

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 10 October 2016 at 6.00 pm**

Present: Geoff Hughes (Chairman)

Members of the Forum

Tom Bolton, Neil Gander, Pat Holding, Angela Johnson, Steve Scoffin, Robin Trounson and Jim Welch

Officers:

Audrey Christie, Victoria Lloyd-Gent and Jill Errington
Niall Benson – Principal Heritage Coast Officer, DCC

Not present:

Councillor Neil Foster, Brian Hodgson and Geoff Rigden

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from David Maughan, Councillor Eddie Tomlinson and Mike Ogden.

The Chair reported the resignation of Andrew Jeffrey due to illness. Members asked that a letter be sent to Andrew thanking him for his contribution to the work of the LAF, particularly in shaping the Forum's involvement in the Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Heritage Coast Management Plan

Angela Johnson reported that the LAF had commented on the first draft Heritage Coast Management Plan in February 2015, and had now been invited to comment on the final revised version by 12 December 2016. A copy had been circulated to members.

Members received a presentation from Niall Benson, Principal Heritage Coast Officer on the Plan. The Plan would guide management of the Heritage Coast through key objectives including the preservation and enhancement of the landscape quality, and the facilitation of access and public enjoyment of the coastline. The Plan also set out to integrate with adjoining areas and within the region to promote integrated coastal management and this was a matter that he would report to the LAF at later date.

In response to questions from members Niall Benson explained that through the Plan the Heritage Coast Partnership wanted to encourage people to visit the coast but for it to be enjoyed in a respectful manner; motorcycles and 4x4 vehicles, for example, would be unwelcome. By improving networks the Partnership hoped to spread the use of the coastline further inland. There were bridleways but these were not connected at present. He was involved with promoting the England Coast Path (ECP) which was integral to improving the networks. The LAF would be given the opportunity to be represented on the ECP and would receive a formal invitation to appoint a member. In terms of the statutory status of the Plan the regulatory background to delivering the aims were the National Planning Policy Framework, Marine Spatial Planning and EU Directives for protected sites which he did not expect to be affected following Brexit.

Niall Benson was asked if there was baseline data about usage of the coast and informed members of automaton counters placed on a site to the north of Seaham and in car parks along the coast. Video analysis had also been carried out at two sites. Visitor numbers had exceeded 30k per year at all monitored locations.

For information he advised that the first Heritage Coast Outdoor Festival held between 29 May and 5 June 2016 had been a great success.

AGREED that Angela Johnson prepare comments on the Plan for circulation to all LAF members for their views in time for the response deadline of 12 December 2016.

ACTION: Angela Johnson.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 July 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

5 Matters Arising

a) **County Durham Plan**

AGREED that the LAF response to the County Durham Plan Issues and Options Report be confirmed and further developments be awaited.

ACTION: Robin Trounson.

b) **Draft Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy 2016-2033**

AGREED that the LAF response to the draft Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy for 2016-2033 be confirmed and the City of Durham Trust's response be noted. Neil Gander and Robin Trounson be thanked for co-ordinating the LAF's comments on the Strategy.

c) **DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

The Chair reported that the DCC/LAF meeting scheduled to be held on 21 September 2016 had been postponed and would now be held on 24 January 2017. Matters already identified for discussion included common land and

dedication of land but members were invited to consider other potential topics that were relevant to the work of the LAF.

Members who suggested topics for discussion would have the opportunity to attend the meeting and Stuart Timmiss would be asked if there were any matters he wished to discuss with the LAF.

AGREED that members be invited to consider topics of discussion at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

ACTION: All to note. Jill Errington to prompt members for suggested topics in December.

6 National/Regional Issues

a) Natural England

The Chairman reported that Natural England had not provided an update for the meeting. Members were referred to the reply Tees Valley LAF had received from Natural England in response to their letter expressing concern regarding future support for North East LAFs. Robin Trounson anticipated that the level of support provided by Natural England would be highlighted as an issue in the findings of the Annual Report for 2015-2016.

AGREED that the information be noted.

b) North East Combined Authority – Regional Access Priorities

The Chairman reported that the devolution deal had been withdrawn by the Government, and therefore the future of a North East Combined Authority was uncertain. Regional priorities were still being explored, led by Northumberland JLAF, and he would continue to pursue progress.

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

ACTION: Chairman to continue to provide updates.

c) Joint LAF Summer Site Visit – Lambton Estate and Fatfield Bridge

Geoff Rigden had attended the summer site visit on 15 August 2016 with the Tyne and Wear LAF but was not present to provide feedback.

AGREED that Geoff Rigden provide a note of the visit for circulation to members.

ACTION: Geoff Rigden/Jill Errington.

d) Rural Tourism – Government Committee Inquiry

AGREED that the LAF response to the Inquiry into supporting rural growth and improving access to the coast and countryside be confirmed, and the outcome of the Inquiry be awaited.

e) **DEFRA Access Newsletters**

AGREED that Access Newsletter Issues 74 and 75, copies of which were included with the papers for the meeting, together with Issue 76 which had been circulated by e-mail, be received.

7 De-Regulation Act - Research for 2026 Cut-Off Date

Members were informed that the 'Lost Ways' Sub-Group had met with Sue Rogers from the BHS on 20 September 2016 to look at 20 unrecorded routes she had identified on Durham maps. Audrey Christie had also drawn up a list of 35 RUPPs (Roads used as Public Paths) which could be examined against the routes identified by the BHS. This would help the Sub-Group prioritise which 'lost ways' should be explored further.

As a way forward it was suggested that one or two members of the Sub-Group visit the Rights of Way office to make an initial assessment of the routes using the Council's GIS mapping tools.

Angela Johnson informed members of a training day on the matter which had been organised by the BHS on 29 October 2016 in York. Angela was attending in her BHS capacity but suggested that it would be useful for LAF members for their research into 'lost ways'.

Pat Holding expressed an interest in being involved in the work of the Sub-Group.

AGREED that

- (i) Arrangements be made for one or two members of the Sub-Group to visit the Rights of Way office to carry out an initial assessment of the list of routes;
- (ii) LAF members be forwarded the link to the training day on 29 October 2016 for anyone interested in attending to register a place on the course;
- (iii) Pat Holding be included on the Sub-Group.

ACTION: 'Lost Ways' Sub-Group members.

8 Common Land

Tom Bolton reported that Common Land would be discussed at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

AGREED that the information be noted.

9 Dedication of Land (Durham County Council)

Prior to the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting when dedication of land would be discussed, Pat Holding had agreed to prepare a paper on the merits and issues of dedication, given Durham County Council's views on the matter which members had received at the LAF meeting in April.

AGREED that Pat Holding examine the merits and issues of dedication and produce a paper with suggestions on a way forward.

ACTION: Pat Holding.

10 Rights of Way Team

Audrey Christie reported that £50k had been secured from S106 Agreements for the Sheraton Park development in Durham to improve the infrastructure in that area, and £3.5k for footpath works in Pitlington. A discussion ensued about S106 Agreements and whether rights of way could benefit from the funding regime which was part of the planning process. It was suggested that this could be a topic for discussion at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting. Prior to raising the matter at the meeting it was agreed that in the first instance Angela Johnson and Pat Holding carry out some background research into Section 106 Agreements and produce information for discussion.

An Experimental Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 had recently come into force at Hexham Lane, Wolsingham which prohibited all motor vehicles with four wheels or more from using the Byway.

Works on the first Pelaw Woods landslide was almost completed and work on the second was due to commence.

Repair work was continuing on paths damaged following Storm Desmond.

Members were provided with a copy of a decision notice following a Public Inquiry at Hamsterley Mill which resulted in 28m of footpath being added to the Definitive Map.

AGREED that

- (i) the information be noted;
- (ii) Angela Johnson and Pat Holding carry out background research into Section 106 Agreements.

ACTION: Angela Johnson/Pat Holding.

11 Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Members were informed that good progress was being made with the delivery of the Plan.

12 Access Prioritisation

Audrey Christie provided an update on progress with delivery of schemes in Shildon, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland. The work carried out would be promoted on completion of the schemes.

AGREED that the information be noted.

13 Cycling

a) **Awareness Campaign**

Members were informed that the press release to raise landowner awareness of the importance of clearing roads and paths during hedgecutting season had been posted on the LAF webpage and circulated to all media contacts. The article had appeared in on-line news site Neconnected.co.uk.

AGREED that the information be noted.

b) **Cycling Strategy**

Victoria Lloyd-Gent informed members that a meeting of the Cycling Strategy Working Group had been held on 6 October 2016 to consider the draft Strategy. On receipt of comments from the two Working Groups, the Strategy would be revised and circulated for wider consultation in November/December for a period of 8 weeks.

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

ACTION:

Neil Gander/Geoff Rigden.

c) **Landor Cycle Planning Awards 2016 – Best Cycling Network Strategy/Masterplan Category**

Victoria Lloyd-Gent reported that the Council had not been shortlisted for the award but thanked the LAF for the letter of support. The Council would submit an entry next year when improvements to the cycle network would be nearer to completion.

AGREED that the letter of support be noted.

14 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership

Jim Welch reported that he had met with Peter Downes, Access and Woodland Officer to discuss how the LAF might assist in providing advice on access needs. He would continue to liaise with him and update the LAF on progress.

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

ACTION: Jim Welch.

15 North East Local Nature Partnership

The Chairman provided an update on progress and explained that the consultant appointed by the NELNP had produced a paper following the workshops held over the summer which set out a sustainable business model for the Partnership, given the limited funding available. The 2 full time staff positions would be funded by the public sector.

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

ACTION: Chairman.

16 Bright Water Landscape Project

The Chairman provided an update on progress with the delivery of the Bright Water Landscape Project. Members were informed that the Project was working towards the submission of an application for stage 2 HLF funding in 12 months.

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

ACTION: Chairman.

17 Pennine National Trails Partnership

Members considered a written update provided by Mike Ogden which reported on work across all National Trails to secure funding for future years from DEFRA/Natural England and to investigate alternative sources of funding. The next meeting of the Partnership was to be held on 29 October 2016 which would include a discussion on a volunteering project (see minute no. 19 below).

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

ACTION: Mike Ogden.

18 North Pennines AONB Partnership

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

Neil Gander provided feedback from the meeting held on 29 September 2016.

He advised that there had been complaints from landowners that cyclists had been using the Coast to Coast route between Rookhope and Park Head on shooting days.

A request to extend Derwent Reservoir multi-user path was to be explored with Northumbrian Water.

A new bridge was to be erected across the beck at Cow Green.

A bid for £250k for the Durham Dales cycling route had been unsuccessful but potential funding was now being explored through DEFRA.

AGREED that the information be noted and the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2016 be received.

- b) **North Pennines AONB Partnership Pennine National Trails Partnership**
Members considered a written update from Mike Ogden which provided feedback from the meeting held on 29 September 2016. The meeting discussed funding, endurance and mass participation events, the donate-a-gate scheme and the potential for this to be extended to cover the Pennine Way from Tan Hill to Greenhead.

AGREED that the information be noted and the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2016 be received.

19 Volunteering

Members considered a written update from Mike Ogden who had been working with Simon Wilson at the North Pennines AONB on a bid for funding from the Pennine National Trails Partnership to pay for research into setting up an effective and co-ordinated volunteering programme for the Pennine Way across the AONB, trialling some volunteer activities, and seeing how applicable this could be elsewhere. Part of the work would involve assessing the extent of current volunteering opportunities within the area, and how those opportunities could be better co-ordinated and managed. It was hoped that funding for this would be agreed at the Partnership meeting on 26 October 2016. The LAF would have a role to play in contributing to the project.

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

ACTION: Mike Ogden.

20 Health

Robin Trounson provided feedback from the meeting he had attended on 12 September 2016. Since the meeting he had received the following internet link to a web tool which set out 10 physical activity key indicators produced by Public Health England:-

<http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/physical-activity>

The physical activity data compared Durham with other areas in the region and also compared the North East to the rest of the country. The data also identified 12 conditions related to physical activity and supporting information such as life expectancy. It was pointed out that this would enable members to support any business case for improving access to the countryside and urban green spaces for recreation and exercise by citing up to date data about local health inequalities and opportunities. Robin Trounson offered to demonstrate the web tool at the next LAF meeting.

Progress with the Physical Activity Framework was also discussed at the meeting. The LAF had submitted comments to the Framework earlier this year and had said that it would welcome the opportunity to be involved, however it seemed that work had gone ahead without any input from the Forum. He suggested that the Portfolio

Lead for Health be invited to the next meeting to give an update on progress with the Framework.

AGREED that

- (i) the information be noted;
- (ii) Robin Trounson demonstrate the physical activity web tool at the next LAF meeting;
- (iii) the Portfolio Lead for Health or his representative be invited to the next meeting to discuss the Physical Activity Framework.

ACTION: Robin Trounson/Jim Welch.

21 Durham Tourism Management Plan 2016-2020

Consideration was given to the recently published Durham Tourism Management Plan for 2016-2020 and it was **AGREED** that an officer from Visit Durham be invited to the next meeting to discuss how the LAF could assist in the delivery of some of the actions in the Plan which were relevant to the work of the LAF.

22 Work Programme 2016/2017

AGREED that the Work Programme be updated to include Pat Holding on the Sub-Group for 'lost ways' and members be asked to give consideration to tasks and targets for their own work areas.

ACTION: Jill Errington to e-mail members for the information.

23 Meeting Dates 2017

AGREED that meetings for 2017 be held at 6.00pm on the following dates:-

Monday 30 January 2017
Monday 24 April 2017
Monday 17 July 2017
Monday 16 October 2017.