

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Secretary

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Stockport Local Access Forum (LAF) is a statutory public forum run by the Local Authority. It's aimed at providing opportunities for its members to be informed of and make valuable contributions to strategic access related matters within the borough.
- 1.2 The LAF serves as an important consultee to major strategic and development projects. It's also to serve as a broad-based interface to make informed comments on land management, public rights of way, development and access policy matters.
- 1.3 The LAF meets three times a year, often inviting guest organisations such as charities to give presentations to inform members of their work, as well as discussing wider strategic and ad-hoc issues.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Members

David Gosling	Chair
Debbi Hall	Vice-Chair
Cllr Grace Baynham	Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services
Jonathan Broad	
Kathy England	
Edgar Ernstbrunner	
Phil Featherstone	
Elizabeth Morgan	
Rachel Sewart	
Zoe Smith	
Ian Tate	
Chris Walsh	

2.2 Regular Officer Attendees

Emily Brough	Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager
Nick Robinson	Senior Transportation Officer
George Cox	Secretary

3. GUEST SPEAKERS

- 3.1 This year saw an invitation extended to the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, who gave a presentation at the November meeting.

4. MEETING DIARY

4.1 17th July 2023

The July meeting began with the election of the Chair and the appointment of the Vice-Chair, to which David Gosling and Debbi Hall were chosen respectively.

The Forum received a rights of way update largely relating to vegetation clearance and minor repair works.

The Strategy Growth & Improvement Manager delivered a verbal presentation on outstanding Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs). Member responses included:

- Concerns that there were DMMOs from up to a decade ago which remained outstanding.
- That the legal process for completing DMMOs should be outlined by a legal officer.
- That consideration be given as to how other authorities report on the same issues.

A report was submitted regarding the Council's budget plans for 2023/2024 maintenance of public rights of way. This included officer updates such as that priorities were being made off of a risk matrix, and that signage was one of these priorities. Member responses included:

- Enquiries regarding the size of the budget in comparison to the highways budget, and concern that this was too small.
- Comment that more should be done to encourage active travel within the borough.
- Concern that the GMCA did not give a fair allocation of funding to Stockport for public rights of way.
- Enquiries into feasibility studies on new rights of way, and how this was decided.

4.2 14th November 2023

The November meeting covered a range of items, which included Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs); modification and removal of access controls; volunteer work on rights of way; and recent activity in relation to rights of way.

The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People delivered a presentation, raising awareness to the Forum of access issues for disabled people, including at train stations; on pavements as a consequence of pavement seating following the pandemic; and on public rights of way.

A verbal update on outstanding DMMOs was given by the Head of the Planning & Highways Team, which resulted in member discussion on financial constraints; highway number allocation on DMMOs; and website improvements.

A verbal update on the modification and removal of access controls was given by the Strategy Growth & Improvement Manager. Member comments included:

- Concern that the Council had missed an opportunity to gain funding from Sustrans for this work on the Trans Pennine trail.
- Concern relating to the time it had taken for the Council to resolve these issues.
- Enquiries on the feasibility of volunteer work on some of the paths.

4.3 11th March 2024

The March meeting focused primarily on feeding back on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Members concerns and comments included (but were not limited to) topics such as:

- Reactive vs frequent footpath maintenance policies.
- How the footpath network was used.
- Use of inclusive language extending to wheelchair users and equestrians.
- Progress on route status clarification.
- Progress on Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).
- The distinction between what constitutes revenue vs capital projects and the transparency of both.
- The standard of surfacing on routes.
- Unnecessary barriers on footpaths.
- Lack of progress on the implementation of access policy.

5. **CHAIR'S COMMENT**

TO BE COMPLETED

6. **GET INVOLVED**

6.1 Membership is encouraged from those with an interest in; land management, walking, horse riding, cycling, transportation, local business, greenspace, planning, tourism, disability access, community champions and minority ethnic group's access.

For enquiries regarding joining, please visit [Stockport Local Access Forum - Stockport Council](#) or email secretariat@stockport.gov.uk

7. **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Forum is recommended to comment on and note the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact George Cox on 0161 474 2981 or by email on george.cox@stockport.gov.uk