

## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 16 July 2018 at 6.00 pm**

### **Present:**

### **Members:**

Tom Bolton, Brian Hodgson, Pat Holding, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, Councillor Ossie Johnson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden, Peter Singer, John Sturdy and Jim Welch

**Officers:** Mike Ogden, Audrey Christie and Jill Errington

### **Also Present:**

Ken Bradshaw – Durham Woodland Revival Development Manager (until item 5)

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

**AGREED** that Pat Holding be elected Chair and Angela Johnson Vice-Chair of the LAF for the ensuing year.

### **2 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed Ken Bradshaw, Durham Woodland Revival Development Manager.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carl Marshall, Steve Scoffin and Robin Trounson.

The Chair announced the resignations of Colin Hemingway and Robin Trounson from the LAF. Members were sorry to hear of their resignations and it was **AGREED** that a letter be sent to the members thanking them for their contribution to the work of the LAF, and to Robin in particular for his contribution as Vice-Chair.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 Woodland Revival Project**

Ken Bradshaw gave a presentation to members on the project to restore County Durham's woodlands for people, timber and wildlife.

The Woodland Revival Project had been established at this point in time to address a number of factors including the under-management of woodlands which was leading to a decline in the quality of timber and the loss of amenity and wildlife

value, because peak wood was predicted for 2030, there were threats from disease such as Chalara and to mitigate against climate change and flooding.

The project, which was based around three themes (Woodland Management, Forest Habitat Network and Community Woodlands), aimed to conserve ancient woodlands, develop woodland habitat networks, reconnect people with local woodlands and create social enterprises to sustain future woodland management.

The Community Woodlands theme would support five woodland groups, and look at projects to improve access, working with volunteers.

The next step was to develop an activity plan with a view to submitting the final project outline to the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2018. Subject to a decision in Spring 2019, the project would start in the summer of 2019 and would run to 2023.

Members discussed how the LAF could support the Project and it was **AGREED** that Geoff Hughes (lead) and Geoff Rigden be the LAF's point of contacts as the Project developed.

## **5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 April 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2018 were agreed as a correct record subject to it being noted that the North Pennines Walking Festival commenced on 30 June 2018 and not 13 June 2018 as stated in minute numbered 16.

## **6 Matters Arising**

### **a) County Durham Plan**

Councillor Johnson advised that the County Durham Plan Preferred Options was now out for consultation. A number of roadshows were planned and the LAF had its own workshop on 19 July 2018 to which all members were encouraged to attend. The workshop would help the LAF formulate its response to the consultation which ended on 3 August 2018.

Brian Hodgson raised concerns about proposals for the Durham bypass and was advised that the LAF's role was to respond to the consultation in general terms focusing on access arrangements, however an Officer would be available at the forthcoming workshop to respond to the member's queries.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted and a response to the consultation be drafted following the workshop.

**ACTION:** Brian Hodgson.

### **b) Planning Training Session**

Members were informed that the training session on 12 July 2018 had been attended by representatives from Tyne and Wear and Northumberland JLAFs, and Pat Holding, Angela Johnson, Robin Trounson and Jim Welch.

The session was very useful and informative, and the material used during the training had been circulated to all members for information.

**AGREED** that a letter of thanks be sent to Planning Development Manager, Stephen Reed.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to draft letter.

c) **Press Release – Hedgecutting**

The Council's Corporate Communications had been asked to consider including the press release in County Durham News and a response on this was awaited.

**AGREED** that a response be pursued from Corporate Communications and the press release be issued to media contacts and published on the LAF webpage in mid-August 2018.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington.

d) **DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

Members were informed that the provisional date for the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting had been arranged for Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 2pm. Members were asked to provide the LAF Secretary with any topics they wish to be considered.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to e-mail Members for suggested topics.

## 7 National/Regional Issues

a) **National LAF Conference 2018**

Members were informed that no arrangements had been made as yet for a national conference but the NE LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs had suggested topics to Natural England:-

Climate Change  
DEFRA's 25 Year Plan  
Public access to the countryside – post Brexit  
Natural England contact and support for LAFs

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

b) **NE Regional LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs**

Angela Johnson provided feedback from the meeting held on 3 May 2018. The meeting heard a presentation from NECA about the Cycling and Walking Strategy, discussed the NECA Transport Plan and proposals by Northumberland JLAF for a one day regional conference in the Autumn. Resource implications for the 2026 cut-off to register Lost Ways had also been discussed together with the Great Exhibition of the North.

The next meeting was to be held on Thursday 13 September 2018 at 1pm at Summerhill Park, Hartlepool.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted and Angela Johnson attend the next meeting on 13 September 2018.

c) **A66 Non-motorised Users Stakeholders Reference Group**

Members were informed that a meeting of the Stakeholders Reference Group was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 25 September 2018 at Darlington which would be attended by David Maughan and Mike Ogden. The LAF had been asked to respond to a number of questions from the Highways Agency in advance of the meeting.

**AGREED** that Mike Ogden, David Maughan and Peter Singer meet in advance of the meeting to discuss a response to the questions and to identify Rights of Way affected by the project.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden/David Maughan/Peter Singer.

d) **Huddle**

Neil Gander and Steve Scoffin were not in attendance to provide an update.

**AGREED** that an update be provided at the next meeting.

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

Audrey Christie reported that the ploughing and cropping campaign had now been completed with 175 paths targeted. The Team had only been required to serve two notices on landowners.

There was now £65k funding remaining for flood damage remedial works following Storm Desmond. Schemes at Egglestone, Sherburn beck and Croxdale beck were scheduled for completion.

With regard to the 2026 cut-off date, since March 2017 31 applications had been received, mostly from the BHS. Whilst the legal requirement was for applications to be submitted by the cut-off date, the Council would have an obligation to applicants and landowners to determine applications within a reasonable timeframe, and there were resource implications around this.

Audrey Christie also informed members that 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 was due to commence on Tuesday 24 July 2018.

**AGREED** that information given be noted.

## **9 Durham County Council Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan**

There was no update provided.

**ACTION:** An update be provided at the next meeting.

## **10 Public Access to Council Owned Land**

Pat Holding informed members that site visits were to be arranged to assess the suitability of the potential sites identified for permissive access in Seaham, Shildon and Stanley. Members were shown plans of the proposed sites.

**AGREED** that once the dates for the visits to each site were confirmed the plans be circulated to all members with an invitation to attend.

**ACTION:** Pat Holding/Tom Bolton/Mike Ogden.

## **11 North East of England Nature Partnership (NEENP)**

Geoff Hughes reported that the NEENP was now independent of Durham Wildlife Trust and was currently funded by all local authorities in the North East. To ensure its future sustainability, funding opportunities were being explored through Investors in the Environment.

Members were also informed of a Guide for Councillors 'Achieving Environmental Growth in the North East' which would be of interest to LAF members.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted and the Guide for Councillors be circulated to all members.

**ACTION:** Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

## **12 Bright Water Landscape Project**

Geoff Hughes was pleased to announce the award of £2.6m Heritage Lottery Funding and referred members to the press release. He advised that the Partnership was now in the process of recruiting staff and he was due to attend a meeting of the Board on Thursday 19 July 2018.

John Sturdy provided feedback from his attendance at the Board meeting on 15 June 2018 which considered the imminent appointment of the Project Manager, how the funding award would be managed and options for the location of the project offices.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted.

**ACTION:** Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

## **13 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership**

Consideration was given to the report of Jim Welch which outlined progress with access projects to date and included notes of the joint site visit to Hamsterley Riverside and Milkwellburn Wood on 10 May 2018.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted.

**ACTION:** Jim Welch to keep members informed of progress.

#### **14 Health**

Consideration was given to the information paper by Robin Trounson which provided feedback from the meeting held on 9 July 2018 and reminded members how to access Public Health England's Physical Activity Data Tool.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted.

#### **15 Lost Ways Sub-Group**

Angela Johnson reported that Neil Gander had been undertaking a lot of research and members were asked to note the letter of thanks to the BHS for its offer to contribute towards expenses he had incurred.

It was suggested that a further meeting be arranged in the Autumn and Sylvia from the BHS be invited to attend to explain to members how an application should be completed.

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

**ACTION:** Angela Johnson.

#### **16 Traffic Lights for Dogs Sub-Group**

It was noted that a further meeting of the Sub-Group was to be arranged to discuss what practical assistance would be required of DCC to implement the project. Jim Welch advised that he would seek advice from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association for discussion at the meeting.

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

**ACTION:** Steve Scoffin/David Maughan/Brian Hodgson/Jim Welch.

#### **17 North Pennines AONB Partnership**

**AGREED** that the minutes of the meetings of the North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group, and the Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group held on 27 March 2018, copies of which had previously been circulated, be noted. The date of the next meeting of each Working Group was to be agreed.

#### **18 Teesdale Way**

Consideration was given to the report of Peter Singer following his attendance at the Teesdale Way Partnership Workshop held on 23 May 2018.

**AGREED** that information contained in the report be noted and the LAF be represented on the Teesdale Way Partnership by David Maughan (lead) and Peter Singer.

**ACTION:** David Maughan/Peter Singer.

**19 Member Training**

**AGREED** that members forward any suggestions for training to the Secretary.

**20 Membership**

The LAF considered changing the timing of meetings as a means of potentially encouraging interest from new members.

**AGREED** that afternoon meetings be held on a trial basis, commencing with the next meeting.

**21 Notification of Open Access Restrictions**

There were no notifications received in the quarter.

**22 Annual Report 2017/2018**

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report for 2017/2018. Minor amendments to the report were agreed by members.

**AGREED** that the Annual Report for 2017/2018 be published and circulated in line with previous years.

**23 Work Programme**

In view of the recent resignations members reviewed each topic area in the Work Programme and the following amendments were **AGREED:-**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Member (Lead) and Group</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Regional LAF Liaison	Represent the LAF at regional meetings with other LAFs	Pat Holding/Angela Johnson	Attend meetings as and when required	Ongoing
Woodland Revival Project	Point of contact	(Geoff Hughes)/Geoff Rigden		
Annual Report and Annual	Completion of Annual Report and	Angela Johnson		

Review Pro-forma	Natural England Annual Review Pro-forma			
Working with Public Health	Represent the LAF at HWAG meetings and lead on any consultation	Jim Welch		
Teesdale Way	To represent the LAF on Teesdale Way Partnership	(David Maughan)/Peter Singer		
Traffic Lights for Dogs Sub-Group	To progress a scheme in County Durham	Steve Scoffin/David Maughan/Brian Hodgson/Jim Welch		
Public Access to DCC Land	To consider sites for permissive access	Pat Holding/Tom Bolton		
Volunteering				

## 24 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

**AGREED** that the next meeting be held on Monday 22 October 2018 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham.