

Somerset Local Access Forum
Minutes For The Meeting Held On
15th June 2017
At Langport Town Hall

SLAF Members Present:

Julia Gadd (Chair Person), David Lovejoy, James Bateman, Suzy Dymond-White (Vice Chair), Hugh Warmington.

SCC Officers present:

SCC Officers Present: Pete Hobley – Rights of Way Service Manager, Tara Moore (Joint Secretary).

Two members of the public were also in attendance.

Apologies:

Cllr John Woodman, Cllr Ann Bown, Emma Parsons (Joint Secretary – SCC), Patricia Coombes, Alan Carr, Ann Finn, Virginia Jones, Anthony Gray .

Welcome

Julia Gadd welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table.

Pete Hobley updated the Committee that Cllr David Fothergill had been appointed Leader of Somerset County Council and Cllr John Woodman was the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Highways.

Cllr Ann Bown had been extended an invite to the meeting as she is the new District Council (Sedgemoor) representative for the Forum. She covers the Bridgwater Area.

Minutes From 16th August 2016

Julia Gadd asked everyone present if they were happy with the minutes from the last meeting. The Committee unanimously agreed and voted their approval.

Action Sheet

Julia Gadd took each point from the action sheet for updates. Please see action sheet for summary.

Guidance Of Tree Safety Council (Please refer to Action Sheet)

A discussion then proceeded with the following points:

- Somerset County Council has a duty of care and policy in place.

Action: David Lovejoy asked for a copy of this policy. Pete Hobley will contact his Manager to see if this was permissible.

- Somerset County Council Highways has a regime in place and frequency by which trees are inspected by an Inspector.
- A suggestion was made that Volunteers should be trained to spot a defective tree.
- That the training to spot for a defective tree is half a day. This looks for visual signs a tree is unwell but there could be underlying issues that are not visible to the naked eye.
- Somerset County Council will be giving their front line Rights of Way Officers training on tree health.
- The Bridleways Association report a tree is down to the Landowner for it to be removed before this is reported to the Somerset County Council as an obstruction.
- Awareness is required for Landowners so they are aware of their liability/responsibility that is on their land should a tree come down.
- Could existing Volunteers be used to look at Tree Health/carry out Survey's. The responsibilities surrounding this additional work and whether this would impact on Volunteers retention.
- Two issues 1) Mechanism for a tree that has fallen and 2) tree health.

Auditing The List of Streets

Pete Hobley gave a brief background around 'The List Of Streets' (which is available on the Somerset County Council Website in an Excel Sheet format) and what the Local Authorities role/responsibilities were.

Pete Hobley then referred the Committee to the attachment sent out with the Agenda and paper copies that were available – called Auditing The List Of Streets: A Role For Local Access Forums by The British Horse Society.

Responding in turn to each question in points 6 to 7:

6. What unsealed highways have been removed from the list of streets since 1998 (the year in which the Ordnance Survey collected such data for the purposes of showing ORPAS on leisure mapping)?

Somerset County Council will try to do this by cross referencing with the archive records.

7. What procedures apply to any proposal to remove a highway from the list of streets, other than in response to a legal event (such as a magistrates' court stopping order, or a Town and Country Planning Act diversion order)?

This is not applicable for Somerset County Council unless a legal event occurred.

A legal event would have gone through a public consultation. The Forum could approach Somerset County Council with regard to making representation.

Summary

A removal from the List Of Streets would need a public order and include a public consultation.

A request to add the length on the List Of Streets. Pete Hobley would need to discuss this with the Highways Commissioner.

The document is produced annually.

There is historical paperwork and an archive from 2006. But there is a gap of missing information which cannot be found.

The Definitive Map is exempt from the 2026 deadline.

Need to wait for the Regulations to the Deregulation Act to come out to look at the provisions for safeguarding routes and what needs to be in place to ensure routes do not fall through the cracks.

A303 And A358 Improvements

Pete Hobley drew member's attention to the links within the agenda regarding these schemes. He reported that Highways England had not contacted SLAF Committee prior to the consultations, of which the A303 had already closed and the A358 to close 19 July 2017.

The documents provided by Highways England were substantial in size and therefore no paper copies were available. But Pete Hobley passed around copies of a map.

As this was the stage of selecting one of four options, once this was known the committee may wish in the future to form a working party.

Pete Hobley confirmed Highways England had engaged with Somerset County Council in advance of the consultations.

Potential Impact would be the Neroche Herepath and connections to the eastern side of the A358, and quiet lanes/footpaths that would be dissected by the duelling of the carriageway. Options would be looked at for underpasses or over bridges, and if this was not viable, directing to the nearest crossing.

James Bateman asked if the bridge would be wide enough to facilitate the carriage being expanded in the future.

Suzu Dymond – Whyte asked if the new road would have provision for cycle lanes.

Members to collate their ideas or comments on these proposed options.

Action: Members to email Julia Gadd to collate responses into a report and send to Highways England. Dead line is 07 July 2017.

How SLAF Can Help

Julia Gadd explained this was an item Ann Finn had asked to be put on the agenda but was unable to make the meeting. Ann Finn had attended a conference with a broad spectrum of other LAFs from across the country to discuss what they do.

Therefore how the role of SLAF could be spread to raise people's awareness of the group.

Discussion followed with the following points made:

- Keeping communication open between interested parties.
- Using the knowledge and expertise of those living within a Parish and the Parish Council.
- A newsletter that explained what SLAF do, relevant information or articles of interest.
- That SLAF newsletter could be pulled into the Newsletter the Somerset County Council Rights of Way Team have for their volunteers.

AOB

Julia Gadd told the Committee that Roger Conway had resigned from the Committee. Roger was a very proactive member of SLAF over the years and will be greatly missed. Julia Gadd on behalf of the Committee wanted to pass on their gratitude and wish him well in the future.

Pete Hoblely asked Members to think about Agenda items they would like to appear on the October Agenda and forward to the SLAF Secretaries Emma Parsons or Tara Moore.

David Lovejoy has taken on a new role with Highways England for any footpath that goes under the A303, M5 and in the future the A358 when built. David asked if any member had maintenance problems using them to pass the information on to him.

David Lovejoy asked about Somerset County Council's policy for Rights of Way on stiles, as a person had approached him with the query.

Pete Hoblely replied there was Rights of Way Improvement Plan and within this an Appendix B – Maintenance Enforcement Policy.

The Local Authority does not have the power to force landowners to have a kissing gate where historically there was a stile.

Member of the public drew the Forum's attention to the fact that the British Standards Institute would be publishing new standards regarding disabled access but this would only apply to new furniture.

Action: Pete Hoblely to contact the person directly and discuss the matter with them.

David Lovejoy had a permissive path link arranged in Martock and asked Pete Hoblely for information.

Action: Pete Hoblely to send permissive path information to David Lovejoy,

Next Meeting: 19 October 2017 2pm to 4pm. Venue to Be Confirmed.