

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 11 July 2016 at 6.00 pm**

Present:

Members of the Forum:

Tom Bolton, Councillor Neil Foster, Neil Gander, Brian Hodgson, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden, Steve Scoffin, Councillor Eddie Tomlinson (until item 5), Robin Trounson and Jim Welch

Officers:

Mike Ogden, Audrey Christie, Victoria Lloyd-Gent and Jill Errington
Sue Rogers – BHS Access and Bridleways Officer for the Region (until item 5)

1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

AGREED that Geoff Hughes be elected Chair and Robin Trounson and Angela Johnson be elected Vice-Chairs of the LAF for 2016-2017.

Geoff Hughes advised that the workload of the Chair and the Forum had increased considerably in the last 12 months and members would be asked to consider a paper later on the Agenda about proposals for the re-distribution of work areas among the whole LAF membership.

2 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Pat Holding and Andrew Jeffrey. The Chairman reported that unfortunately Andrew Jeffrey was unwell at present and Members asked that a letter be sent to him conveying their best wishes during his treatment and recuperation.

The Chairman also welcomed new member Steve Scoffin and Sue Rogers, BHS Access and Bridleways Officer to the meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Deregulation Act - Research for 2026 Cut-Off Date

Sue Rogers, BHS Access and Bridleways Officer for the Region gave a presentation to members on research being carried out by volunteers to identify 'lost ways' and have them recorded by the 2026 cut-off date. Members had been provided with background information which set out the implications of the

Deregulation Act and which included the stages in the process of making application to have routes recorded.

Members were shown photographic examples of routes that had successfully been identified in Northumberland and were advised that funding had been secured to support research work in County Durham.

The LAF offered to assist with the process by helping to identify 'lost ways' in Durham in the first instance, and Mike Ogden suggested that in view of the potential resource implications for DCC, research should be targeted to routes that were of value to local people.

In discussing a way forward it was suggested that a LAF Sub-Group be set up to firstly explore potential 'lost ways' with Sue Rogers, who had identified unrecorded routes on Durham maps.

AGREED:

That a Sub-Group comprising Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, Neil Gander, Geoff Rigden, Steve Scoffin and David Maughan be set up and a meeting of the Group be arranged with Sue Rogers, Audrey Christie and Mike Ogden to identify potential 'lost ways'.

ACTION: Jill Errington to arrange a meeting of the Sub-Group.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 April 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

6 Matters Arising

a) **County Durham Plan**

Councillor Foster advised that consultation on the County Durham Plan Issues and Options report was underway and a number of community events were being held to raise awareness and seek the views of local people.

The LAF had been invited to respond to the consultation and the Chairman asked for a volunteer to take over from him as lead member and prepare a draft response.

AGREED:

That Robin Trounson take over the role of lead member in relation to the County Durham Plan, and draft a response to the Issues and Options report. The response be circulated to all members for their comments before the consultation deadline of 3 August 2016.

ACTION: Robin Trounson.

- b) **Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2030**
Members were informed that the final draft of the Strategy and Action Plan was out to wider consultation until 3 August 2016. Neil Gander considered that the LAF's comments had not been fully taken into consideration in the final draft, and suggested that the LAF may wish to consider submitting further comments.

AGREED:

That Neil Gander examine the final draft Strategy and Action Plan with a view to the submission of a further response before the consultation deadline.

ACTION: Neil Gander.

- c) **Heritage Coast Management Plan**
Angela Johnson informed members that due to unforeseen circumstances Niall Benson had been unable to attend the meeting but it was hoped that the final draft Plan would go out to wider consultation in the next few weeks.

AGREED that the information be noted and further developments be awaited.

ACTION: Angela Johnson to continue to provide updates.

7 National/Regional Issues

- a) **Update from Natural England**
The Chairman advised that LAFs in the region had previously been supported by Jim Milner but this dedicated officer support had now been lost following his redeployment. The region was one of the few LAF areas without a dedicated support officer and Tees Valley LAF had written to Natural England to express concern. A response to this letter was awaited.

Robin Trounson explained that the Annual Review Form for 2015/2016, which was due for completion and return to Natural England by the end of July, included a section about LAF training and support. He suggested that this could be an opportunity to express the LAF's views about the level of support it wished to receive from Natural England.

AGREED

That the information be noted, and a statement about support from Natural England be included in the Annual Review Form for 2015/2016.

ACTION:

Robin Trounson to complete the Annual Review Form for 2015/2016 for return to Natural England by no later than 31 July 2016.

b) **LAF Newsletter – Issue 9**

AGREED that LAF Newsletter Issue 9, a copy of which had been circulated, be received.

c) **Regional North East LAF's Meeting**

The Chairman reported on feedback received from the Regional meeting held on 6 July 2016. The North East Combined Authority had asked LAFs in the region to confirm their regional access priorities. Amanda Earnshaw of Northumberland JLAF had offered to examine each ROWIP to establish any common themes which would inform the regional priorities.

AGREED that the information be received.

d) **Joint LAF Summer Site Visit – July/August:
Lambton Estate and Fatfield Bridge**

The Chairman reported of an opportunity for a LAF member to attend a joint site visit with members of Tyne and Wear LAF on a date to be agreed in July or August. Details of the proposed site visit had been circulated to members.

AGREED that, subject to his availability on the date to be determined, Geoff Rigden attend the site visit.

ACTION: Jill Errington to liaise with Tyne and Wear LAF regarding the date of the site visit.

8 DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting

Robin Trounson explained that meetings of the DCC/LAF Liaison Group provided an opportunity for members to raise matters that were current and appropriate to LAF business and which were within the remit of Stuart Timmiss, Head of Planning and Assets. Members were invited to consider potential topics for discussion for the next meeting to be held on 21 September 2016. The Chairman advised that Planning Guidance Notes had been produced by the Tyne and Wear Authorities which were aimed at ensuring that developers gave appropriate consideration to Public Rights of Way. He suggested that Stuart Timmiss' views be sought at the meeting about the Notes, or similar, being circulated to developers in County Durham as part of the planning application process.

Members who suggested topics for discussion would have the opportunity to attend the meeting.

AGREED that members notify the LAF Secretary of any items for discussion at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

ACTION: All to consider.

9 Common Land

Tom Bolton advised that a number of actions had been agreed at the LAF/DCC Liaison meeting held on 7 April 2016 which were included in the minutes of the last LAF meeting. Progress would be considered at the next liaison meeting on 21 September 2016.

AGREED that the information be noted and further progress be awaited.

ACTION: Tom Bolton to provide feedback from the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

10 Dedication of Land

Members were informed that Stuart Timmiss had provided a response outlining the Council's position in relation to dedication of land and further discussions would take place at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting with a view to identifying potential land suitable for dedication.

AGREED that the information be noted and further progress be awaited.

ACTION: Angela Johnson to provide feedback from the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

11 Rights of Way Team

Audrey Christie reported that additional funding of £300k from capital budgets had been secured over a 3 year period to carry out repairs to paths following damage caused by Storm Desmond.

AGREED that the information be noted.

12 Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Victoria Lloyd-Gent reported on progress with the delivery of ROWIP and advised of proposals to carry out a people profile study of 25 sites on the cycle network and railway paths. The scheme had already been trialled at 4 sites, including The Locomotion Way.

AGREED that the information be noted.

13 Access Prioritisation

Audrey Christie provided an update on the delivery of schemes in Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland. She hoped that the key priorities identified in each of those settlements would be delivered by the end of 2016. She continued to liaise with local members about the possibility of securing funding for path improvements using their own neighbourhood budgets.

AGREED that the information be noted.

14 Cycling Strategy

a) Awareness Campaign – Hedgecutting

Members were informed that there had been no further progress made in drafting the press release. David Maughan made the point that it would be timely to raise landowner awareness as soon as possible as hedge-cutting was about to commence.

AGREED that LAF members Geoff Rigden, David Maughan and Brian Hodgson liaise with Victoria Lloyd-Gent on the wording of the press release in consultation with the Council's Communications Team.

ACTION:

Geoff Rigden/David Maughan/Brian Hodgson and Victoria Lloyd-Gent.

b) Cycling Strategy

Geoff Rigden provided feedback from the Working Group meeting he had attended on 29 June 2016 with regard to the Council's Cycling Strategy which was currently under review. Two working groups had been set up, their roles being to separately review the existing Strategy and to consider what should be included in the revised version. The work of both groups would inform the new Strategy which would be adopted by March 2017.

Victoria Lloyd-Gent provided an update on the 'Park that Bike' scheme which had been over-subscribed but would now be rolled out over the next 2 years.

With regard to the cycle network planning process members were informed that good progress had been made in completing the audit of the 12 main towns, with 9 completed to date. Town cycle maps would be produced on completion of all audits.

AGREED that the information be noted.

15 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership

Members were informed that Andrew Jeffrey had made good progress as lead of the triumvirate of Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland LAF's with regard to the Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership. A volunteer was sought to keep a watching brief until Andrew's return and ensure that issues of access for all were properly considered.

AGREED that Jim Welch keep a watching brief over the Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership during Andrew Jeffrey's absence.

ACTION: Jill Errington to notify Lisa Stephenson, Project Development Manager and inform Northumberland and Tyne and Wear LAFs.

16 North East Local Nature Partnership (NELNP)

Angela Johnson and Robin Trounson provided feedback from the workshops they had attended on 16 June 2016 and 7 July 2016 respectively. The purpose of the workshops was to explore the vision and structure of the NELNP. The findings of the consultant who facilitated the workshops were to be considered by the NELNP Executive on 14 July 2016 which would be attended by Geoff Hughes.

AGREED that the information be noted and the LAF continue to receive updates.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes.

17 Bright Water Landscape Project

The Chairman gave a presentation to members on the Bright Water Landscape Project which, with partnership working, aimed to provide a co-ordinated approach to natural, built and cultural heritage conservation in the River Skerne catchment area. The presentation included background history of the land along the stretch of river and the proposed environmental programme to restore the river's natural meanders and its surroundings.

AGREED that the information be noted and the LAF continue to receive updates on the delivery of the Project.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes.

18 Pennine National Trails Partnership

Mike Ogden reported that cuts to budgets for National Trails had been averted this year by lobbying of the Government but there remained some uncertainty for next year. It was suggested by the Chairman that the LAF consider offering its support should any further lobbying against potential budget cuts be proposed.

AGREED that the information be noted and further developments in relation to the future of National Trails budgets be awaited.

ACTION: Mike Ogden.

19 North Pennines AONB Partnership

a) **North Pennines AONB Partnership Access and Recreation Working Group**

Consideration was given to the paper prepared by Robin Trounson which provided feedback from the meeting held on 18 May 2016, a copy of which had been circulated.

AGREED that the information be noted.

- b) **North Pennines AONB Partnership Pennine National Trails Partnership**
Consideration was given to the paper prepared by Robin Trounson which provided feedback from the meeting held on 18 May 2016, a copy of which had been circulated.

AGREED that the information be noted.

20 Volunteering

Mike Ogden referred to the feedback provided by Robin Trounson following his attendance at the North Pennines National Trails Partnership meeting on 18 May 2016, and added that the Partnership was considering supporting a short term project to explore different models for providing a volunteer service in the Pennines.

AGREED that the information be noted and further developments be awaited.

ACTION: Mike Ogden

21 Membership and Promotion of the LAF

Jim Welch advised of a landowner in Upper Teesdale who may be interested in joining the Forum and agreed to pursue this further.

AGREED that the information be noted and members forward any suggestions for promotion of the LAF or potential new members to Mike Ogden.

ACTION: All to note.

22 Notification of Open Access Restrictions

The Chairman reported of the receipt of the following open access restrictions:-

Wemmergill Close House Mine
Birk Halt Moor
Cotherstone Moor

Members were provided with a copy of each Notice at the meeting.

AGREED that the information be noted.

23 Annual Report 2015/2016

Consideration was given to the content of the draft Annual Report for 2015/2016, a copy of which had been circulated. This year members had been asked to provide a summary of their own work areas, a brief explanation of what had been achieved in the year and any aims for 2016/17. Members were also asked for their views on the revised format.

AGREED

- (i) Subject to the inclusion of a paragraph with regard to ROWIP the Annual Report for 2015/2016 be promoted on the Council's website and sent to Natural England;
- (ii) the revised process be adopted for the completion of the Annual Report for 2016/2017.

24 Work Programme 2016/2017

Consideration was given to the paper prepared by Robin Trounson which asked members to review the Work Programme with a view to rebalancing the tasks between the chair and vice-chairs, and ensuring a more equitable division of workload.

AGREED that the recommendations in the paper be endorsed and the Work Programme be updated as follows:-

Topic	Role	Member (Lead) and Group 2016-2017	Task	Target Date
Coordinate LAF Activity	Prepare agendas, chair meetings, coordinate links with other bodies	(Chair)/ Vice-Chairs	Prepare agendas for quarterly meetings. Liaise with secretariat. Chair meetings, prepare minutes with secretariat	2-3 weeks prior to mtgs.
County Durham Plan	To respond to consultation on draft County Durham Plan	Robin Trounson	Respond to Issues and Options Report	
NE Local Nature Partnership	Represent the LAF at meetings and respond to consultations	(G Hughes)	Input to quarterly meetings to promote access	
Bright Water Landscape Project	Chair Board of Partnership	(G Hughes)		
Coastal Access	Consider implications and coordinate responses to evolving programme of coastal access	(A Johnson)/ T Bolton		
Coast Path Partnership	Represent the LAF at meetings and respond to consultations	A Johnson		

Dedication of Land (incl Natural England NNRs)	Explore potential of further areas for dedication with DCC	P Holding (TBC)/ A Johnson	Meet DCC with a view to exploring dedication of new areas	
Huddle	Champion Huddle	N Gander	To respond to consultation on the future of Huddle	
Access Prioritisation	Coordinate LAF involvement/ Support Officers in securing funding	G Rigden/ J Welch		
Regional LAF Liaison	Represent the LAF at regional meetings with other LAFs and Natural England	(Vice-Chairs)	Attend and input on a regular basis	
DCC Liaison	To meet with Stuart Timmis twice yearly to discuss current LAF business	All		
ROWIP	Support Officers to deliver ROWIP	(G Rigden/ T Bolton)		
Cycling	Coordinate LAF involvement	(N Gander)/ G Rigden		
Hedge-cutting Awareness Campaign – Press Release	To draft press release	(Geoff Rigden)/David Maughan/Brian Hodgson		
North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group	Represent the LAF	(N Gander)/ A Jeffrey	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report back on issues as and when necessary	
Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group	Represent the LAF	(N Gander)/A Jeffrey	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report back on issues as and when necessary	
Government Consultations	Respond on behalf of the LAF	(Chair)/all	As required	
Completion of Annual Report and Annual Review Pro-forma		Vice-Chairs	Complete preface to annual report and coordinate proforma prep as required by NE	

Working with Public Health		R Trounson/ J Welch	Input to healthy weight alliance as opportunity arises to promote outdoor access	quarterly
Common Land	Liaise with DCC on issues around the protection of Common Land and respond to consultation on applications for deregistration	(T Bolton)/ J Welch		
Heritage Coast Management Plan	Update members on progress with final Plan	(A Johnson)		
De-Regulation Act	To explore 'lost ways'	Sub-Group:- G Hughes, A Johnson, S Scoffin, N Gander, D Maughan		
Heritage Way	Point of Contact			
Volunteering		G Hughes/ R Trounson		
Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership	To keep a watching brief	(Andrew Jeffrey)/J Welch		

25 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting be held on Monday 10 October 2016 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham.