

## **County Durham Local Access Forum**

At the Annual General Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 17 July 2017 at 6.00 pm**

### **Present:**

Tom Bolton, Neil Gander, Geoff Hughes (until item 16), Pat Holding, Angela Johnson  
Councillor Ossie Johnson, Robin Trounson and Jim Welch

### **Officers:**

Mike Ogden, Victoria Lloyd-Gent and Jill Errington

### **Also present:**

Adrian White – Head of Transport and Contract Services, DCC

Bill Lightburn – Strategic Manager – Culture and Sport, DCC

John Sturdy - Observer

## **1 Welcome and Introductions**

Retiring Chairman Geoff Hughes welcomed Adrian White, Head of Transport and Contract Services and Bill Lightburn, Strategic Manager – Culture and Sport who were representatives of the Active Durham Leadership Group. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carl Marshall, Brian Hodgson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden, Steve Scoffin and Audrey Christie.

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Ossie Johnson to the Forum, who together with Councillor Carl Marshall replaced former Councillors Foster and Tomlinson. Members asked that letters be sent to Councillors Foster and Tomlinson to thank them for the support they had given to the LAF during their term of office.

## **2 Physical Activity Framework**

Members received a presentation from Adrian White and Bill Lightburn on Active Durham, a partnership aimed at engaging organisations in promoting and supporting physical activity. The vision for County Durham was to encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to be more physically active.

Encouraging people to be active was important to County Durham and would contribute to the County's wider priorities. To deliver its vision a Framework had been developed with the aim of achieving the Chief Medical Officer's recommendations for physical activity.

It was early days for the Framework but an evidence based approach would help the Framework target key groups. Ideas and support from the LAF were welcomed.

Members discussed how the LAF could support the Strategy, given its expertise in encouraging access to the countryside for activities such as walking, cycling and horse-riding. The Officers were asked if there was scope for a Task and Finish Working Group for Physical Activity and the Natural Environment which the LAF could support.

Robin Trounson referred to the comments of the LAF on the Physical Activity Framework which had suggested that Officers might wish to consider the data collected by Natural England (MENE). Since 2009 Natural England had surveyed 800 people per week on their visits to the countryside and the statistics would be a useful tool in helping to establish the barriers to engagement in physical activity.

Members discussed physical activity and young people, and Tom Bolton referred to a scrutiny project undertaken a few years ago which may be useful to re-visit. Adrian White advised that a Children and Young People's Group would be dedicated to increasing activity in children. It was recognised that schools would play an important role in this.

Geoff thanked the Officers for the presentation and hoped that the LAF's offer of help and expertise in the implementation of the Strategy would be taken on board.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### **3 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Geoff Hughes informed Members that he was not standing for the position this year but with the LAF's agreement would devote his time to the Bright Water Project and the North East England Nature Partnership.

The LAF Secretary sought nominations for the election of the Chair of the Local Access Forum for the ensuing year.

There were no nominations and following discussion it was **AGREED** that a Chair be elected at each meeting from among the membership, until such time as the position could be filled permanently. The Chair to remain in place until the subsequent meeting of the Forum to enable business to be conducted between meetings.

Following nominations it was **AGREED** that Neil Gander be elected as Chair for the meeting and until the next scheduled meeting of the Forum.

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice-Chair(s) of the LAF.

**AGREED** that Robin Trounson and Angela Johnson be elected as joint Vice-Chairs of the Forum for the ensuing year.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

## 6 Matters Arising

### a) County Durham Plan

Robin Trounson reported that due to the local and general elections, and the expected Government White Paper on housing, there was no further progress to report in relation to the County Durham Plan.

This was confirmed by Councillor Johnson who added that the Council intended to progress work on the Plan if further Guidance from Central Government was not forthcoming.

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

**ACTION:** Robin Trounson to continue to provide updates.

### b) Heritage Coast Management Plan 2017-2025

Angela Johnson reported that there had been some slippage in deadlines due to resource issues and the Plan would therefore now be submitted to the Heritage Coast Steering Group for approval in September 2017. Niall Benson would provide the matrix of comments on the Plan as soon as possible.

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

**ACTION:** Angela Johnson to continue to provide updates.

### c) Teesdale Way Website

In the absence of David Maughan, Mike Ogden provided an update in relation to the proposed Teesdale Way Website. River Tees Rediscovered had appointed a new delivery officer and following discussions the new Tees Valley Combined Authority had agreed to use the Teesdale Way and the Heritage Trail Project as the backbone for a tourism-based website. This addressed the concerns about the proposed site's long-term future.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### d) Healthy Weight Alliance

The LAF had not been represented at the meeting of the Healthy Weight Alliance held on 6 July 2017 but Mike Ogden and Cllr Johnson had attended the launch of Active Durham and the Sugar Smart Initiative.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Robin Trounson to continue to provide updates.

## 7 National/Regional Issues

### a) North East LAF Chairs

Angela Johnson provided feedback from the meeting held on 4 May 2017, as outlined in the minutes which had been circulated to members. Interest had been expressed in the press releases Durham LAF had issued in relation to hedge-cutting and sheep worrying. These were felt to be useful advice and a way of publicising the LAFs, and the meeting agreed to explore a joint approach, looking at potential press releases at the next meeting.

The next meeting of the LAF Chairs was to be held on 12 October 2017 at County Hall, and in discussing potential topics it was suggested that the NECA Transport Plan and the regional priorities identified by Northumberland JLAF be included on the Agenda.

For information Members considered a discussion paper by Northumberland JLAF on the future of promoted routes in Northumberland.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### b) LAF National Conference

Consideration was given to the report of Tom Bolton which provided feedback following his attendance at the LAF National Conference held in Birmingham on 21 June 2017.

A topic of particular interest was Health and the Natural Environment and Natural England's Outdoors for All Programme, which it was noted, linked to Durham's Physical Activity Framework.

Tom Bolton advised that he had provided feedback in relation to some organisational issues with regard to the conference

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to circulate conference presentations on receipt from Natural England.

### c) Tyne and Wear LAF – Proposed Training Seminar on Planning

The Chairman asked Members to indicate if they would be interested in attending a possible training seminar on planning which was to be arranged by Tyne and Wear JLAF in September 2017.

Angela Johnson, Pat Holding, Robin Trounson and Jim Welch had expressed an interest in attending.

**AGREED** that Tyne and Wear LAF be notified of the LAF's interest in the Planning Seminar.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington.

d) **DEFRA Access Newsletters**

**AGREED** that DEFRA Access Newsletters Issues 80 and 81 be received.

**8 DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

Members were invited to consider topics for discussion at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting to be held on 6 October 2017. Stuart Timmiss would also be asked if there were any matters he wished to raise with the LAF.

**AGREED** that members submit any topics they wished to raise to the LAF Secretary. In the event that there were no matters for discussion the meeting be cancelled.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to ask members and Stuart Timmiss for suggested topics.

**9 Rights of Way Team**

In the absence of Audrey Christie, Mike Ogden provided an update in relation to the work of the Rights of Way Team.

Members were unformed that the Pelaw Woods restoration project was now fully completed. Work on other areas of flood damage would now commence and one of the first projects identified at Slitt Wood, Westgate was due to start the following week.

The ploughing and cropping campaign had been successful with only one landowner served notice for non-compliance.

A public inquiry was due to commence in connection with a claimed Public Right of Way in Wharton Park.

To date there had been no objections received in respect of the proposed modification order at High Stoop, Tow Law.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**10 Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Members noted that ROWIP3 concluded in 2018 and it was suggested that a meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged to discuss the future of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan beyond next year. The outcome of the discussions could be a topic for discussion at the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

Jim Welch advised that he wished to be involved in the Sub-Group meeting.

**AGREED** that a meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged to discuss the future of ROWIP.

**ACTION:** Victoria Lloyd-Gent to arrange Sub-Group meeting.

## 11 Access Prioritisation

In the absence of Audrey Christie, Members were informed that there was no funding available to carry out any further audits. Mike Ogden added that it may be possible to access funding by including projects tackling health deprivation and it was suggested that a meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged to discuss how this could be progressed.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and a meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged.

**ACTION:** Audrey Christie.

## 12 Cycling

### a) NECA Event Walking and Cycling Strategy

Neil Gander provided feedback from an event he had attended to discuss NECA's proposed Walking and Cycling Strategy. Planning, transport, health and access sectors were all represented and using the exchange of views at the event, consultants would develop a draft Strategy. Mike Ogden and Victoria Lloyd-Gent had also attended an event each.

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

**ACTION:** Neil Gander to keep members informed of developments.

### b) Cycling Update

Victoria Lloyd-Gent advised that she had now moved to the Strategic Traffic Team following a restructure of the Transport Section.

National Cycle Network route 14 had now re-opened at Pelaw Woods and an informal celebration with photoshoot had been held to mark this.

She was pleased to report that the link to Durham station had now opened and work had commenced on the path on the opposite side of the road.

As part of the proposed Walking and Cycling Strategy Members were informed of a bid submitted to the Department of Transport for 30 days technical support on the outline design and feasibility of the main towns of Durham, Newton Aycliffe and Chester-le-Street.

The town cycling map for Durham City had been completed and work would now commence on a map for Newton Aycliffe. Following a question from Geoff Hughes, Victoria Lloyd-Gent advised that there were no plans for a single network map of the County but a long-term aim was to carry out an audit of all routes between the main towns.

All cycling information was now on a single dedicated page on DCC's website.

Work on the Cycling Strategy had started and would hopefully be ready to go out to consultation later in the year.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

### **13 Lost Ways**

Angela Johnson advised that she would aim to arrange a meeting of the Lost Ways Sub-Group in the first week of October 2017 to progress the work already carried out in relation to identifying lost routes.

Mike Ogden advised that work on auditing the List of Streets was ongoing.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:**

1. Angela Johnson to arrange meeting of the Lost Ways Sub-Group.
2. Audrey Christie to continue with work on auditing the list of streets.

With the agreement of the Chairman, items on the Agenda relating to the North East England Nature Partnership and the Bright Water Project were brought forward to allow Geoff Hughes to report on the business before he had to leave the meeting.

### **14 North East England Nature Partnership**

Geoff Hughes reiterated that although no longer Chairman of the Forum he wished to continue to lead as the LAF's representative on the North East England Nature Partnership.

**AGREED** that Geoff Hughes continue to represent the LAF on the North East England Nature Partnership.

**ACTION:** Geoff Hughes to continue to provide updates.

### **15 Bright Water Landscape Project**

Consideration was given to information circulated to Members which gave details of interim governance arrangements for the delivery phase of the Bright Water project.

Geoff Hughes was currently Chair of the Partnership Board for the development phase. The project would shortly be submitting a bid for funding for the delivery phase, and subject to it being successful, the Partnership Board would be reconfigured. There was one place for the Tees Valley and County Durham Local Access Forums on the Delivery Phase Board and subject to the agreement of members and Tees Valley LAF he wished to continue to represent the LAFs.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and Geoff Hughes's role on the Partnership Board be endorsed.

## **16 Common Land**

Tom Bolton reported that searches were being carried out with the Land Registry to establish the ownership status of common land and village greens that were unclaimed or vested in the Council. Most of the work on village greens was completed and it was hoped that searches in respect of common land could be completed during the Council's August recess.

The village green dataset for inclusion on the website had been completed and subject to a final check of the boundaries the information should be ready to be posted on the Council's website by the end of the summer.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Tom Bolton to continue to provide updates.

## **17 Dedication of Land**

Consideration was given to the report of Pat Holding which provided feedback from the workshop held on 26 April 2017 which discussed dedication of land by Durham County Council.

Stuart Timmiss had agreed to explore the feasibility of three areas, Seaham, Stanley and Shildon. Durham County Council would now look at Council owned land in these areas and assess their suitability for dedication. A further workshop would be held on completion of this work. Mike Ogden confirmed that Officers had met to discuss this further and had addressed some of DCC's reservations about dedication.

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

**ACTION:** Pat Holding to continue to provide updates.

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

Consideration was given to an update by Jim Welch on progress with the Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership which included details of the proposed Visitor Centre, the forthcoming Festival and other LOI events. The paper also gave details of progress with access projects.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Jim Welch to continue to provide updates.



## **19 Pennine National Trails Partnership**

Mike Ogden informed Members that funding had been secured for a further year for Pennine Way People, a project involving a team of volunteers who looked after the route from Tan Hill to Greenhead.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden to continue to provide updates.

## **20 North Pennines AONB Partnership**

It was noted that the LAF was not represented at the meetings of the North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group, and the National Trails Northern Working Group held on 15 June 2017.

Nominations were sought for a substitute for Neil Gander in the event that he was unable to attend any future meetings.

**AGREED** that

1. The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 June 2017 be circulated to Members for information on receipt.
2. An e-mail be sent to all members seeking a substitute.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington.

## **21 Notification of Open Access Restrictions**

Members were informed of 3 open access notifications received in respect of the following since the last meeting, copies of which had been circulated:-

Wemmergill  
Cotherstone Moor  
Birk Hatt Moor

**AGREED** that the notifications be received.

## **22 Member Training Needs**

Members were asked to consider any training needs relevant to the work of the LAF.

**AGREED** that any suggestions for training be submitted to the LAF Secretary.

**ACTION:** All to consider.

## **23 Membership Update**

Members were informed that in accordance with Local Access Forum Regulations LAF members were required to be appointed for a 3 year term. In order to formalise arrangements it was proposed that all members be appointed for 3 years with effect from the date of the meeting.

**AGREED** that all members be appointed for a three year term with effect from 17 July 2017.

## **24 Annual Report 2016/2017**

Consideration was given to the content of the draft Annual Report for 2016/2017, a copy of which had been circulated.

**AGREED** that Annual Report for 2016/17 be approved for publication on the Council's website, and be circulated to the following for comments and feedback:-

Chief Executive, DCC  
Head of Planning and Assets, DCC  
Head of Transport and Contract Services, DCC  
Leader of the Council  
Local MPs  
Area Action Partnerships  
Regional LAFs  
Parish/Town Councils  
Durham Voice.

## **25 Work Programme/Targets and Outputs**

**AGREED** that the Work Programme be updated to include Jim Welch on the ROWIP Sub-Group. Members to update their own work areas as necessary and inform the LAF Secretary.

**ACTION:** All to consider.

## **26 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

Members were informed that Mike Ogden and Audrey Christie would be unable to attend the next scheduled meeting of the LAF and it was therefore **AGREED** that the meeting be held on Monday 9 October 2017 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall.