

Somerset Local Access Forum

Minutes for the Meeting held on: 16th May 2019

At Langport Town Hall

SLAF Members Present:

David Lovejoy (Chair Person), Patricia Coombes (Vice Chair), Julia Gadd, Ann Fin, Anthony Gray, Alicia Aras, Sally Flack, Cllr Paul Maxwell,.

Members of Public: Lynn Myland, Joanna Roseff, Rachel Thompson

SCC Officers Present: Pete Hobleby – Rights of Way Service Manager, Keri Blackmore – SLAF Secretary, Business Support, Natasha Tremelling - Business Support

Apologies: Chris Sidaway, Helen Stephenson, Hugh Warmington, Suzy Diamond-White

Minutes by: Keri Blackmore– SLAF Secretary

Welcome

JG welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made from each member present to welcome the new Secretary, KB. KB provided apologies from members.

Election

JG & AF stepped down from Chair & Vice Chair and elections took place.

DL had already put himself forward for role of Chair, there were no other nominations from other members.

JG proposed and AF seconds DL for Chair.

TC is nominated for Vice Chair, she stated she would not want to be chair. JG proposed, AF seconds.

DL and TC are confirmed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

Matters Arising Oct 2018

Apologies from PH for the minutes not being complete, SCC's mistake, welcomes any further information from members.

Members wish to send their best wishes to Emma and wish her well.

County Farm Sales, general comment whether SLAF could be consulted or informed, nothing has been established as of yet. ROW are already consulted in advance of sales. Could estate agents inform ROW when land is being sold.

AA & DL, it should be up to the seller to declare any rights of access. PH commented that there is potential with this, and that there is a mandatory question for ROW as part

of the conveyancing process since 2016. There is a limited resource issue though and unsure if ROW could cope with any possible demand.

PH mentioned that the forum could potentially take on this role of contacting / being a consultee with estate agents for land sales. JG unable to action a letter to County Farms due to late minutes.

Neroche Herepath - PH provided a summary background for the newer members and those members of the public present. The Forestry Commission now need to put the remedial costs forward to the funding board, though there is greater amount of capping. Tyres are a cheap method of construction but expensive to remove. Once the funding method has been confirmed between Forestry Commission and SCC (and any others as may be required), PH to then talk to the new landowners about securing an agreement for continuing the public access.

AA mentioned EDF have a social fund, Broomfield have been offered money. PH mentioned it's probably too far from Hinkley to qualify for this.

DL mentioned Highways England have an under used fund pot of £65 million, but this is complicated to get money out of. There is also £150 million in the reservation pot. You couldn't simply cap it, there are different compression rates.

PH mentioned the public expectable standard; the construction wasn't done to a good standard, but the solution has been designed by Forestry Commission engineer.

PH is keen to resolve this prior to A358, so the Herepath is opened and in use before to see how it interacts with the A358.

PM asked if the tyres are toxic.

PH said he didn't know, but that the main issue is the mix of different tyres used.

DL mentioned that he will talk to Mr McDonald and find out what he can, the A358 plan is not popular.

A303 Update

PH mentioned he spent two days at hearings in Ilchester & Sparkford recently, explaining that a number of ROW are being diverted to meet the over bridge & under bridge footpaths and bridleways as part of the dualling proposal. There is an additional hearing on the 23rd May to focus primarily on the drafting of the Development Consent Order. This includes historical routes, modifying the definitive map and trying to secure mitigation, so there is an option to fall back on. Highways England response to this has could be better. There will be two routes directly impacted which may have higher rights. The current rights will be diverted as part of the scheme.

12th June is the cut off examination period, then 6 months for the Examining Authority and the Planning Inspectorate to come to a decision. Construction programmed to take place March next year assuming they have approval from the Secretary of State. Information can be found here:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-west/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester-dualling/?ipcsection=overview>

Backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map

PH spoke about the backlog of applications to update the definitive map. ROW have 330 outstanding applications around 10 years old. What could the forum do? ROW used to have more resources but are only able to work on 10 a year due to lack of resource now. With the A303 development, these applications can be taken out of turn

as a priority. Efficiency proposals have been taken to the Regulation Committee and already received feedback. Committee are not keen on the proposals in relation to decision-making and wish to keep the status quo. PH won't contest this aspect. Savings would allow for additional 3 applications a year to be determined. Proposals will go to the Scrutiny Committee in June.

PM asked what could improve the work load.

PH stated it would need to be dramatic, maybe a separate service to help reduce the backlog.

PM said thinking out of the box, any mileage from each District to create or invest into help with the backlog. SSDC would support, believes all Districts should.

PH mentioned that the cut-off point is 2026 for any applications based on historic (pre-1949) evidence.

PM mentioned he was happy to take this idea back to his team.

The members of the public were invited to share their views. Similar views had been presented to the Regulation Committee and PH said a response to the written submissions was being prepared, which he is happy to circulate to the forum. **ACTION** DL asked how we can help to move forward.

PH said a campaign for additional resource would help.

DL I will work with PM on a draft letter. **ACTION**

AF asked if we should prolong the deadline, to push for an extension, to which RT replied that the government hasn't done what it was supposed to, she believes it should be done by 2026 to everyone's agreement.

No update from working group.

Additional Transport

PH has secured Capital money in transport for ROW, he has £100,000 for resurfacing projects across the county, working with the Bridleways Associations and the Ramblers, the money has already committed to ideas brought forward. The budget needs to be used by March next year. 3rd party funding would enable more to be done. There is a potential delay with private vehicle access rights, barriers need to be put in place for unauthorised vehicles. If anyone has any ideas, this can be sent to the SLAF email.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan update

AF attended a BHS meeting and mentioned how ROW's improvement plan is used for improvements, information on new housing estates.

PH mentioned the wider strategy for developments is not seen so much at the SCC ROW level and struggle to just keep up in responding to the individual applications as and when consulted on them. PH mentioned they're trying to get Grampian conditions on permissions where a diversion is required to ensure that any necessary changes to the network occur before the development interferes with the ROW.

PM said he supports PH in regard to the Grampian condition, Cllr & Officers working together.

PH Improvement Plans have to be published with an annual report every year, but currently the resource isn't there to do this effectively and achieve all the aspirations of the Improvement Plan. Some actions of the Plan are being embedded as par to the

maintenance activity by investing long life infrastructure, bridges with ramps instead of steps, gap/ gate instead of stiles.

AF aiming towards multiuser paths?

PH Yes. We welcome members of the public to comment on developments and routes that they want to put forward.

Newsletter

Members approved of the newsletter, want it to possibly include a report/minutes, twice a year and loaded online.

JG mentioned it might be a good idea to send a copy to the Parish Councils as many will not know what SLAF is.

PH welcomed the idea, thought a personal message could go on the next newsletter. ROW have the contacts of the Parishes and ROW volunteers.

JG volunteered to work with KB & PH on the next newsletter. **ACTION**

AOB

AF mentioned that issues with stiles that had been logged on explore Somerset have been removed from the map without being completed. She stated they had been told the farmers needed to mend the stiles.

PH stated that issues should not be closed before they are solved and asked her to forward details, so PH can look into it. **ACTION**

AA mentioned an interesting watch on Countryfile in regard to the Steart Peninsula. This is the UK's largest wetland, found on the North Somerset coast. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004wpb>

PH mentioned the email sent out in regard to Fairfield Estate Woodland management plan. Responses are required by the 11th June.

DL stated that for him, two meetings a year is not enough, and wanted to know if anything could be done with this. He also may be able to provide a suitable location for meetings for free.

JG mentioned about sufficient fund for KB & PH to attend more meetings, PH mentioned that the secretary could possibly attend without PH.

DL also mentioned he would like a site visit every year, he would like to show off his own Parish.

PH if forum is self-sufficient will fully support it.

DL asked if anyone has any ideas to email him. Believes a site visit would be a great benefit.

Next Meeting- 3rd October (Location yet to be decided)

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Meeting	Action	Owner	Complete
16/5/19	Circulate Joanna Roseff submission with SCC ROW response	PH	Y

16/5/19	Campaign letter for additional resource in relation to processing of applications to modify the Definitive Map & Statement	DL & PM	
16/5/19	JG to provide personal SLAF message for next newsletter (circulation to PCs & vols)	JG with KB/PH	
16/5/19	AF to forward details of prematurely closed issues	AF	Y