

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in County Hall, Durham on **Monday 22 October 2018 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Pat Holding (Chair)

Members:

Brian Hodgson, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, David Maughan and Peter Singer

Officers: Audrey Christie, Jill Errington and Lauren Johnston

Also present: Niall Benson, Principal Heritage Coast Officer, DCC

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Niall Benson, Principal Heritage Coast Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from LAF members Councillors Ossie Johnson and Carl Marshall, Geoff Rigden, Steve Scoffin and Jim Welch, and Mike Ogden.

2 Heritage Coast

Niall Benson, Principal Heritage Coast Officer was in attendance and discussed the following projects in relation to the Heritage Coast:-

Heritage Coast Management Plan

The Management Plan had now been published, incorporating the LAF's comments. The LAF's views had been welcomed and members would receive a formal response to their comments in due course.

Seascapes Partnership – Tyne to Tees, Shores and Seas

Members were informed of Seascape, a Landscape Partnership Project along the Heritage Coast which aimed to improve access to beaches, explore the shipwrecks and habitats beneath the waves and create opportunities for local people and visitors to enjoy the coastline. The scheme aimed to take a community-led approach from the beginning, and throughout development and delivery. The LAF was encouraged to be involved at the delivery stages, particularly relating to projects involving the England Coast path and access to beaches.

Living Coast

Natural England were developing an initiative known as Living Coasts and one of the pilot projects was Seascapes. Using MENE analysis the study was exploring what people valued about their local coastal environment and was looking at

barriers to engagement with the natural environment in deprived areas, including access routes in Horden and Easington Colliery. The study should be completed by the end of March 2019 and the results could be reported to the LAF.

AGREED that the information be noted and a representative from Seascapes be invited to the next meeting to discuss the project.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

5 Matters Arising

a) County Durham Plan

Some Members of the LAF had attended a workshop on the County Durham Plan on 19 July 2018 and this had helped formulate the LAF's response to the consultation on the Preferred Options.

AGREED that the LAF response to the County Durham Plan Preferred Options be noted, and further developments be awaited.

b) DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting

Members were informed that the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting scheduled to be held on 9 October 2018 was postponed as there were no topics for discussion from members or DCC. The meetings were held twice yearly and the next meeting was due to be held in April 2019. It was suggested that if there were any new or ongoing matters which the LAF wished to discuss with DCC, such as the County Durham Plan or Public Access to Council-owned land, an earlier meeting be arranged.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Jill Errington to monitor progress with ongoing matters and arrange a suitable date for the next meeting, at which time members be invited to suggest topics for discussion.

c) Durham Woodland Revival

The LAF letter of support to the project, a copy of which had been e-mailed to members, be **AGREED**.

d) Press Release – Hedgecutting

David Maughan informed members that the press release had been issued in August 2018 to coincide with the hedgecutting season, and had appeared in both the Durham Times and the Darlington and Stockton Times.

AGREED that the information given be noted and consideration be given to the re-issue of this press release and any others in 2019, at the next LAF meeting.

e) **LAF National Conference**

Geoff Hughes asked for an update in relation to the National Conference as he was concerned that topics had been suggested but no further information had been received. The member also expressed concern about the lack of information and communication LAF s received from Natural England.

AGREED that the matters be raised at the next meeting of the NE Regional LAF Chairs/Vice-Chairs meeting.

6 National/Regional Issues

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

David Maughan provided feedback from the stakeholders meeting he had attended with Mike Ogden on 25 September 2018 hosted by the Highways Agency to discuss proposals for the A66. Prior to the meeting Mike Ogden, Peter Singer and David Maughan had met to identify routes which would be affected by the project. This was an opportunity to address concerns and submit proposals for those routes affected. Further public consultation was expected early next year.

AGREED that the information given be noted and the LAF continue to be involved as the project progressed.

ACTION: David Maughan/Peter Singer/Mike Ogden.

b) **Huddle**

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

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

Angela Johnson reported that the meeting scheduled for 13 September 2018 had been postponed and would be re-convened when consultations on Walking and Cycling Strategies had been completed and published by the Combined Authorities.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Vice-Chair to attend next meeting when arranged.

7 Update from Rights of Way Team

Audrey Christie welcomed new Apprentice Lauren who was a welcome addition to the Team and was helping with administrative duties.

She was pleased to report that the Public Inquiry held 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 had been successful.

This was the final year of repair works following Storm Desmond and a photograph of works undertaken was circulated. She hoped that the works at Eggleston, Nickynack Beck (Croxdale), Belmont and Sherburn House Beck would be completed by the end of January 2019.

The Team had secured 100 tonnes of sub-base from the Deerness Bridge works for use at various locations, mainly bridleways where there was shared vehicular use with little other prospect of works.

With regard to the 2026 cut-off date, since July one further application had been received, bringing the total to 32. The Team was preparing a business case for additional resources to assist with the applications. The need for additional resources had been raised with Stuart Timmiss at the DCC/LAF Liaison meeting earlier this year but it was suggested that the LAF write to the Head of Transport and Contract Services for his views, as he was the more appropriate audience.

AGREED that the information given be noted and a letter be sent to the Head of Service offering the LAF's support to the need for additional resources and seeking his views.

8 Draft Strategic Cycling and Walking Plan 2018-2028

AGREED that the LAF's response to the draft Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2018-2028 be noted.

ACTION: Neil Gander to keep members informed of progress and Victoria Lloyd-Gent be invited to give a presentation on the Plan when it was published.

9 Public Access to Council Owned Land

Pat Holding and Geoff Hughes reported that visits had been made to a number of the potential sites identified for permissive access, including Craghead, Beamish Mary Wood, Windmill Wood, Harperley Pea Woods, Seaham and Tanfield Lea.

A discussion ensued about the wider management of the sites in future but the point was made that the role for the LAF at present should be to assess whether those sites had value for public access. Site management and community involvement could be looked at once the access was agreed and recorded.

Following the discussion it was **AGREED** that arrangements be made to visit the remaining sites with Mike Ogden as a priority.

ACTION: Pat Holding/Geoff Hughes.

10 North East of England Nature Partnership

Geoff Hughes provided an update and reported that he had attended a special meeting of the Executive to look at DEFRA's 25 Year Plan. High level discussions

were ongoing between local authorities on specific projects, and initiatives included improving woodlands.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

11 Bright Water Landscape Project

Geoff Hughes provided an update and advised that the project was now in the delivery phase. The project was at an important point in terms of access and it would be useful for the LAF to appoint a Deputy to ensure that the LAF was represented at Board meetings.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: An e-mail be circulated to members seeking a volunteer to deputise for Geoff Hughes in the event that he could not attend a Board meeting.

12 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership

Consideration was given to the report of Jim Welch which provided an update on progress.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

13 Traffic Lights for Dogs

AGREED that Jim Welch and David Maughan attend the JLAF and Kennel Club Workshop to be held on 29 October 2018.

ACTION: Feedback be provided at the next meeting.

14 Lost Ways

Angela Johnson advised that Neil Gander continued to research potential routes and she would invite Sylvia Briggs of the BHS to address a meeting of the Sub-Group on making applications to register unrecorded historic public rights of way/highways. The meeting would be convened in the winter months.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Angela Johnson to arrange a meeting of the Sub-Group.

15 North Pennines AONB Partnership

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Access and Recreation Working Group and the Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group held on 23 August 2018.

Peter Singer had attended the meetings and referred to minute numbered 7 of the Access and Recreation Working Group regarding the Tees-Swale Project. The project would include access improvement schemes and Mike Ogden had suggested that it would be useful for the LAF to nominate a point of contact at this stage.

AGREED that the minutes of the Working Groups be noted, and Peter Singer be appointed as the LAF's point of contact for the Tees-Swale project.

16 Health

Consideration was given to a report from Jim Welch which provided feedback from his attendance at the Healthy Weight Alliance Group on 28 September 2018.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

17 Member Training

As discussed at minute numbered 14 training would be provided to members of the Lost Ways Sub-Group on completing applications to register unrecorded historic public rights of way/highways.

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

18 Membership

A discussion ensued about membership and the need to explore ways of encouraging interest from potential new members. Afternoon meetings had been suggested on a trial basis but the majority of members expressed that they preferred evening meetings, and noted that only around half the membership was in attendance today.

AGREED that consideration be given to ways of attracting new members to join the Forum and meetings revert to being held at 6.00pm.

ACTION: Chair to liaise with Mike Ogden.

19 Notification of Open Access Restrictions

There were no notifications of open access restrictions received in the quarter.

20 Work Programme

Members considered the Work Programme and the suggestion was made by Geoff Hughes that it be reviewed by members to ensure that their work areas were still relevant. This would help focus the work of the LAF.

AGREED that the Work Programme be updated to include the Tees-Swale Project, and all members be asked to review their own work areas.

ACTION: Jill Errington to contact members.

21 Dates of Future Meetings

The meeting dates for 2019 were **AGREED** as follows:-

Monday 28 January 2019

Monday 15 April 2019

Monday 22 July 2019

Monday 21 October 2019.

All meetings to commence at 6.00pm and be held in County Hall, Durham, however consideration be given to alternative venues as and when appropriate to the work of the LAF.

22 Any other business

Closure of Public Parks

David Maughan referred to an article in a national newspaper which was concerned about the closure of parks by Councils.

Audrey Christie advised that she was not aware that this was a problem in County Durham but would confirm this with the Strategic Manager for Sports, Leisure and Outdoors.