

Item No.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – Coventry Sub-Group</u> <u>Thursday 2nd June 2016, 2pm</u> <u>Brandon Marsh Nature Centre</u></p>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<p>Present: Joe Carroll (Chair), Sheila Cooper, Roger Stone, Mike Murray</p> <p>Apologies: None</p> <p>Officer(s) in Attendance: Lex Le Marinel (CCC)</p> <p>Notes compiled by: Mike Murray</p>	
2.	<p>Notes from the Chair</p> <p>Joe welcomed everyone to this first meeting of the Coventry sub-group of the joint Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum (LAF) and explained that the purpose of the sub-group was offer <u>advice</u> to the appointing authority (Coventry City Council) on certain public access issues, including making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. The Public Rights of Way Officer from the City Council will identify Coventry’s priorities depending on local issues, and the sub-group, where appropriate, will offer advice and report back to the main LAF. In making recommendations, the sub-group will also need to consider land use, and the need to conserve flora, fauna, geological and physical features.</p> <p>Where possible, the sub-group will seek to achieve demonstrable goals and outcomes from the appointing authority on identified local RoW issues (SMART):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Specific</i> – target specific areas for improvement or resolving issues.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Measurable</i> – quantify or at least suggest indicators of progress.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Assignable</i> – specify who will do it.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Realistic</i> – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Time-related</i> – specify when the result(s) can reasonably be achieved.</p> <p>Any local access issues or recommendations of the Coventry sub-</p>	JC

	group will be reported back to the main LAF at the next available meeting by the Chair of the sub-group.	
3.	<p>How can the LAF and sub-group assist Coventry?</p> <p>Lex introduced the discussion by explaining that Coventry is a ‘Marmot City’ and that to improve the health, wellbeing and life chances of the people of Coventry, reducing inequality is vital. Where someone is born, where they live, whether they work or not and what they do all affect how long someone will live, how healthy they will be and what quality of life they will experience. Men in the most affluent areas of the city will live, on average, 9.4 years longer than men in the most deprived areas, while for women the difference is 8.7 years. These inequalities in life expectancy and health arise out of inequalities in society. As well as improving health outcomes, reducing inequality in society has been shown to lead to improvements in well-being, better mental health, better community and social relations, reduced levels of violence and better educational attainment.</p> <p>Being part of the Marmot Network has provided Coventry with access to the international expertise of the Marmot Team based at University College London, and since Coventry became a Marmot City in 2013, there has been progress in outcomes across health and across society. For further information about Coventry's strategy to reduce health inequalities you can download the Marmot Strategy Summary.</p> <p>Improving access to the public RoW network, both locally and across the city, can help towards some of the health and social objectives of the Marmot Strategy. In particular, producing and promoting information about the public RoW network in the city; how it can be accessed and used; facilitating community engagement, including access to the network for people from deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic communities, schools, and for people with health related and obesity problems, physical and mental disabilities and restricted mobility.</p> <p>In helping to tackle obesity in the city, consideration needs to be given to engaging with the community, including schools, community groups and doctors’ surgeries. For example, engaging with GPs to raise awareness of the local RoW network and promoting its wider use as part of a suite of measure to improve people’s health and well-being.</p> <p>The RoW Officer will seek to engage with other departments and officers in the City Council to ascertain and clarify what information, strategies and publications already exist, such as Healthy Walks, to avoid duplication and to explore opportunities on how best to facilitate and incorporate RoW information into other Council agendas. This could include a possible RoW pack for schools, community groups and GPs. Also, consideration of how best to use the Coventry Walks website and possible links with Plas Dol-y-Moch, the outdoor</p>	LM

	<p>education centre for Coventry schools in the Snowdonia National Park, owned by Coventry City Council since 1966, and reaching its landmark 50th anniversary this year: http://www.friendsofplasdolymoch.co.uk/.</p> <p>RS emphasised the importance of the LAF's <u>advisory role</u>, in accordance with the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007, and the latest government guidance published in September 2014 on the 'Role of Local Access Forums'. In particular, <i>“the improvement of public access to land in the area for which the forum is established for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.”</i></p> <p>In this context, one of the key functions of the City Council's Public RoW Officer, with advice from the LAF Coventry sub-group, will be to provide a facilitating and enabling role, to maximise the RoW potential and benefits for the citizens of Coventry.</p>	
4.	<p>Dog Owners – problems and possible solutions?</p> <p>Some work has been done on getting the rural paths re-instated after ploughing and cropping, particularly in the parishes of Allesley and Keresley, which has helped to establish good relationships with landowners and farmers. However, one of the ongoing problems is irresponsible dog owners not keeping their dogs on a lead or under close control, particularly across farmland, and also not cleaning up after their dog. This can lead to serious contamination of farmland, particularly pastoral land and render it unsuitable for grazing or hay cropping, thus affecting the livelihoods of farmers.</p> <p>Clearly, there is an ongoing need to educate all dog owners on the potential serious risks of farmland contamination from dog fouling. This includes the importance of worming, with possible labelling and advisory information, leaflets and notices being available in pet shops and vets; and on/with dog related products. Consideration could also be given to securing potential sponsorship for this initiative from appropriate companies and organisations.</p> <p>Dog Control Orders are in force across Coventry. The order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires owners to keep dogs on a lead in certain specified places, (which may include public Right of Way). • Requires owners to put dogs on a lead if instructed to do so by an Authorised Officer from the City Council. • Places restrictions on owners taking dogs into certain places e.g. children's play areas. • Limits the number of dogs a person has with them at any one time (this would include professional dog walkers). • Requires dog walkers to remove their dog's foul 'forthwith'. 	LM

	<p>In addition to an ongoing education agenda, consideration will also need to be given on how best use DCOs to enforce the responsible close control of dogs on public RoW.</p> <p>MM will approach contacts at the National Trust to ascertain how they address problems associated with dogs on their land.</p> <p>SC will informally approach farmer Adam Henson to see if he would be interested in doing a feature on <i>BBC Countryfile</i> to help highlight this issue.</p> <p>RS referred to the need for appropriate signage on public RoW to encourage people to keep their dogs on a lead and also to deter dog fouling and littering, which is a criminal offence and could lead to the prosecution of offenders. A sign used by WCC was mentioned as an example of good practice. Coventry also has similar signs (measuring 6"x8" & 4"x6") on some rural public footpaths, referring to a possible fine of up to £2,500 for dropping litter and/or dog fouling. However, these may need to be revised and updated in the light of recent Dog Control Orders.</p> <p>Overall, there was very strong support and agreement in the meeting on the need to reach young people and to spread the messages regarding dog fouling and the associated problems that loose dogs can present, particularly on farmland. Also, to involve schools in order to help educate young people on this important issue and to disseminate the same messages into community centres and other establishments. If this was in the form of a 'flyer' then the information may need to be presented in a variety of languages.</p> <p>The sub-group recognised that philosophically this was going to be a protracted educating process with the local community. However, it was considered essential that young people should be involved at an early stage, so that loose dogs and the associated problems may eventually be viewed in the same way as other anti-social behaviour, such as speeding drivers, which is now considered wholly unacceptable in society.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Other Local Access Issues and Opportunities</p> <p>There is an ownership and condition inventory of all RoW structures that the City Council's Countryside Project is currently responsible for, including kissing gates, sign posts, timber bridges, boardwalks, etc. There may be limited resources to keep this inventory up-to-date, but it is important, as it helps to inform future maintenance implications and priorities, particularly where there may be health and safety issues. Consider the possibility of using volunteers to help with keeping this inventory up-to-date.</p>	<p>LM</p>

	<p>Explore further opportunities to improve circular links to long-distance local paths e.g. Coventry Way; Heart of England Way; and Centenary Way.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to employ a government sponsored Apprentice, to assist the City Council's Countryside Project Field Officer on practical Rights of Way work.</p> <p>The Chair concluded by emphasising that throughout its various discussions during the meeting, the sub-group was mindful that as with the main LAF, it was an advisory body only. In that capacity, therefore, it was very happy to offer ideas, suggestions and recommendations to assist the appointing authority (Coventry City Council) with various public access and related issues in and around Coventry's green spaces.</p>	JC
6.	<p>Date and venue for next meeting(s)</p> <p>Brandon Marsh Nature Centre Date(s) TBC</p>	JC