

## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 23 April 2013 at 6.00 pm**

**Present: Geoff Hughes**

**Chair**

### **Members of the Forum:**

Roger Cornwell (Vice-Chair), Marilyn Gibson, Brian Hodgson, Angela Johnson, Geoffrey Rigden, Jim Welch, Chris Wiltsher

### **Officers:**

Audrey Christie, Victoria Lloyd and Jill Errington

**Also present:** Dawn Phillips, Public Health Portfolio Lead, DCC (until item 6)

### **Not present:**

Councillors Neil Foster and Andy Turner

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Tom Bolton, Neil Gander, David Maughan and Ray Partridge.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 February 2013**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **4 Matters Arising**

##### **(a) Jubilee Woods Project**

Consideration was given to the update provided by Gary Haley which gave details of planting schemes completed in 2012 and projects scheduled for completion in 2013.

Reference was made to the scheme at Lumley Sixth Pit, Bournmoor. It was noted that ownership of part of the land was unknown and this was preventing the installation of a sleeper bridge to improve access. Audrey Christie advised that the Rights of Way Team may have information as to the current ownership and would report to Gary Haley direct.

**AGREED** that the information be received.

**ACTION:** Audrey Christie

(b) **LAF Annual Review**

The Chair advised that the final version of the Annual Review Pro-forma was expected from Natural England within the next month for completion for 2012-2013. This was in addition to the Annual Report produced by the LAF.

**AGREED** that the information be received.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden and Jill Errington to complete the pro-forma on receipt from Natural England.

(c) **Growth and Infrastructure Bill - Village Greens**

It was reported that the Bill was currently proceeding through Parliament but it was unlikely that there would be any changes to the proposals in relation to the registration of village greens.

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

**ACTION:** Tom Bolton to continue to monitor progress of the Bill.

## **5 Working with Health**

Consideration was given to papers received from Natural England in relation to the Better Health, Fairer Health Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The Chair introduced Dawn Phillips, Portfolio Lead for Health, and welcomed the opportunity to work together since the Local Authority had assumed responsibility for Public Health on 1 April 2013.

Dawn Phillips outlined her experience with the NHS and her new role with DCC, explaining that this was an opportunity to liaise with partners to influence policy, and to work with and support Teams within Durham County Council to encourage people to get out into the countryside. She briefly outlined funding available and the schemes she had tapped into such as Change for Life and Walking for Health.

A lengthy discussion ensued on how the LAF could work with Public Health and it was agreed that as a way forward Dawn Phillips consult the LAF when a plan of events had been developed.

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

**ACTION:** Geoff Hughes, Chair to monitor progress.

## **6 Three Rivers/Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnerships**

### **Three Rivers LNP**

Consideration was given to the notes of the Ministerial event held for LNP Chairs, the Terms of Reference for the Three Rivers LNP and the Memorandum of Understanding.

**AGREED** that the information be received and the Chair be authorised to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.

**ACTION:** Geoff Hughes, Chair.

### **Northern Upland Chain LNP**

Consideration was given to the briefing note prepared by Mike Ogden which gave details of projects the Partnership was planning to undertake. With regard to appointing a representative, it was noted that there may be opportunities to become involved as the Partnership developed but there would be a lot of LAFs in the extensive area covered by the Northern Upland Chain LNP.

**AGREED** the information be received and further developments be awaited before considering the appointment of a LAF Member to the LNP.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden to monitor developments.

## **7 National Conference**

The Chair provided feedback on the LAF National Conference held on 22 February 2013. He advised that the conference had been a success and a meeting of Regional Chairs and Vice-Chairs had been held on 9 April 2013 to discuss outcomes, the notes of which had been circulated.

In considering the outcomes the Chair referred to MENE, a Natural England 3 year project which detailed an annual breakdown of the number and type of visits made into parks, and across the countryside and coast in England. It had been agreed that individual LAF MENE Champions should be appointed and Jim Milner would provide appropriate training.

The Chair briefly took Members through feedback from each of the workshops and advised that Natural England had asked each LAF to provide its top 3 priorities for the next 12-18 months.

**AGREED** that

- (a) The information be received
- (b) Chris Wiltsher explore the role of MENE Champion with Jim Milner
- (c) Members put forward suggestions for LAF priorities for the next 12-18 months

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to co-ordinate LAF priorities proposed by members.

## **8 National/Regional Issues**

### **(a) Update from Natural England**

The Chair advised that Natural England proposed to produce a quarterly newsletter for distribution to all LAFs, with the first issue to be circulated at the end of June 2013.

**AGREED** that the information be received.

### **(b) Paths for Communities**

Consideration was given to the update provided by Mike Ogden which advised that there had been no applications considered from within County Durham to date. Almost £450,000 had been awarded from the overall fund of £2 million.

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

### **(c) Management of National Trails**

Consideration was given to the 'New Deal' document in relation to the management of national trails in England from April 2013. Members considered the briefing note provided by Mike Ogden and noted that the main issue for the LAF was the proposal for each National Trail to have a Trail Partnership. It would be appropriate for LAFs to have a voice on these Partnerships and it was suggested that a member be appointed to lead on this.

**AGREED** that the information be received and Geoff Rigden be appointed as the lead member for the National Trails Partnership.

With the agreement of members the following items of business numbered 16 and 17 on the Agenda were brought forward.

## **9 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Delivery/Cycling Strategy and Access Prioritisation**

Victoria Lloyd advised that £300k had been secured from Sustrans for the Shildon to Aycliffe multi-user route. This funding had been matched by DCC and the works would be completed by February 2014.

£100k had been secured from DfT Funds for cycle schemes in Durham City with matched funding from LTP money. Members discussed the design of new routes and referred to the widened footway at Houghall College which cyclists did seem to be using. Victoria Lloyd advised that cycle design infrastructure training was to be arranged and it was suggested that a LAF member be involved.

**AGREED** that the information be received and Neil Gander be given the opportunity to attend any training event on cycle design infrastructure.

## 10 The Minutes of the Regional Meeting held on 25 February 2013

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Regional meeting held on 25 February 2013.

**AGREED** that the minutes be received.

## 11 Membership Issues

### Resignation

**AGREED** that the resignation of Matthew Trewartha be noted.

### Recruitment

Consideration was given to the update from Mike Ogden which advised that whilst there had been expressions of interest from individuals these had not resulted in applications to join. Many LAFs were experiencing recruitment problems and members were asked to encourage anyone they were aware of who might be interested to get in touch.

The Chair suggested that it may be useful to draw from the experiences of other LAFs and also for Roger Cornwell to explore recruitment ideas through HUDDLE.

**AGREED** that the information be received and members forward any suggestions for new members to Mike Ogden.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden to continue to pursue recruitment opportunities.

## 12 Coastal Access Higher Rights – Blackhall and Crimdon

Consideration was given to correspondence with DCC in relation to the proposal for higher rights access over Council owned land at Blackhall and Crimdon.

Members considered the response received from Stuart Timmiss and noted the comments made about the impact on the coastal nature conservation protected areas. It was suggested that the advice of Natural England be sought on this.

With regard to the comments made by DCC that a ramped access to the beach would increase illegal vehicle access, Marilyn Gibson advised that steps would be acceptable and would not prohibit higher rights.

It was also suggested that the views of Tees Valley LAF be sought on equestrian access to Hartlepool's beaches.

**AGREED** that a response be sent to DCC following receipt of advice from Natural England and the views of Tees Valley LAF.

**ACTION:** Marilyn Gibson to draft the response in consultation with Angela Johnson and Tom Bolton.

### **Natural England Consultation – Coastal Access between North Gare and South Bents**

Consideration was given to the LAF's response to the Natural England consultation and the update from Mike Ogden. One objection had been received at the end of the consultation period and the Planning Inspectorate was currently assessing the validity of the objection. No implementation work would commence until this was resolved.

**AGREED** that the information be received and the response to the consultation be confirmed.

### **13 Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership**

Consideration was given to the update from Mike Ogden which advised of the appointment of the part time Paths Officer Emma Ashton-Wickett. Her role would be to look at key projects to improve access.

**AGREED** that the information be received and the Paths Officer be invited to the next meeting of the LAF to discuss her role and provide an update on projects.

### **14 County Council Policy on Land Disposal**

Consideration was given to correspondence with DCC in relation to Council procedures for the disposal of land.

Members discussed how to take this forward and it was **AGREED** that the feasibility of the LAF being a named consultee on future proposals for the disposal of land be explored.

**ACTION:** Mike Ogden

### **15 Dedication of Land (Durham County Council)**

The Chair advised that a ceremony to mark the dedication of land at Waldrige Fell and South Moor had been held on 6 March 2013 and a copy of the press release and photograph was circulated for information.

Stuart Timmiss had offered to meet with the LAF to discuss suitable sites for dedication.

**AGREED** that Roger Cornwell continue to explore potential locations and a Sub-Group comprising the Chair, Roger Cornwell and Angela Johnson be set up to meet with Stuart Timmiss in due course.

**16 Request for a Scoping Opinion - Page Bank Brickshale and Coal Quarry at Jesmond House Farm, Page Bank**

Consideration was given to the LAF response to the request for a scoping opinion for a development referred to as Page Bank Brickshale and Coal Quarry at Jesmond House Farm, Page Bank to the north east of Byers Green.

**AGREED** that the response be confirmed.

**17 Update from Rights of Way Team**

Audrey Christie provided an update in relation to the following:-

**Dedication of Public Rights of Way**

11 Public Rights of Way had been identified as potential sites for dedication and these had been agreed in principle following consultation with the Council's Assets Section and local Councillors.

**Storm Damage to Paths**

Work was ongoing to repair the damaged paths following last year's severe weather. The biggest scheme was at Maiden Castle and works were due to commence the following week. It was suggested that as this was used frequently by students, the University be asked if they would be willing to make a contribution to the works.

**AGREED** that the information be received and consideration be given to the feasibility of asking Durham University to contribute to the works at Maiden Castle.

**18 North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group**

It was noted that Neil Gander had attended the last meeting of the Group on 11 February 2013.

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 21 May 2013 at 10am at a venue to be arranged in Cumbria, and it was **AGREED** that Geoffrey Rigden attend as the nominated representative.

## 19 LAF Work Programme

**AGREED** that the LAF Work programme be updated to include the following:-

Topic	Role	Member (Lead) and Group 2012-2013
Working with Public Health		(G Hughes)
MENE Champion		(C Wiltsher)
National Trails Partnership		(G Rigden)

## 20 LAF Annual Report

To assist in the completion of the LAF Annual Report for 2012-2013 it was **AGREED** that members provide an update of their profiles.

**ACTION:** Jill Errington to e-mail members with details of current profiles for amendment.

## 21 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

**AGREED** that the AGM be held on Tuesday 16 July 2013 at 6pm at Woodleigh in Barnard Castle. The meeting to be preceded by a site visit in Teesdale, the location to be confirmed.

## 22 Any Other Business Natural England Open Access Restrictions

The Chair advised of the receipt of notifications of restrictions in respect of the following:-

Pennington Field, Hamsterley Forest  
Cotherstone Moor  
Birk Halt Moor  
Hamsterley Rally

**AGREED** that the information be received.