



# REPORT

Author: Sara Draper  
Area Co-ordinator  
01722 434345  
sdraper@salisbury.gov.uk

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## LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

### **Reason for Report to Committee:**

At the last Western Area Committee meeting it was resolved that officers investigate the mechanism by which a member of the Western Area Committee could become a member of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Access Forum to raise issues of local concern in relation to access and rights of way.

### **Report Summary:**

The report sets out the options that members can pursue to raise their concerns in relation to the Definitive Map as considered at the last meeting.

### **Wiltshire and Swindon Local Access Forum:**

#### *Option 1:*

The Access Forum is a statutory body established as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is comprised of a balance of landowners, ecology groups and users groups amongst others. An introduction to the Access Forum is attached as annex A.

Membership of the Access Forum is decided by appointment. Vacancies for members are advertised in the local media (a sample application form is attached as annex B) and once all applications are received the appointments are decided by the Highways agency to ensure a balance of interested parties is maintained.

The Forum has recently advertised for members however the closing date for these applications was 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005. Therefore if the Western Area Committee wished to nominate a member to apply for membership of the Access Forum it would be necessary to wait for a vacancy to arise and the Committee can nominate a member to complete an application form.

#### *Option 2*

All meetings of the Access Forum are public and therefore an alternative option is for the Western Area Committee to arrange for a copy of the letter that was sent to MPs following the Western Area Committee meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005, to be put to the Chairman of the Forum and ask that it be raised at the next meeting. The procedure set down states that any submissions must be made at least two weeks before the meeting. The next meeting of the Wiltshire and Swindon Access Forum is to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at Hinton Parva Village Hall in Swindon at 10.30am.

### **Cranborne Chase AONB Local Access Forum:**

#### *Option 3*

An Access Forum specifically for the Cranborne Chase AONB is currently being established. Whilst this Forum will not be a statutory body it is intended to provide a valuable medium through which issues of local concern can be brought to the attention of the relevant organisations.

It is envisaged that the Cranborne Chase AONB will advertise for members in the same way as the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Access Forum and will then make a decision on appointments. Therefore when the Forum is launched the Western Area Committee would be welcome to nominate one of its members to apply.

It is hoped that this Forum will be established within the next six months.

Whilst this Forum would not be a formal outside body, the guidance for members on the relationship between the Council and outside bodies is attached as a reference.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that options 2 and 3 outlined above be pursued namely:

1. That a copy of the letter which was sent to both MPs for the area regarding the need for increased protection of bridle paths and bye-ways, be sent to the Chairman of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Access Forum for discussion at the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005.
2. That when the Cranborne Chase AONB Local Access Forum is established, the Western Area Committee nominate one of its members to complete an application form to attend future meetings of the Forum on behalf of the Committee.

### **Background Papers:**

None.

### **Implications:**

- **Financial: None**
- **Legal: None.**
- **Human Rights: N/A.**
- **Personnel: None.**
- **Community Safety: N/A.**
- **Environmental implications: None.**
- **Council's Core Values: Being environmentally conscientious.**
- **Wards Affected: All in the Western Area.**