

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 28 January 2019 at 6.00 pm**

Present:

Pat Holding (Chair)

Members:

Tom Bolton, Neil Gander, Brian Hodgson, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson, Councillor Ossie Johnson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden and Jim Welch

Officers: Audrey Christie and Jill Errington

Also Present: Deborah Hannaby – SeaScapes Engagement Officer (until item 3)

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Deborah Hannaby, SeaScapes Engagement Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carl Marshall and Mike Ogden.

The Chairman reported the resignation of Peter Singer and it was **AGREED** that a letter be sent to the former Member thanking him for his contribution to the work of the LAF.

2 SeaScapes Project

Deborah Hannaby, SeaScapes Engagement Officer was in attendance and gave a presentation to members about the project, which included the coastline from the Tyne to the Tees. A copy of the presentation was circulated to members.

This was a theme of special projects, events and activities around the following key themes along the coastline from the Tyne to the Tees:

SeaScape over Time
Revealing Hidden Heritage
Coastal Champions
Accessing the Sea

In 2017 funding of £5m had been secured following a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and through Partnership working. A bid would be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in Autumn 2019 for the development phase, with delivery commencing in 2020 and ending in 2024.

Access projects included:

ECP Identity
Clavering Circular Trail
Access 2 Beach
Brus to Headland Cycle Route
SeaScapes Stations.

LAF members expressed an interest in being involved in the project, and in becoming a partner. Deborah Hannaby advised that Partners had been agreed in 2017, however the LAF's involvement would be welcomed during the delivery phase.

AGREED that the LAF be involved in the SeaScapes Project during the delivery phase, and further information be awaited.

3 Declarations of Interest

Brian Hodgson advised that he wished to declare an interest in relation to the County Durham Plan. The member wished to raise an issue regarding the Plan.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2018 were agreed as a correct record subject to minute no. 2 Living Coast being amended to read 'The study should be completed by the end of March 2019 and the results should be reported to the LAF'.

5 Matters Arising

Matters Arising from the Minutes

a) **Heritage Coast Management Plan**

It was reported that the research evidence would be included in the Plan before the final version was published. A draft version was available to view <http://www.durhamheritagecoast.org/heritage-coast-management-plan-2018-2025/>

b) **LAF National Conference**

Members were informed that no information had been received as yet from Natural England with regard to any plans for a National Conference in 2019.

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

A date for the next meeting had not been arranged. The meeting would be held following the Walking and Cycling Strategies of the Combined Authorities being published.

d) **Lost Ways**

A letter had been sent to the Head of Transport and Contract Services expressing the LAFs support to additional resources for the Rights of Way

Team to process applications to register unrecorded routes. No further information had been received.

AGREED that a further letter be sent to the Head of Service seeking an update on the Council's position.

e) **Public Parks**

Audrey Christie reported that she had spoken with the Strategic Manager of Sport, Leisure and Outdoors who had advised that nationally there had been issues since local government austerity, but the main problems were in urban authorities. In County Durham there were no closures proposed.

f) **County Durham Plan**

Brian Hodgson expressed concern that specific issues he had with regard to the impact of the County Durham Plan for farmers and landowners and in relation to the proposed bypass had not been addressed. The member was advised to contact the Head of Planning and Assets to seek a response to his concerns.

Members were informed that the Pre-Submission Draft of the Plan was out for consultation until 8 March 2019 and the LAF had been invited to comment.

AGREED that all members be asked to submit any comments on the Plan for inclusion in a formal LAF response.

ACTION: Pat Holding and Brian Hodgson to co-ordinate LAF response. LAF Secretary to circulate website link to the Plan to all members.

g) **DCC/LAF Liaison Meeting**

Members were informed that the date for the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting was provisionally scheduled for 2pm on 10 April 2019, and members were invited to suggest topics for discussion.

ACTION: Members to inform LAF Secretary of potential topics.

6 National/Regional Issues

a) **MENE**

Angela Johnson reported on the outcomes of the 9th national study on people and the environment. A copy of the headline report for 2017/2018 had been circulated to members.

Key findings during 2017/2018 included:

- 2 out of 3 adults spent time in nature at least once a week
- health and exercise was the main motivation for spending time in the natural environment
- having green space close to home was important to 93% of people
- choosing to walk rather than use the car was increasing

- younger people tended to visit more than older people but was more important to older people
- younger age groups were more likely to visit to socialise, entertain children whilst those over 65 years enjoyed scenery and for health and exercise
- those in deprived areas were more likely to visit urban locations such as parks
- the share of the population never making visits had decreased.

A key finding of interest to the LAF was that the proportion of the population choosing to walk through greenspace or actively choosing to walk/cycle rather than drive has increased. This trend may be part related to a general reduction in car usage.

All members had been asked to complete a MENE survey.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

b) **Northumberland JLAF and kennel Club Workshop**

Consideration was given to the notes of the Northumberland JLAF and Kennel Club Workshop held on 29 October 2018, a copy of which had been circulated.

Jim Welch advised that it would have been useful for a representative of Guide Dogs for the Blind to be in attendance.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

c) **Durham Woodland Revival**

AGREED that the letter of support to the project, a copy of which had been circulated, be noted and further developments be awaited.

d) **Huddle**

Neil Gander reported that he had been unable to access the site but would contact Natural England for assistance.

7 **Update from Rights of Way Team**

Audrey Christie reported that a total of 47 applications had now been received to register unrecorded routes, largely as a result of the research carried out by Neil and the BHS.

Members were also informed of the completion of schemes at Eggleston, Belmont and Sherburn House Beck from the £300k budget allocated for repairs following Storm Desmond.

A Creation Order had been made in Barnard Castle for a Bridleway and Footpath near Teesdale School, and a proposed creation order for a public bridleway near Oxen Law, Muggleswick was to be considered by the Council's Highways Committee on 1 February 2019.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

8 Public Access to Council-owned Land

It was reported that some of the potential sites identified for permissive access had been visited and assessed using a scoring criteria, and arrangements would be made for members to visit the remaining sites. Geoff Hughes saw this as the start of a rolling programme of sites across the County which could be suitable for dedication or permissive access.

AGREED that Pat Holding, Geoff Hughes, Tom Bolton and Angela Johnson arrange to visit the remaining sites to assess suitability based on the scoring criteria.

ACTION: LAF Secretary to circulate the site plans.

9 North East of England Nature Partnership

Geoff Hughes reported that the Partnership was struggling for resources and therefore progress was slow. The Partnership was well-supported by Durham County Council.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

10 Bright Water Landscape Project

Consideration was given to the Board update, a copy of which had been circulated to members.

Geoff Hughes provided feedback from the Board meeting he had attended the previous week and would provide the Board report when received. All project staff were now in post and the official launch was proposed for 14 March 2019. Funding had been secured from the Environment Agency to carry out feasibility studies for the projects. Additional Board members had been identified from Bishop Middleham and from landowner Theakstons.

AGREED that the information given be noted and Geoff Rigden's appointment as substitute to attend Board meetings in the absence of Geoff Hughes be confirmed.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

11 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership

Jim Welch advised that there was no progress to report. Councillor Johnson reported that the new visitor centre was very popular and had proved to be financially viable.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

12 Traffic Lights for Dogs Sub-Group

David Maughan reported that a further meeting of the Sub-Group should be arranged to discuss the next steps. Brian Hodgson advised that the NFU had produced signs which could be used in the interim. Jim Welch added that a representative from Guide Dogs for the Blind had offered to attend a meeting of the Sub-Group to offer advice.

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

ACTION: David Maughan/Brian Hodgson/Jim Welch.

13 Lost Ways

Neil Gander advised that he expected that applications would reach 100 by next year. Members felt that it would be useful to arrange a 30 minute training session in advance of the next meeting on the research process and how to complete an application. It was suggested that it may be useful for other LAFs to be invited to the session. Jim Welch suggested that History Clubs may also be interested and it may encourage members of those groups to get involved in the research.

AGREED that Neil Gander provide a training session before the next meeting.

ACTION: Members to contact LAF Secretary with suggested contacts from groups who may be interested in attending.

14 Health

Jim Welch provided feedback from his attendance at the meeting of the Healthy Weight Alliance Group on 28 January 2019. The Group was at the policy making stage and was looking at involving schools in different events to raise awareness of the issue of obesity.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Jim Welch to keep members informed of progress.

15 Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029

Members were informed by Geoff Rigden that the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029 had been approved by Cabinet on 16 January 2019 and work would now focus on implementing the Delivery Plan with Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans being completed first.

Delivery of the cycling super route schemes continued and there would be a slight reduction in the walking and cycling budget in 2019/2020 due to other demands.

Schemes of note included the next phase of the Great North Cycleway from Merryoaks to Cock O' North would be completed by the end of March 2019 followed by the missing link at Sunderland Bridge planned for 2019/2020. A shared path to

the new Horden station was planned in 2019/2020. Other projects included ParkthatBike which continued to deliver cycle parking stands to local businesses, community centres, and workplaces etc across the County, and the Town Cycling maps for Consett and Newton Aycliffe would be published in the next few months.

Neil Gander noted that reductions in obesity could be realised through cycling, as mentioned in the cycling strategy, however this would require a real change in spending per head per citizen to be achieved.

AGREED that the information given be noted, and the Sustainable Travel Officer be invited to the next meeting to present the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan for 2019-2029.

16 North Pennines AONB Partnership

a) Access and Recreation and Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group meetings held on 10 December 2019

It was noted that the Minutes of the meetings had been circulated to members.

b) North Pennines AONB Partnership Management Plan 2019-2024

Consideration was given to the draft response prepared by Neil Gander in respect of the Team Plan. Jim Welch noted that the Management Plan was weak in terms of its reference to diversity and accessibility. All members were reminded to complete the survey on the Plan which was included in the consultation, if they had not already done so.

AGREED that any comments on the draft response be submitted to the LAF Secretary by 30 January 2019, and members complete the survey by the consultation deadline of 31 January 2019.

ACTION: LAF Secretary to circulate link to the survey and submit the final response by the deadline.

c) LAF Substitute

A member to replace Peter Singer as substitute for Neil Gander on the Working Groups was sought. Geoff Hughes made the point that capacity was an issue for members as the overall membership of the LAF continued to reduce, and it did not have the resources to fill the position.

AGREED that in the interim Neil Gander inform the Secretary when he was an unable to attend a Working Group meeting, and all members be given the opportunity to volunteer to attend in his absence.

d) Tees-Swale Project

AGREED that David Maughan be appointed as the LAF's point of contact for the project.

17 Press Release - Sheep Worrying

AGREED that the press release drafted by David Maughan regarding sheep-worrying be confirmed and issued at the end of February 2019.

18 Notification of Open Access Restrictions

Members were informed of the following open access notifications received in the quarter, copies of which had been circulated:

Derwent Gorge and Muggleswick Woods NNR
Mayland Hall
Rackwood Hill

AGREED that the notifications be received.

19 Membership

Further to minute no. 16(c) when the LAF's membership had been raised, Geoff Hughes suggested that the issue of recruitment should be highlighted with the appointing authority. Members were informed that Mike Ogden was to meet with DCC Corporate Communications to discuss what assistance they could offer with LAF recruitment.

Angela Johnson advised that North Yorkshire LAF had placed a recruitment article in the Darlington and Stockton Times, and suggested that this could be an avenue that Durham LAF could explore.

AGREED that the information given be noted and an update be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: Mike Ogden.

20 Member Training

As discussed at minute numbered 13 a training session be arranged prior to the next meeting on applications to record lost ways.

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

21 Work Programme

AGREED that the Work Programme be updated to include David Maughan as the point of contact for the Tees-Swale Project, and to reflect the vacant positions following Peter Singer's resignation.

22 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting be held on Monday 15 April 2019 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall.

23 Any other business

DEFRA Consultations

For information the Chair reported the receipt of 2 DEFRA consultations; 25 Year Environment Plan – Measuring Progress, and Net Gain in the Planning Process. It had been decided that a response was not necessary to either consultation because the content was not central to the work of the LAF.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

Countryside Service

It was **AGREED** that an Officer from the Countryside Service be invited to a future meeting of the LAF to discuss their work.