



## WEST LOTHIAN ACCESS FORUM

***“An independent statutory body set up to advise West Lothian Council on access issues under The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and on Rights of Way”***

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 3pm at Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park**

Present:	Eirwen Hopwood Andy Gibbs Chris Alcorn Carol Campbell	Ben Dolphin Jamie Smart Carl Gilbert (part) Richard Toleman (part)	Alastair Morrison Gordon Allan Deborah Paton (part) Malcolm Hill (part)
Apologies:	Beverly Stirling	Tracey Smith	

		<u>Action</u>
1.	<b>Chair</b>	
	Chris Alcorn volunteered to Chair the meeting.	
	Carol Campbell again volunteered to take Minutes	
2.	<b>Minutes of last meeting held on 6 April 2016</b>	
	Point 7 – should be 16/17 not 16/16.	<b>CA</b>
3.	<b>Matters Arising</b> <b>Local Development Plan (LDP) – on agenda.</b> Core Paths Plan review being considered by WLC in context of producing LDP. Current LDP going to Scottish Government Reporter in October 2016 and may get their view on objection by May 2017 (or possibly later). Review process starts over again once LDP adopted in 2018 CA has reviewed LDP – taken routes in landward section and produced plans for 13 routes. <b>(Richard Toleman joined meeting)</b> Council considering reviewing CP's within next LDP review rather than new / revised specific CPP. CA inviting comments on 13 routes. AM stated he had made favourable comments on LDP access policies/issues. <b>(Malcolm Hill joined meeting)</b> JS proposed LDP route so that there were not a number of plans. Stated though that all landowners affected should be contacted directly, rather than just through notifications through press. CA to provide maps for route discussions at next Forum meeting. AM queried how WLC Active Travel Plan (ATP) fits into LDP. DP said ATP was now a strategic consideration by WLC and adopted in April 2016 for period 2016-21. Referred to as planning guidance within LDP so has some material planning consideration. ATP focuses on functional journeys to work and school rather than recreational routes. AM asked if ATP has proposed routes and were they the same as LDP? DP – Yes, LDP has these and additional recreational routes within it. Also includes plans to strengthen connections between, and within settlements, as Local Active Travel Network Plans (LATNP) for main settlements e.g. Linlithgow is pilot community. MH queried when LDP will be before Ministers. CA – preparation administratively has been huge so while Reporters Unit get at end of October 2016 it will probably be summer 2017 (because of election purdah) before bringing recommendations delivered with adoption anticipated towards end 2017.	<b>CA</b>

	<p><b>Bathgate Hills Quiet Roads Initiative</b></p> <p>Initiative now across WL area with data collection for a range of rural routes – traffic volume and average speed. Now looking at different concept that when first mooted c2000 with signage and possibly reduced speed as part of functional networks rather than just stand alone routes and costly physical measures. Results been to Environment Panel to go out to public consultation in November 2016 and use online mapping tool to ask people what they currently use and seeking suggestions from them. Survey also online. Static presentations at Beecraigs, Stoneyburn and West Calder and can also contact WLC directly online, or by post to consult as widely as possible. Comments will be reviewed and then decided if project will be taken further. All consultation material will be passed to Access Forum. Keen to engage and seek suggestions from Access Forum on engagement.</p> <p>MH had previously e-mailed DP his concerns, but queried how people would get to these quiet road areas. DP said mainly through existing networks. MH stated that people would not use these but would take more direct routes by car and park e.g. across farm gates and create problems for land managers. DP asked for example. MH suggested Bathgate Hills. DP disagreed with this and suggested that it would be better to wait for results. While MH in favour he pressed point that need infrastructure to tie up and people will need to get to these QR areas and this needs to be considered carefully.</p> <p>DP, in response to JS query on police enforcing the speed limit, said reducing speed limit will be psychological to give walkers and cyclists confidence to walk or cycle on these specific routes. Also self-enforcing as speed data is key issue looking at. Initiative is also looking at wider Stoneyburn (as isolated) &amp; West Calder areas and Easton Road between Bathgate and Armadale, parallel to A89. AM pointed out that there was already Quiet Road signage on Stoneyburn Road.</p> <p>Discussion then on other suggested routes e.g. C17 albeit haven't looked at Dechmont Road as part of this project. Torphichen part of C17 although acknowledge footpath issues. MH raised Ballencrieff sport centre cycle track honey pot. AG raised concerns about Balvornie Road though Beecraigs as C17 would become replacement so should drop the speed limit. DP mentioned council formal policy to have national speed limit on rural roads. EH stressed worth making formal comments as part of QRI process as recorded / addressed. DP re-emphasised, if routes selected comes down to evidence of accidents / fatalities balance against perceived problems</p>	<b>All</b>
	<p>JS suggested good signage and an educational element for walkers and cyclists and horse riders as well as drivers (cars and tractors) as he thought road safety not specifically taught in schools. DP noted Junior Road Safety Officer programme work in all West Lothian primary schools – Police and WLC Transportation officers attend. JS offered NFUS rep could attend with a tractor to teach kids about farm safety issues if he had a contact point and also NFUS mailing list related to 2014/15 Sheep Worriying Initiative letter that was sent to WL farmers.</p>	<b>JS/ DP</b>
	<p>CA stated that police, fire &amp; ambulance services would all be consulted by WLC. MH also suggested contacting Bathgate Community Council.</p>	<b>DP</b>
	<p>Finally, DP mentioned she had contacted all WL Community councils in relation to the Active Travel Plan as well as Linlithgow Clarion Club</p>	
	<p><b>Community Links Programme</b></p>	
	<p>WLC applied for Sustrans funding in 2016/17 and various projects were successful, although they required 50% match funding:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armadale – Whitburn project: landownership issues have delayed project.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A89 – Shared Use Path: will be continued to North Lanarkshire boundary at Greenrigg / Harthill in phases e.g.link to Polkemmet Country Park.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sellers Path, Linlithgow – have funding to resurface</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet Roads Initiative - as above</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fauldhouse – Longridge: installation of solar LED, but needs new</li> </ul>	

	landowner agreement	
	• Broxburn Canal Link – carried out in 2015	
	• Blackburn – Bathgate AT walking and cycling corridor route	
	• Wester Inch Link through to Whitehill – improve link	
	• Access to Wester Inch from Bathgate train station	
	• Stoneyburn – design feasibility routes to north / west and east of village	
	RT suggested having shared use/signage for paths that shows that cyclists and pedestrians can use legally. DP suggested that this would need to be done elsewhere (which would be large and costly) otherwise might cause more problems where not done and cyclist can legally be on paths under access legislation. There was a potential West Lothian project for 2017/18 related to directional signage e.g. on cycle routes.	
	<b>(Carl Gilbert and Deboarah Paton left meeting at this point).</b>	
	Jamie Smart queried if A2B had been resolved, ownership-wise, particularly for fencing. Issue is that farmers cannot turn out livestock where they know fencing is not up to standard.	
	CA to ask Jim Stewart in Transportation question who is responsible.	<b>CA &gt; JS</b>
	WLATP Summary and “Love Linlithgow” leaflets were circulated	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Ranger Post</b>	
	EH related internal interviews held but no-one suitable. To be advertised externally it must be approved by Council. However, due to budgets they won't release this post for advertising. Discussions have considered 2-year fixed term post but this won't necessarily attract best candidate. With recent reorganisation of NETs & Land Services as she was responsible for Parks & Woodland, Rangers had been doing a lot more on access issues.	
	EH suggested if Access Forum were concerned at continued delay on the appointment of an Access Ranger they write to WLC.	
	JS volunteered to draft letter to Chief Executive on this issue in a supportive manner, as MH felt there needed to be a positive link, and as NFUS had raised concerns with Scottish Government at times of LRA / Core Path Plans and local authority, such as West Lothian Council, now not doing what they previously had on access issues.	<b>JS</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Access Issues Update (by Chris Alcorn)</b>	
	Parkhead, West Calder – New secondary school and electrification of rail line. Hundreds of objections over Network Rail proposal to temporary re-route A71 road around primary school. Network Rail will now close A71 road for over 18 months to raise and rebuild bridge.	
	Leithhead Bridge – east of Cauldstane Slap / on administrative boundary with Edinburgh Council leads into Pentland Hills Regional Park. Scheme to replace abutments under consideration.	
	Winchburgh Golf Course – Bridleway around Niddry Castle Bing. Network Rail has replaced road bridge. Golf course has small bridge on it related to right of way. Golf course wanted WLC to replace bridge. Ranger had been out to assess but club had got NR to sort bridge parapets. Club still concerned at people walking across course.	
	NCN75 – gorse encroachment at Seafeld Law had been removed.	
	Cobbinshaw area - South Lanarkshire Council had identified core paths at boundary / from Woolfords Tarbrax / Auchengray areas and into West Lothian without informing WLC! Work underway by WAT- Improvement Foundation development officer on some path improvements on routes across nearby wind farm sites. Tie up with West Calder area Quiet Roads potential routes.	
	Stoneyburn – Foulshiels - landowner shelters beasts on core path. This core path was source of objection at time of CPP. WLAF and Reporter found that route was acceptable over land manager's suggested route over other farmers' land.	
	John Muir Way – Rerouting into Linlithgow - WLC discussing internally with	

	Transportation. Problems crossing M9 on separate route due to parapet barriers and costs of related road works.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>WLC Planning Access capital programme / Sustrans Community Links</b>	
	Budget with prospective projects, had been transferred from Planning to Countryside Services in summer 2015.	
	Philpstoun Bing – access enhancements had stalled but recent site meeting with CSGNT / Community Council rep / Hopetoun Estate Factor & Bing operator. CSGNT to look again at costs and let Ecclesmachan & 3 Miletown CC know for potential application for Village Improvement Funds to February LAC.	
	Torphichen to River Avon Heritage Trail – stalled as landowner at wall house entrance not keen. While Community Council keen and council have some VIF to direct to project WLC didn't have their budget share.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Torphichen – Linlithgow</b> – TS has liaised with both major landowners. Link identified that is usable for walkers. Will incorporate gates and stiles and way-marking. Landowners happy with route and suggested segregation from cattle.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>West Calder &amp; Harburn Community Development Trust: West Muir Study Update by Chris Alcorn</b> £90k - £100k available for WC CDT looking at access, though they have other priorities. West Muir right of way, via Hermand Wood (SWT managed), to Harburn study now complete. WLC now looking at refining initial costs and implementation with CSGNT if space in their 2017/18 work programme and subject to budget.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>SNH John Muir Way – Linlithgow re-alignment update</b> See above.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Pentland Paths Project Cairngorm Development Trust: West Muir Study</b> £5k from WLC as part of £30k access audit. 23 routes looked at by Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust covered c 100km. £160k needed for Cauldstane Slap route in WL. Gala Ford bridges checked by WLC Structures Unit and no structural issues.	
	Kirknewton – Selm Muir – AM reported issue at stopped-up road near Calderwood Country Park car park off A71 and while there had been some voluntary work undertaken to clear it needed more. CA to look at route with NETs +/- Countryside Services.	<b>CA</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>National Access Forum</b> – info circulated before meeting. CA also mentioned BHS event. CA to circulate date.	<b>CA</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Ramblers Scotland Pathwatch Project</b> – pilot project run by Ramblers England. Went live in Scotland in September 2016. Will be retained as Access Forum Standing Agenda Item to see what arises.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	CC reported that tree felling work will commence shortly at Knowes Colliery CW in Fauldhouse requiring closure of paths.	
	GA – Oatridge – Longmuir path issues. Barbed wire over path (LW192). AV top, very steep, fence down. GA spoke to farmer and has since been fixed by them. Also fencing down at Ochiltree Farm - barbed wire (LW139) on ground. Rangers will look at and report back. Ecclesmachan to Threemiletown – Phase 2 study on hold.	<b>Rangers</b>
	RT – Access issues on lowland crofting site at Woodbank, Armadale raised. Increasing access maintenance issues now that some of these sites 15 -25 years old. CA reported that audit of all 13 lowland crofting site undertaken last year. Pilot project was identified but not progressed. Access issues identified on 13 sites will be part of new Access Ranger, if post secured, work programme priorities.	

	JS – vehicle insurance on private land – may need this but JS trying to confirm with insurers and Transport Bureau. Based on “public place” definition.	
	JS reported that more landowners seeking closure of ROW near dwelling places. Case in Aberdeenshire been successful. CA will look for further info on case.	<b>CA</b>
	MH – number of reports of sheep worrying – dogs and vehicles.	
	Petershill SWT Reserve, Bathgate – barbed wire around site so walkers going through Bughtknowes Farm. WLC had previously reported to SWT. MH will raise again with SWT.	<b>MH</b>
	AG – thanked Rangers for help in re-instating Witchcraig Wall. Refuge stone still on ground. CA will ask HES who is responsible for re-instating.	<b>CA</b>
	EH – reported that re-employment project has surveyed a number of ROWs so may have looked at routes reported by GA above.	
	Date of Next meeting – Please note it is <b>26<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 3.00pm Sutherland Building, Beecraigs</b> - not 25 <sup>th</sup> April (previously indicated at foot of October 2016 Agenda)	