

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 22 January 2018 at 6.00 pm**

### **Present:**

**Steve Scoffin - Chairman**

### **Members:**

Tom Bolton, Neil Gander, Colin Hemingway, Brian Hodgson, Pat Holding, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, Councillor Ossie Johnson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden, John Sturdy and Robin Trounson

### **Officers:**

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

### **Also Present:**

Chris Scaife, Countryside Access Officer, Hartlepool Borough Council

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

The Chairman welcomed new members John Sturdy and Colin Hemingway to the meeting and Chris Scaife, Countryside Access Officer from Hartlepool Borough Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Singer and Jim Welch, and Beryl Bird of Tees Valley LAF.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

Steve Scoffin declared an interest in item numbered 24 on the Agenda regarding MOD Consultation on Section 28 Indefinite Directions at Bowes and Battle Hill. The member was employed by the MOD.

## **3 Tackling Livestock Worrying and Encouraging Responsible Dog Ownership**

Chris Scaife briefed members on the Traffic Lights for Dogs Project which had been developed by Tees Valley LAF and Hartlepool Borough Council following concerns by landowner and LAF member Rob Brown about dog attacks on his sheep flock.

Members were informed that the project had been developed with partners and comprised of signage boards with interchangeable red, amber and green messages. The project was introduced on North Brierton Farm as a pilot for one year. Feedback from the landowner had been positive with no dog attacks experienced during 2017. The project was one of three case studies that had

featured in the All Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare's report on Tackling Livestock Worrying and Encouraging Responsible Dog Ownership.

Members thanked Chris Scaife for his presentation and discussed the feasibility of introducing a similar project in County Durham.

Brian Hodgson advised that he would welcome a similar scheme in County Durham and outlined the problems he experienced as an urban-fringe farmer across the year.

Following discussion it was **AGREED** that a Sub-Group be set up comprising Steve Scoffin, David Maughan, Brian Hodgson and Colin Hemingway to consider options for a similar project in County Durham to tackle live-stock worrying.

**ACTION:**

1. Jill Errington to arrange Sub-Group and give any other interested members an opportunity to participate;
2. the Sub-Group to present proposals to the next meeting of the Forum.

**4 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**5 Matters Arising**

a) **County Durham Plan**

Councillor Johnson advised that following approval by Cabinet in November 2017 the preferred options report would now be considered in Spring 2018 with consultation commencing in the early Summer. At the end of the consultation period the draft submission should be published early in 2019 before the inspection process commenced.

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

b) **Draft Heritage Coast Management Plan**

A letter received from the Heritage Coast Officer was circulated to members which provided an update on progress with the Plan. Angela Johnson advised that the final draft was now completed, subject to a Heritage Regulations Assessment. It was pleasing that the LAF's comments had been taken on board and incorporated in the Plan but regretful that there wasn't support for a linear coastal bridleway route.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and the final Plan be circulated on receipt.

c) **Northumbrian Water – Water Rangers**

At the last meeting members had agreed that a representative from the Water Rangers be invited to give a presentation to the LAF on their work and how it could link to the Rights of Way Team. Members were informed that a representative had been invited to the meeting on 23 April 2018 and confirmation of their attendance was awaited.

Angela Johnson added that Northumbrian Water had established a website of river maps of the County which the Rights of Way Team may find useful.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to seek confirmation of attendance by a representative from the Water Rangers at the next meeting.

d) **DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

Members were informed that the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 11 April 2018 and members had been asked to consider potential topics for discussion.

**AGREED** that the following matters be raised:-

- ) Training for LAF members on planning processes (see minute 6(ii))
- ) Potential LAF project to tackle livestock worrying
- ) Public access to land post Brexit (in the light of announcement from Michael Gove) (see minute 6(d))
- ) Potential resource implications of the De-Regulation Act and the 2026 cut-off date for recording 'lost ways' on the Definitive Map (see minute 7)

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to inform Stuart Timmiss of items and ask for any topics from DCC.

## 6 National/Regional Issues

a) **Regional LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2017 were received and members considered the matters arising which were included in a discussion paper by Robin Trounson:-

i) **Relationship with North East Combined Authority**

**AGREED** that if NECA attendance at the next LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group was confirmed Councillors Johnson and Marshall and/or appropriate officers be invited to attend the NE LAF Chairs/Vice-Chairs meeting on 8 March 2018.

ii) **Training**

**AGREED** that training for LAF members on the theme of planning be included on the Agenda for the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting. If training

was agreed an invitation be extended to other LAFs in the region to attend.

iii) **LAF National Conference**

Members were advised that a letter had been sent to Natural England about arrangements for the National Conference for 2018, a copy of which had been circulated. Members were asked for suggestions for the Agenda, should it go ahead.

**AGREED** that the letter be noted and DEFRA's 25 Year Plan and Public Access Post Brexit be suggested as conference topics at the next NE LAF Chairs/Vice-Chairs meeting (see minute numbered 6(d)).

iv) **Regional Press Releases**

**AGREED** that arrangements be made for the press releases relating to sheep worrying and hedge-cutting to be updated and released at the appropriate time in 2018.

**ACTION:** David Maughan/Brian Hodgson/Geoff Rigden.

b) **LAF Annual Review Form 2016/2017**

Members were informed that the LAF had been asked to complete the Annual Review Form by Natural England for 2016/2017 and unlike other years completion was not compulsory. A copy of the completed form had been circulated to members which included comments about the level of support received from Natural England.

**AGREED** that the LAF Annual Review Form for 2016/2017 be noted.

c) **NECA Transport Plan: Walking and Cycling Strategy**

**AGREED** that Neil Gander's attendance at the Tyne and Wear Joint LAF meeting on 23 January 2017 for an update in relation to the NECA Transport Plan, be confirmed.

**ACTION:** Neil Gander to provide feedback at the next LAF meeting.

d) **Post Brexit Access Proposals**

Consideration was given to a paper from the British Horse Society, the Byways and Bridleways Trust, the Open Spaces Society and the Ramblers with regard to public access post Brexit, and proposals for the redirection of agricultural funds to give public benefit.

Members discussed the paper and considered that if there was a National Conference the plans announced by Michael Gove MP should be a topic for discussion.

**AGREED** that the information be noted and public access post Brexit be suggested as a potential item for the National Conference at the next Regional Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting.

e) **Huddle**

Huddle was explained for the benefit of new members and it was acknowledged that Natural England was keen to promote it as a communication tool for LAFs. Neil Gander advised that he had been unable to access Huddle but hoped to resolve the problem before the next meeting when the LAF would discuss future use.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Neil Gander.

## **7 Update from Rights of Way Team**

Audrey Christie provided an update in relation to the work of the Rights of Way Team.

Members were informed that the 2026 cut-off date for restoring lost ways was beginning to impact upon the Team as a result of the increase in the number of modifications being received. Ten applications had been made since March 2017 and this number was likely to increase as the cut-off date approached. Geoff Hughes appreciated that resources were limited, but considered that the Council should be made aware of the added pressure and take steps to manage the increased workload. It was suggested that this be raised as a topic for discussion at the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting.

Audrey Christie provided an overview of other work undertaken since the last meeting which included the completion of repairs to reinstate the riverbank at Maiden Castle and the commencement of works to create a footpath next to the Weardale Railway between Wolsingham and Frosterley.

The Public Inquiry in connection with the Modification Order to add a disputed path to the Definitive Map as a bridleway at the Howden-le-Wear to Wear Valley Junction would commence in July 2018.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

## **8 Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Geoff Rigden reported that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was due for renewal in 2018. The ROWIP remained a statutory requirement for local authorities and was an important document for setting out the action the Council would take to provide a Public Rights of Way (PROW) network which met current and future needs and demand.

Due to a change in roles and responsibilities, the PROW team would now lead on Durham County Council's ROWIP. Audrey Christie, Victoria Lloyd-Gent and Mike Ogden had met recently to discuss and scope the next version. It was agreed that a full re-write was not required and the next version would adhere to the new Council guidelines to keep strategies to a minimum, consisting of a summary, a brief review of the previous strategy and an updated action plan.

The consultation plan was yet to be determined but would be built into the ROWIP process.

The LAF ROWIP Sub-Group would be invited to be involved by the lead officers at the appropriate time to ensure best use of LAF members' time.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Geoff Rigden/Tom Bolton and Jim Welch to keep members informed of developments.

## **9 Access Prioritisation**

Geoff Rigden reported that with the introduction of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) by the Department for Transport and the big changes facing local authorities, the relevance of the project was under question. Discussions had taken place to consider whether it was appropriate to align Access Prioritisation to LCWIPs but it was felt that this may alter the ethos and outcomes of a well-regarded project. Instead, it had been decided that with the limited resources, for the time being it was best to focus on LCWIPs with the hope that this would lead to investment for improvements to the cycling and walking network in a similar way to the Access Prioritisation Project. Wherever possible information from the Access Prioritisation Project would feed into the LCWIP process.

Progress with the LCWIP could be reported under the Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan in future.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

## **10 Cycling Strategy**

Geoff Rigden reported that the Strategy had undergone significant changes since it was paused for various reasons at the start of the year and would now be aligned to the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy to reflect the government guidelines to produce Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

It would now be named County Durham's Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan. This was due to governance arrangements with the North East Combined Authority.

The document was in the process of being re-profiled to align with DCC's guidelines for strategies as mentioned under the ROWIP update. It would be presented as a review, an evidence base and an action plan. Work was ongoing but it was hoped that the completed version would be published by Autumn 2018.

The LAF Sub-Group would be advised when an early version was available for their attention.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**Action:** Neil Gander and Geoff Rigden keep members informed of developments.

## **11 Coastal Access - Network Rail Proposals**

Members were informed that Network Rail had invited the LAF to be represented at a site visit on Tuesday 6 February 2018 to discuss the proposed closure of the footpath level crossing Hawthorn Hive and the construction of a new footbridge at the bottom of Hawthorn Dene to access the beach. Angela Johnson and John Sturdy had volunteered to attend.

**AGREED** that Angela Johnson and John Sturdy represent the LAF at the site visit and provide feedback at the next meeting.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to confirm with members the time of the site visit.

## **12 Lost Ways - Restoring the Record**

Angela Johnson advised that she had provided the Sub-Group with an updated list of lost routes by Sue Rogers, BHS showing those that have had modification applications submitted or currently being researched, the list of Roads Used as Public Paths which were identified as suitable for research for possible upgrade to bridleway (following the visit of the Sub-Group members looking at the Rights of Way GIS), and a guide with useful links for those who were new to undertaking research.

Members were informed that Natural England had sent the LAF a copy of Phil Wadey's book on Restoring the Record which was very useful for the research. This was the latest, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the book, and was to be shared around the Sub-Group for use. Neil Gander made the point that the work in carrying out the research was expensive and asked about assistance with meeting these costs. It was stated that DCC and the LAF could not recompense these expenses, but it was queried whether the BHS would cover any costs for Neil Gander as he was researching bridleway routes. Angela Johnson advised that she would check.

**AGREED** that a further meeting of the Sub-Group be arranged.

**ACTION:** Angela Johnson.

## **13 Dedication of Land**

Members considered Durham County Council's response following the meeting held on 26 April 2017 in connection with dedication of land which was attended by DCC Officers and LAF members Pat Holding and Tom Bolton. Their understanding from the meeting had been that the Council was inclined to provide sites for permissive access and would look at potential sites in Shildon, Seaham and Stanley for the next meeting. However this differed from the response provided by Durham County Council and there appeared that there had been a misunderstanding as to the outcomes from the meeting. A further meeting of the Group had been scheduled for 10 January 2018 but unfortunately this had been

cancelled and would now be re-arranged. Members' views on the way forward were sought.

It was suggested by Steve Scoffin that the members should reiterate to the Council that their understanding was that three areas would be explored, but also that the LAF would be happy for the search for potential sites to be widened.

**AGREED** that a further meeting of the Working Group be arranged and attended by Pat Holding and Tom Bolton.

**ACTION:** Pat Holding and Tom Bolton to provide feedback at the next LAF meeting.

#### **14 Common Land**

Tom Bolton advised that work on updating the village green maps had been completed and arrangements would be made to have the revised plans posted on the Council's website.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

#### **15 Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan**

Members considered the response drafted by Pat Holding to the second draft of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan, a copy of which had been circulated.

**AGREED** that the response be confirmed.

#### **16 North East of England Nature Partnership**

There was no further progress reported at the meeting.

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

#### **17 Bright Water Landscape Project**

Geoff Hughes advised that a decision on the bid for Heritage Lottery Funding was expected in early March 2018. Members were shown DVD footage of the Bright Water area which had been used to support the application bid.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

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

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

In the absence of Jim Welch consideration was given to the written update on access projects in the LOI. Mike Ogden advised of proposals for a joint site visit involving Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland LAFs to view some of the access projects.



**AGREED** that the information be noted.

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

## **19 Pennine National Trails Partnership**

Mike Ogden referred members to the minutes of the Pennine National Trails Working Group at Agenda item numbered 20 which provided an update on current issues. There remained uncertainty about funding for 2018/2019 and work was ongoing to form a national body which would represent National Trail Partnerships to lobby the Government on matters such as funding.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

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

## **20 North Pennines AONB Partnership**

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meetings of the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Joint Tourism Working Group and Access and Recreation Working Group, and the Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group held on 8 November 2018. Neil Gander provided feedback from the meetings and highlighted proposals for the North Pennine Circular Walk and the information included with the papers regarding the North Pennines UNESCO Global Geopark status.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** Neil Gander or Peter Singer attend the next meetings scheduled to be held on a date and venue to be arranged in March 2018 in Cumbria.

## **21 Health**

No feedback from the meeting of the Healthy Weight Alliance Group held on 21 November 2017 was provided as Jim Welch was not in attendance and the minutes had not yet been received.

Consideration was given to the letter sent by Robin Trounson to Public Health in response to the plan 'Tackle the issues which result in people of all ages becoming obese' which highlighted the benefits of improving access to public open space. Robin Trounson had also sent information to DCC Public Health from Public Health England about 'Improving Health and Wellbeing through our National Parks'. Colleagues in Public Health had expressed an interest in pursuing this through the Healthy Weight Alliance. There may be funding to encourage Health Groups and the question was asked if funding could be explored for projects identified under access prioritisation. Mike Ogden advised that he had been asked to sit on a Group to look at the Healthy Communities Grant Scheme which may include access projects.

**AGREED** that

- i) the letter to Public Health be confirmed;
- ii) the LAF explore further the potential for securing funding for access projects and as a first step Mike Ogden provide feedback from his attendance at the Healthy Communities Grant Scheme Group.

## **22 Teesdale Way Website**

David Maughan provided an update on the development of the website to promote the Teesdale Way. Work had stalled when the Lead Officer left the River Tees Rediscovered Project but he was pleased to report that work would now resume as the project had been picked up by the Tees Valley Combined Authority. He hoped there would be a further meeting to discuss progress in the next couple of months.

**AGREED** that the information be noted.

**ACTION:** David Maughan to provide updates on progress.

## **23 Member Training Needs**

Steve Scoffin advised that planning training had been identified and asked members to forward any further suggestions to the LAF Secretary.

Colin Hemingway and John Sturdy had visited the Rights of Way Team prior to the meeting which they found to be informative and of use as new members of the Forum.

**AGREED** that all members consider any training requirements and e-mail any suggestions to Jill Errington.

## **24 Notification of Open Access Restrictions**

- a) **AGREED** that the response to MOD Consultation on Section 28 Indefinite Directions at Bowe and Battle Hill be confirmed.
- b) **AGREED** that the open access restriction received for Derwent Gorge and Muggleswick Woods Nature Reserve for dates in November and December 2017, and January 2018 be noted. A copy of the restriction was available at the meeting for inspection.

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

**AGREED** that the Work Programme be updated to include the issue of press releases and the Sub-Group established to consider a project to tackle livestock worrying.

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

**AGREED** that the next meeting be held on Monday 23 April 2018 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham.

**27 Any Other Business**

a) **Chair for Next Meeting**

Steve Scoffin advised that the LAF Secretary would e-mail members seeking a volunteer to chair the next meeting of the LAF.

b) **Guidance Note**

Members welcomed the leaflet drafted by Mike Ogden 'Things you need to know...' The document would be amended to reflect any omissions or suggestions from members.

c) **Woodland Revival Project**

Geoff Hughes asked that information on the Woodland Revival Project be considered at the next meeting.