

Public Rights of Way and Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th July, 2022 at 10.00 am in Teams Virtual Meeting - Teams

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Sue Hind

Committee Members

County Councillor Stephen Clarke
County Councillor Carole Haythornthwaite
Adam Briggs, National Farmers Union (NFU)
Duncan Byrne, (Wyre Borough Council representative)
Mr Brian Dearnaley, Peak and Northern Footpath Society
Mrs Rosemary Hogarth, (Long Distance Riders Group representative)
David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Ms Chris Peat, (British Horse Society representative)
Mike Prescott, Cycling UK
Neil Herbert, Lancaster Ramblers Association

Officers

David Goode, Lancashire County Council
Garth Harbison, Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, County Councillor Sue Hind, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Cosima Towneley.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Highways Act Orders and Town and Country Planning Act Orders

In terms of Highways Act Orders the forum was informed that Legal Services had 84 live files. Since the last forum Legal Services had received 3 new applications and 0 matters had been closed.

38 applications had not yet been to committee. 7 applications were awaiting Order making. 4 Orders were in the objection period and 2 Orders were awaiting confirmation authorisation.

5 Orders needed to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as they had received objections. 1 Order was with the Planning Inspectorate.

2 Orders were awaiting confirmation as they required groundworks to be undertaken before they were confirmed. 25 Orders had been confirmed but were awaiting to be certified fit for use.

Regarding Town and Country Planning Act Orders, Legal Services had 3 live files. 3 matters were waiting to be confirmed following further advice from the Rights of Way Team.

There was concern about the fact that zero Highways Act Orders had been closed since the last forum. The reason for this was because until a couple of months ago there was only one officer who spent part of their time dealing with diversions. This was mainly dealing with orders made by district councils under the Town and Country Planning Act. Another Public Paths Orders Officer had now been appointed who would deal solely with the Highways Act Orders.

5. Definitive Map Modification Orders

Legal Services had 207 live files. Since the last forum they had received 16 new applications and 5 matters had been closed.

151 matters either were in the consultation period or were being investigated before going to committee. 3 Orders had been made and were in the objection period. 50 Orders had received objections and would need referral to the Planning Inspectorate.

2 Orders were with the Planning Inspectorate for determination. 1 Order was awaiting confirmation. 5 Orders had been confirmed by the council or the Planning Inspectorate and the high court application window had expired. These matters had been closed.

More staff had been recruited by Public Rights of Way and the forum was reassured that figures would improve.

6. Revamp of MARIO

The forum was informed that the Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council had written a missive on the Intranet Staff Notices about the Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS team was thanked for the delivery of a new version of MARIO. MARIO was a website which used maps to help businesses and residents find information local to them. The website could also be used to post real time information such as severe weather warnings.

The new revamp of MARIO had had a mixed reception. Some people were not happy about the ability to print or the absence of concessionary footpaths. The forum was informed that people needed to move on from printing things out.

It was noted that most of the concessionary agreements were for ten years and many had not been renewed so the numbers were declining.

The Public Rights of Way Team used the MARIO system when out on site without printing maps off. It was noted that MARIO was a very useful tool.

7. Public Rights of Way Database

There was concern about the lack of clearances on the Public Rights of Way Database and forum enquired if this was to do with some of the new staff still being trained up.

It was pointed out that there were still errors on the database including duplications and missing reports. The forum enquired what the state of the database was now and what was happening with the errors.

The database was an internal system for the Public Rights of Way Team and broad statistics from it used to be provided to the forum but there were a lot of caveats. Information from the database was still available via Freedom of Information.

The Public Rights of Way Team was looking at getting a new database and looking at having meaningful data as well but this was still a few months away.

Regarding other authorities, Blackburn with Darwen Council received public complaints and these went on its corporate system. These complaints were investigated where possible. The council had got quite a high rate of enforcement cases at the moment as well as a high number of diversion applications. Blackburn with Darwen Council had a lot of work on but not enough staff just like other authorities. A new Public Rights of Way Improvement Officer had just been appointed that pick up one of the enforcement cases and try and get the diversion list down. In terms of data, the authority had a map similar to the MARIO map but not quite as fancy. The authority did not publish its definitive maps online like Lancashire County Council did.

8. Any Other Business

There was no Any Other Business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 16 July 2019 at 10:00am

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston