

## COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 30 January 2017 at 6.00 pm**

**Present:** Geoff Hughes (Chairman)

**Members of the Forum:**

Tom Bolton, Councillor Neil Foster (until item 6), Brian Hodgson, Pat Holding, Angela Johnson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden, Robin Trounson and Jim Welch

**Officers:**

Mike Ogden, Audrey Christie, Victoria Lloyd-Gent and Jill Errington

**Also present:**

Craig Wilson, Destination Development Manager – Visit County Durham  
Peter Singer – Barnard Castle Walkers are Welcome

### **1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies**

The Chairman welcomed Peter Singer of Barnard Castle Walkers are Welcome who was in attendance to observe the meeting, and Craig Wilson of Visit County Durham. Apologies for absence were received from Neil Gander, Steve Scoffin and Councillor Eddie Tomlinson.

Members agreed to consider item 5(a) County Durham Plan and item 25 Consultation – Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan, immediately following item 3 Durham Tourism Management Plan.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 Durham Tourism Management Plan 2016-2020**

Craig Wilson, Destination Development Manager provided background to Visit County Durham which worked with businesses in the public and private sector to maximise the visitor experience in County Durham. The Durham Tourism Management Plan provided a 4 year focus on providing a good experience for visitors to the County and to encourage tourists to stay longer. A need to develop seasonality had been identified which would ensure that the local economy would prosper all year around.

Members discussed how the LAF could contribute to the work of Visit County Durham. In terms of improving the visitor experience Tom Bolton asked if Visit County Durham liaised with Parish Councils who had a role in their local areas in looking after matters such as car parking, cleanliness and litter. Craig Wilson advised that they worked with Area Action Partnerships but would be interested in

exploring links to Parish Councils further through the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC).

Robin Trounson asked about collaboration with neighbouring Counties and was informed that Visit County Durham worked with neighbouring authorities whenever a regional approach was required, and had carried out joint campaigns in the past.

Geoff Hughes made the point that a key attraction in County Durham was its countryside, which included the Teesdale Way, and asked how this linked to priorities in the Plan to encourage visitors to spend more and stay longer. Craig Wilson advised that offering facilities associated with the countryside such as such as Bowlees Visitor Centre on the Pennine Way encouraged visitors to spend longer in the area and therefore increased spending.

Following a question from Angela Johnson about the loss of the Tourist Information Centre in Durham City, Members were informed that visits to the centre had reduced considerably in recent years and visitors in the main were local people. The increased use of technology meant that visitors researched an area before their visit.

Following a question from Jim Welch, Craig Wilson advised that Visit County Durham's Information Team were aware of 'Disabled Go' and ensured that the organisation was linked to relevant businesses.

In closing Geoff Hughes thanked Craig Wilson for the information and advised that the LAF would contact Visit County Durham again if any opportunities arose in future where it felt it could support the priorities of the Plan.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

#### **4 County Durham Plan**

Councillor N Foster explained that the County Durham Plan process had been paused until details of the Government White Paper on housing were received.

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

**ACTION:** Councillor Neil Foster and Robin Trounson to continue to provide updates.

#### **5 Consultation - Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan**

The Chairman informed members that Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum had asked the LAF to consider commenting on its draft Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the LAF would not normally comment on Neighbourhood Plans, this was a strategic document for the core of the County.

Councillor Foster explained that through Neighbourhood Plans communities were able to shape development in their local area. The role of the County Council was to provide advice and assistance to those developing a Plan. Robin Trounson noted

that housing sites were included, and Councillor Foster advised that the County Durham Plan was the over-arching document which would specify housing numbers, and Neighbourhood Plans would help to inform where developments should be located.

Members considered that it would be appropriate to comment on those parts of the Plan which were relevant to the LAF, as it had on the Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy. Robin Trounson volunteered to respond during the consultation period which would run from 1 March to 13 April 2017.

Brian Hodgson made the point that farmers were encouraged to diversify but to achieve that more accommodation was needed in the countryside.

**AGREED** that the LAF respond to the draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan.

**ACTION:** Robin Trounson to draft a response and circulate to the LAF for comments prior to the close of consultation.

## **6 Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 October 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

## **7 Matters Arising**

### **a) Heritage Coast Management Plan 2017-2025**

Members were informed that Niall Benson was in the process of logging responses to the consultation, including the comments of the LAF, and amending the Plan accordingly. He should be in a position to provide a formal response to the LAF before the next meeting.

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

**ACTION:** Angela Johnson to continue to update the LAF.

### **b) Joint Summer LAF Site Visit – Lambton Estate and Fatfield Bridge**

Members considered the note of the joint LAF summer site visit by Geoff Rigden. On the visit it had been noted that a section of the Weardale Way where it crossed the A183 near Wapping Bridge was in poor repair. Mike Ogden informed members that works to the path and steps had been completed.

**AGREED** that the note of the site visit be received and a letter be sent to Tyne and Wear LAF advising that improvements to the section of path near Wapping Bridge had been completed.

**ACTION:** Geoff Rigden to draft letter.

## 8 National/Regional Issues

### a) **Natural England**

Consideration was given to the update provided by Natural England. It was noted that the LAF annual conference was scheduled for 21 March 2017 in Birmingham, and further details were awaited.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and consideration be given to LAF representation at the conference on receipt of further details of the event.

### b) **Regional ROWIP Priorities**

Consideration was given to a paper prepared by Northumberland JLAF following an initial study of the common themes of the ROWIPs of Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland. The priorities identified from this study would be included in a paper for consideration at the regional Chairs/Vice-Chairs meeting to be held on 11 April 2017.

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

**ACTION:** Chairman to attend meeting.

### c) **Rural Tourism – Government Committee Inquiry**

The LAF response to the inquiry into supporting rural growth and improving access to the coast and countryside was confirmed. Members were informed that the Inquiry was now at the oral evidence hearing stage.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and the outcome of the Inquiry be awaited.

### d) **DEFRA Access Newsletter**

**AGREED** that DEFRA Access Newsletter Issue 77 be received.

## 9 De-Regulation Act

Members were informed that there was no progress to report in respect of the implementation of the De-Regulation Act at present.

**AGREED** that further developments be awaited.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden to provide updates on progress.

## 10 Lost Ways - Research for 2026 Cut-Off Date

Consideration was given to a paper by Angela Johnson which provided an update in respect of action taken to date by the Lost Ways Sub-Group in their research of lost routes.

Members were informed that a further 'Restoring the Record' training event was to be held on 4 March 2017 at Darlington. Sub-Group member Steve Scoffin had registered to attend and it was suggested that it may be of interest to other LAF members.

The BHS had circulated a paper in relation to auditing the list of streets and the recommendation by the stakeholder working group on rights of way that routes on the list of streets should be exempted from the 2026 cut-off date. The BHS had asked the LAF to respond to a number of questions and it was suggested that in the first instance information be gathered about current practices and discrepancies in the current list, for consideration by the Sub-Group.

**AGREED that:**

- a) details of the 'Restoring the Record' training event to be held on 4 March 2017 be circulated to all LAF members;
- b) information be gathered about current practices in respect of the list of streets for consideration by the Sub-Group;
- c) a further meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged to prioritise the list of routes identified by Sue Rogers, and the list of RUPPs.

**ACTION:**

- a) Jill Errington to circulate details of the training event;
- b) Audrey Christie to provide details of current practices and discrepancies in relation to the list of streets to the Lost Ways Sub-Group;
- c) Angela Johnson to arrange meeting of Lost Ways Sub-Group.

## **11 DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

Members were provided with feedback from the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting held on 24 January 2017. Robin Trounson had provided a summary of actions arising from the meeting which was circulated to members. The following actions were discussed:-

### **Action Points from meeting held on 7 April 2016**

Stuart Timmiss agreed to provide contact details of Planning and Asset Department Managers to the LAF.

### **Common Land and Village Greens**

Tom Bolton advised that actions had been agreed about the management and protection of Common Land and Village Greens. Stuart Timmiss had agreed to explore carrying out searches with the Land Registry which may help to establish the ownership status of those areas of Common Land and Village Greens that were unclaimed or vested in the Council. It was also agreed that village green data be made available to the public online. Common land subject to the CROW Act was already available on the Council's website via the MAGIC web tool.

### **Dedication of Land**

Pat Holding advised that Stuart Timmiss had agreed to the LAF's suggestion of a working group to explore the issue of dedication and to scope potential sites.

**AGREED** that Pat Holding represent the LAF on the working group, supported by Robin Trounson, and LAF members be asked for suggestions of potential sites for dedication.

### **Section 106 Agreements**

Members were informed that Pat Holding had prepared a paper for discussion at the Liaison meeting exploring opportunities available within section 106 Agreements to raise funding which could be used for improving access rights. It was explained at the Liaison meeting that decisions for spending Section 106 monies was generally a matter for local areas and it was agreed that the LAF may be able to influence local decision-making by improving communication with local members, Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and Parish and Town Councils. The LAF discussed how this might be achieved and which could raise the profile of the LAF at the same time.

Stuart Timmiss also offered to arrange a presentation for the LAF on the Green Infrastructure Strategy at its next meeting on 24 April 2017.

**AGREED** that in the first instance an offer of a presentation be made through County Durham Association of Local Authorities (CDALC) at its AGM which could then be extended to AAPs.

**ACTION:** Tom Bolton to make contact with CDALC.

**FURTHER AGREED** that the offer of a presentation on the Green Infrastructure Strategy be accepted.

### **County Durham Plan**

Stuart Timmiss invited the LAF to participate in a workshop to ensure that due consideration was given to issues relating to access.

**AGREED** that the offer of a workshop be accepted, and in view of the current delay in the timetable for the County Durham Plan, Stuart Timmiss be asked to inform the LAF when it would be appropriate to meet. Geoff Hughes and Robin Trounson to represent the LAF on the workshop.

### **Rights of Way Guidance for Developers**

Bedfordshire County Council had produced guidance for developers with regard to rights of way and Stuart Timmiss was to give consideration to DCC publishing its own guidance.

**AGREED** that the matter be a topic for discussion at the next DCCL/LAF Liaison meeting.

## **12 Common Land**

See Minute no. 11.

### **13 Dedication of Land**

See Minute no. 11.

### **14 Section 106 Agreements**

See Minute no. 11.

### **15 Rights of Way Team**

Audrey Christie reported that the latest tranche of paths for dedication as rights of way had been completed.

Direct Services had completed a significant amount of work in the last 2 months, which included access prioritisation projects in Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Shildon.

£300k had been allocated over 3 years for the damage caused by Storm Desmond. Members were informed of a scheme for works at Chester-le-Street Riverside where part of the river bank had collapsed.

Brian Hodgson referred to problems caused at lambing time by sheep worrying and the availability of free signs to raise awareness among dog owners. The Member asked if the Council would be able to assist with the distribution of signs but was informed that this would not be feasible. Members discussed ways of raising awareness of the problem and it was suggested that the LAF issue a press release to local media contacts and to the Audio Newsletter.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and a press release be drafted to raise awareness amongst dog owners of the effects of sheep worrying, particularly at lambing time.

**ACTION:** Brian Hodgson to draft press release. Jill Errington to circulate to local media contacts. Jim Welch to include in audio newsletter.

### **16 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Delivery**

Members were informed that good progress was being made with the delivery of the Plan. Over the last year £500k of LTP funding had been utilised on walking and cycling schemes.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### **17 Access Prioritisation**

Victoria Lloyd-Gent informed Members that projects were progressing well and the next stage would be to review the current position and look at other infrastructure improvements.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

## 18 **Cycling Strategy**

Victoria Lloyd-Gent reported that approval for consultation on the Strategy had been delayed and the Strategy would be submitted to Cabinet in September/October 2017. Work was continuing on the cycle network planning process but unfortunately the Project Officer's contract would end in March 2017 so there may be a resource issue going forward.

Work on producing town cycle maps was progressing well. The map for Chester-le-Street had been completed and had been distributed in cycling shops and the local sports centre. A free Bike Easy book was promoted in every leaflet. The next map to be completed was Durham City.

Following a question from Tom Bolton, members were informed that the leaflets included a scan code to Visit County Durham information.

Work had commenced on the Pity Me and the Chester-le-Street Riverside to Hermitage schemes which would form part of the Great North Cycleway. The path between Heighington and Hitachi was almost completed.

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

**ACTION:** Neil Gander/Geoff Rigden.

## 19 **Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership (LOI)**

Consideration was given to a report by Jim Welch which provided an update on progress. Members were informed that regular meetings had been set up with Peter Downes, the Access and Woodland Officer. A festival was planned for late summer/early autumn 2017 to celebrate and trial improvements to date. It had been suggested that LAFs may be able to assist in promoting the event and helping on the ground, and Jim Welch agreed to contact the festival organiser to clarify what was required. It was suggested that the report be circulated to Gateshead and Northumberland LAFs, highlighting the proposed festival.

**AGREED** that

- a) the information be noted;
- b) Jim Welch contact the LOI festival organiser for further information;
- c) Jill Errington circulate the report to Northumberland and Gateshead LAFs.

**ACTION:** Jim Welch/Jill Errington.

## 20 **North East Local Nature Partnership (NELNP)**

The Chairman provided an update on progress and referred Members to details of the NELNP Conference to be held on 28 February 2017. A volunteer was sought to attend the event.

**AGREED** that Robin Trounson attend the NELNP Conference on 28 February 2017.



**ACTION:** Robin Trounson to register his attendance on-line.

## **21 Bright Water Landscape Project**

The Chairman provided an update on progress with the delivery of the Bright Water Landscape Project. The project was working towards making application for HLF funding for individual projects in the summer. A Development Day had been held last Autumn and he had recently attended a Board meeting.

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

**ACTION:** Chairman.

## **22 Pennine National Trails Partnership**

Mike Ogden reported that funding for National Trails had been granted at the same level for 2017/2018 as had been received in 2016/2017, despite the threat of budget cuts, however other sources of funding would need to be explored in the longer term.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

## **23 Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (LNP)**

Members considered a letter received from the Northern Upland Chain LNP which asked if County Durham LAF had any projects, activities or initiatives to which the LNP could usefully contribute.

Mike Ogden suggested that the most obvious strategic access projects across the LNP area related to the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway National Trails, and support for them would seem to fit the Partnership's objectives. There was also the proposed Tees-Swale project, which would have a significant access element and which would be supported as a strategic approach to access across administrative boundaries.

**AGREED** that Mike Ogden draft a response to the LNP, as outlined above.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden.

## **24 Health**

Robin Trounson provided members with a brief demonstration of Public Health England's web tool of 10 physical activity indicators. The data would be useful to support the LAF's contribution to the Healthy Weight Alliance Group:-

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

The Chairman noted that as agreed at the last meeting Chris Woodcock, the Portfolio Lead for Health had been invited to discuss the Physical Activity Framework with the LAF. It was suggested that a further invitation be sent asking the Officer or a representative to attend the next meeting.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and the Portfolio Lead for Health or a representative be invited to the next meeting to discuss the Physical Activity Framework.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to send further invitation.

## **25 North Pennines AONB Partnership**

### **a) Volunteering**

Members were informed of a project seeking volunteers to look after the Pennine Way between Tan Hill and Greenhead. Members had been sent a flyer which invited volunteers to participate in the Pennine Way People Project, and Mike Ogden understood that there had been a good response.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### **b) North Pennines AONB Partnership Access and Recreation Working Group**

**AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 be received, and Neil Gander represent the LAF at the next meeting to be held on 2 February 2017.

### **c) North Pennines AONB Partnership Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group**

**AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 be received, and Neil Gander represent the LAF at the next meeting to be held on 2 February 2017.

## **26 Teesdale Way - Website**

David Maughan provided feedback from the meeting he had attended on 16 November 2016 with Tees Valley and North Yorkshire LAFs which considered proposals for a website to promote the Teesdale Way. Durham University students had been asked to build the website which would be an opportunity to promote the good work carried out by the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership. A key issue would be sustainability and he hoped that the website could be funded by local businesses in the long-term.

**AGREED** that the project be endorsed and David Maughan continue to represent the LAF on the Teesdale Way Website Group.

**ACTION:** David Maughan.

**27 Notification of Open Access Restrictions**

The Chairman reported of two notifications of open access restrictions received since the last meeting in respect of Derwent Gorge and Muggleswick Woods. A copy of each notification was provided to members for information.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**28 Work Programme - Tasks and Targets**

**AGREED** that the Work Programme be updated to include the following:-

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Member (Lead)</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Targets</b>
Teesdale Way Website	To represent the LAF on the Teesdale Way Website Group	David Maughan		
Sheep Worrying – Raising Awareness	To draft press release	Brian Hodgson		

**29 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

**AGREED** that the next meeting be held on Monday 24 April 2017 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall.