

COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 15 April 2019 at 6.00 pm**

Present:

Pat Holding (Chair)

Members:

Tom Bolton, Geoff Hughes, Angela Johnson and Jim Welch

Officers:

Mike Ogden, Audrey Christie and Jill Errington

Also Present:

Victoria Lloyd-Gent – Sustainable Travel Officer, DCC and Craig Wilson Destination Project Manager, Visit County Durham

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Victoria Lloyd-Gent, Sustainable Travel Officer and Craig Wilson of Visit County Durham.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ossie Johnson and Carl Marshall, Neil Gander, Brian Hodgson, David Maughan, Geoff Rigden and Steve Scoffin.

2 County Durham Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029

Victoria Lloyd-Gent gave a presentation to members about the Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan which was agreed in January 2019 and which outlined the Strategy's Vision and Aims for the next 10 years. The Plan aimed to make cycling and walking part of Durham's culture and to make them safe, affordable, enjoyable, everyday modes of transport for everyone. A copy of the presentation had been circulated to members.

Members were informed of progress to date which included some quick wins:

Party in the Path – opening of the Cock O North cycle lane
Love Reading, Love Cycling
Cycle Parking Schemes and Part That Bike
New town cycling leaflets
LCWIP brief – 3 Priority Towns

Planned projects included secure storage in Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor Leisure Centres, and surveys for NCN1. Thickley Bridge on the Locomotion Way had re-opened and was accessible.

Following questions about the availability of cycle stands in the City and secure parking, particularly as e-bikes were on the increase, Victoria Lloyd-Gent advised that the ParkthatBike Scheme leaflet provided information on how to lock cycles. Secure storage compounds were provided at locations where bike theft was a known problem. Cycle stands had increased in Durham and the provision of secure storage in the City would be explored.

Geoff Hughes made the point that cyclists used main roads to link to the cycle routes in the countryside and these roads were not designed with cyclists in mind. Consideration should be given to cycle provision as part of road design or improvements. With regard to the development of cycle networks and the focus on key settlements he suggested that consideration be given to assisting local communities to carry out their own audits, who may then be able to develop their own routes.

Following a question about encouraging the take-up of cycling by Council staff, Victoria Lloyd-Gent outlined the schemes available to employees.

AGREED that the information given be noted and Victoria Lloyd-Gent be thanked for her hard work and commitment to producing the Delivery Plan.

3 Northern Saints Trails

Craig Wilson of Visit County Durham was in attendance and gave a presentation to members about the Northern Saints Trails Project. Together with key stakeholders and partners, the Project aimed to increase the volume and value of visitors to local communities in North East England by developing trails associated with the region's Saints. A copy of the presentation was circulated to members.

Members considered this to be a great opportunity for County Durham which would benefit the local economy and businesses, and encourage more people to access the County's countryside.

Following questions, Craig Wilson advised that the project would be marketed using the usual tourism channels and through its own website. The website was currently under development <http://northernsaints.com/> and would include links to accommodation and attractions along the routes. He confirmed that details of accessibility for all routes and attractions would be included on the website.

AGREED that the information be noted.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the correction of a typing error on page 11 - North Pennines

AONB Partnership which should read 'in the interim Neil Gander inform the Secretary when he was unable to attend a Working Group meeting'.

6 Matters Arising

a) **County Durham Plan**

AGREED that the LAF response to the pre-submission draft of the Plan be noted, and further developments be awaited.

b) **DCC/LAF Liaison meeting**

Members were informed that the meeting scheduled to be held on 10 April 2019 had been cancelled as Stuart Timmiss had been unable to attend. Mike Ogden advised of changes to the Management Structure and a new Head of Property and Land had been appointed who would be the appropriate Officer to liaise with the LAF in future.

It was **AGREED** that the next DCC/LAF Liaison meeting be arranged when the officer was in post.

c) **Press Release – Sheep Worrying**

Members were informed that the press release was issued to the media on 26 February 2019 and was included on the LAF's website.

d) **Living Coasts Study**

Members were informed that the study had now ended but the results were not yet available for public inspection. The Principal Heritage Coast Officer had offered to present the results at the next meeting.

AGREED that Niall Benson be invited to the next meeting to discuss the results.

7 National/Regional Issues

a) **A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project - Focus Group**

Mike Ogden advised that he and David Maughan had attended the Focus Group meeting on 13 March 2019. In David's absence Mike Ogden reported that public consultation was due to take place during May and June 2019. Details were circulated to members.

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

ACTION: David Maughan to keep members informed of progress.

b) **Regional LAF Chairs and Vic-Chairs**

AGREED that Angela Johnson's attendance at the next meeting of the NE LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting to be held on 7 May 2019 at Derwenthaugh, be noted.

8 Rights of Way Team

Audrey Christie reported that a total of 57 applications had now been received to register unrecorded routes.

The annual ploughing and cropping campaign with landowners was due to start.

The £300k budget designated for repairs following Storm Desmond had now been fully allocated.

Objections had been received in respect of 2 Public Path Creation Orders at Barnard Castle and Oxen Law.

Audrey reported that she was leaving the team at the end of May to take up a new position. Members were very sorry that she was leaving and wished her all the best in her new job.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

9 Public Access to Council-owned Land

Members were informed that all of the potential sites identified for permissive access had been visited. Discussion ensued with regard to the next steps in the process.

AGREED that the Sub-Group meet to discuss which sites should be put forward to DCC, and the members draft a report for consideration at the next DCC./LAF Liaison meeting. The report to set out the list of preferred sites, and to request details of the Council's next steps in the process, and timescales.

ACTION: Pat Holding/Geoff Hughes/Angela Johnson/Tom Bolton.

10 North East of England Nature Partnership

Geoff Hughes reported that the Partnership had appointed a new Chair in February 2019. Paul Brannon was very focussed and was keen on pursuing projects which demonstrated that the NEENP was adding value, such as woodland revival.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

11 Bright Water Landscape Partnership

Geoff Hughes reported that the Partnership had produced a booklet for the official launch on 26 April 2019, to which he was to attend on behalf of the LAF. A copy of the booklet was circulated to members.

The full project team had now been appointed.

A copy of the Board reports for March and April 2019 had been circulated to members for information.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Geoff Hughes to keep members informed of progress.

12 Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership

Jim Welch reported that he was to attend a joint LAF site visit to Derwenthaugh on 7 May 2019. He had also visited Winlaton Visitor Centre which had been very busy for the time of year, which was pleasing.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Jim Welch to keep members informed of progress.

13 Health

Members considered a report from Jim Welch which provided feedback from his attendance at the Healthy Weight Alliance Group meeting on 9 April 2019, a copy of which had been circulated.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Jim Welch to keep members informed of progress.

14 Lead the Way (formerly Traffic Lights for Dogs)

Members were informed that David Maughan through the Northern Farmer had produced a poster incorporating the LAF logo which encouraged dog owners to use a lead around livestock. David Maughan and Brian Hodgson were in the process of distributing the posters to their local farming network. An article had appeared in the Northern Farmer promoting the scheme and advising that posters were available to County Durham farmers upon request. A photoshoot had taken place with the LAF Chair.

The LAF recorded their thanks to David for all his work on this with the Northern Farmer.

Jim Welch expressed concern that owners of Guide Dogs who walked their dogs in the countryside without a lead were not insured. Guide Dogs UK maintained that Guide Dogs were entitled to go anywhere but this was not the case if they were not on a lead.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

15 Lost Ways

Angela Johnson reported that she had previously asked Sylvia Briggs of the BHS to come along to a LAF meeting to discuss the application process but she was very busy completing applications at present. Neil Gander had offered to provide training to members on completing an application and she had suggested therefore that further training from her may not be required.

Mike Ogden was pleased to report that the team had received agreement to appoint two members of staff for two years to deal with applications. Recruitment would now commence.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Neil Gander to provide a training session on completing an application prior to the next meeting.

16 Member Training

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

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

17 LAF Membership

Mike Ogden reported that he had met with an Officer from the Council's Corporate Communications to seek advice and suggestions for the recruitment of new members. He had been advised that the LAF should showcase successful 'news stories'. Members felt that Lead the Way and Bright Water could be used to attract new members and Mike Ogden advised that he would discuss these with Corporate Communications. An article was to be included in Visit County Durham's newsletter which may attract interest from representatives from the business sector.

AGREED that the information given be noted.

ACTION: Mike Ogden.

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
Sand Edge Common – Dog Exclusion Order

AGREED that the information given be noted.

19 Annual Report 2018/2019

Angela Johnson reported that the LAF Annual Report for 2018/2019 was to be agreed at the AGM in July. The LAF Secretary would ask members to provide a single paragraph about their own topic areas summarising the nature of the work, highlights or developments over the past 12 months and any plans, hopes or expectations for the forthcoming year.

AGREED that members provide updates for the Annual Report 2018/2019.

ACTION: All to action.

20 Work Programme

AGREED that the Prince Bishops Project be added to the Work Programme – see minute numbered 22 below.

21 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

AGREED that given that the next meeting, the AGM, was scheduled to be held at the start of the school holidays, the potential for holding the meeting on an alternative date be explored. If this was not feasible the next meeting be held on Monday 22 July 2019 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, County Hall.

ACTION: Jill Errington

22 Any other business

Prince Bishops Project

The LAF had been invited to participate in the Prince Bishops project which aimed to give beauty spots around County Durham a collective identity, by creating circular walks.

The next step was to form a steering group and a volunteer was sought from the LAF to find out more about what was proposed with a view to the LAF supporting the project.

AGREED that the information given be noted and Jim Welch be nominated as the LAF representative on the Steering Group.

ACTION: Jim Welch.