Goyt breaching the river banking. In response, members were advised that advice would be provided by the Flood and Drainage Team which had undertaken such a risk assessment.
- Members commented that the closed footpath along the River Goyt was unlikely to be fixed soon.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. FORWARD PLAN

Members and officers were invited to suggest agenda items for future meetings of the Forum.

The following agenda items were proposed:

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) update for the next meeting.
- An update on the requirement to produce an annual report.
- An update on the clarity of sign posting in regards to horse riding, cycling routes and bridleways without TROs.

The meeting closed at 19:38