

# Peak District Local Access Forum

## Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 15 March 2008 at the Moorland Discovery Centre, Longshaw

### Members Present:

Bob Berzins	Stuart Elliott
Jacque Bevan	Terry Howard
Jon Clennell	Mike Innerdale
Andrew Critchlow	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Edwina Edwards	Andrew Murley
Richard Entwistle	Geoff Nickolds
Sue Fisher	Keith Pennyfather
Henry Folkard	Lorna Wilson

### Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA)	Andy Jones (PDNPA)
Jane Beech (Natural England )	Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)
Richard Campen (PDNPA)	Gill Millward (DCC)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Richard Pett (PDNPA)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Moorland Discovery Centre. Mike Innerdale gave brief details on the background of how the centre came about. It has been open for a year, employs 2 members of staff, working with schools in Sheffield and the Hope Valley communities. It is an award winning eco build, by no means a traditional type of building found in the National Park, has a ground source heat pump, and built from sustainably-sourced timber. Landscaping work is about to start.

Comments were made regarding lack of signage from the car park and difficulty of accessing the building with a wheelchair (and pushchairs).

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Charlotte Bright.

### **2. Minutes from the last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2007 were agreed as correct.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Terry Howard followed up on the item on page 6 regarding signage being consistent cross boundary. Gill Millward reported that DCC was finalising signs on the basis of comments received and will be liaising with adjacent authorities.

### **4. Draft Annual Report 2007**

The Chair asked for any proof reading comments to be sent to Andy Jones. The meeting felt that there were no general comments or significant omissions. The Chair explained that the Forum is required to produce an annual report. He felt the

report was a fair reflection of the Forum's work and what it aspires to do. Mike Rhodes said that there would be a minimal print run –with mostly electronic distribution to partners.

**ACTION: ALL**

## **5. Election of Vice-chair**

The Chair reported that Andrew Critchlow was standing down as Vice Chair. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed that Mike Innerdale be appointed Vice Chair. The Chair formally thanked Andrew - not just for being vice chair but also for previously acting as chair and for his common sense and excellent leadership. He hopes he will stay on as a member of the Forum.

## **6. Open Access Issues**

Terry Howard thanked the Chair for the opportunity to talk to the meeting. He said that access opportunities in the Peak District and Sheffield are absolutely phenomenal. Every request to the Sheffield access officer has been met. However there still remain problems around Ughill and Rod Moor. He reminded the Forum that reasonable access should be provided under the Act. Terry gave details of access issues (lack of access points and the confusing information/ signage regarding closures. He felt there is a need for clarity and hopes that the National Park Authority will make clear on its website what area is closed so there is no ambiguity. He would like to see these issues resolved.

Mike Rhodes reported that there had been an exchange of correspondence with Sheffield Ramblers and Sheffield MPs. He summarised the National Park Authority's view and stated that one person's reasonable access is not necessarily another's. Current access is reasonable in the opinion of the National Park Authority. He does appreciate that in an ideal world there would be more access points but the National Park Authority has to take into account the views of the landowner, tenant and nature conservation agencies. The NPA has sought to improve access but does not feel it is necessary or appropriate to use its legal powers to force the landowners to create new access points.

Regarding Bamford Moor, Mike agrees publicity/information could be improved. Landowners will show on site what land is closed for a particular period. The very popular concession paths on Stanage Edge (north) and Derwent Edge which cross the moors affected by the access restriction will not be closed and public rights of way always remain open.

Some signage is being pulled down but this is a normal occurrence and the Rangers just have to keep putting them back.

Terry responded that it was not just the Ramblers Association that was concerned about these issues, but also the Sheffield LAF, as these moors are integral to the Sheffield RoWIP.

Mike Innerdale expressed concern that restrictions on dogs do have a displacement effect and lead to increased pressure on other areas.

Andy Jones said absolute exclusions are indicated in red on the open access website whereas dog exclusions are hatched pink.

Edwina spoke about Duke of Edinburgh participants with regard to closures. They have to submit a set of forms with their route 6 weeks in advance and these are checked by someone in the National Park Authority. How do young people know that moors are closed until they get there. Andy Jones works closely with Alan Jones who receives these forms and feels confident he would be checking for up to date information. Where the landowner only has to give 5 days notice he appreciates it is possible for a

closure to occur after forms have been checked. Andy suggested that Duke of Edinburgh people should check the open access website 4 days before their expedition, but he will take this forward to DoE (via Alan Jones) and make sure organisers and participants understand and know where to find the the information.

**ACTION: AJ**

There was a discussion about the information given on websites regarding closures and the Chair summed up by saying that clarity is needed for the public as to why an area is restricted – not just where. It is a balance between providing reasonable access and respecting landowners' positions. There is also a resource issue - not just for the National Park Authority but other local government organisations so there has to be compromise. He feels Mike Rhodes is aware of, and addressing, issues. Terry felt strongly that that islands of open access should be joined up which was agreed from the start and consistency between LAFs is vital. Henry Folkard added that the NPA and other authorities have cut back on budgets – it is a duty of this Forum to resist that – now is not the time to be cutting back on resources for access issues.

The Chair stated that it was important that members bring these items to meetings – not necessarily specific items but wider access issues. He thanked Terry and feels the Forum will visit this area again in the future.

The Chair welcomed Sue Fisher to the Forum and Sue gave brief background information about herself.

## **7. Access Management Grant Scheme (AMGS)**

A letter from the Ramblers Association had been circulated and the Chair gave a brief background, explaining that although the National Park Authority received direct funding for its access work, AMGS was important for the surrounding authorities that fringe the National Park.

Terry asked what the financial situation is now with regard to AMGS – he feels it is important we should support what is in the letter and suggested the Forum asks Natural England to continue funding the AMGS for access authorities.

With regard to DCC's experience, Gill said when the scheme was first introduced it funded some basis signage work. More detailed surveys of access land identified approximately £11,000 of further work, but due to changes within the Countryside Agency/Natural England, the availability of any funding was put on hold. When the money did become available it was fairly late in the financial year and did not leave enough time for the work to be carried out. It would be useful to see the scheme continued, but with the necessary early approval of funding which is essential for planning this type of work. The areas of access land which fringe the National Park, particularly around Buxton and Glossop have an important role to play in linking these communities with the open moorland.

Keith Pennyfather reported that at the Cheshire and Warrington LAF meeting on 14 March they enthusiastically endorsed this principle. The Chair said we must set this in the context of Natural England's shrinking budget but also recognised the importance of maintaining adequate funding for access.

Andrew Critchlow was unsure what Natural England is doing in terms of access around urban fringes – he feels it is crucial that these areas need to be accessible. It was agreed that NE need to keep this on the agenda.

Jane Beech said the Forum should take any opportunity to apply pressure and make sure access is high on Natural England's agenda.

It was agreed that the LAF would write to Natural England to express its support for maintaining AMGS funding for local authorities.

**ACTION : MR**

## **8. National Park Recreation Strategy**

Judy Merryfield - Recreation Strategy Team Manager - updated the Forum. There is an existing recreation strategy from 2003, but this is now being updated and will be evidence based. This will involve auditing natural resources, carrying out surveys to identify issues and holding focus groups, especially with hard to reach groups that do not use the Park. The Authority's view is that it has to be more pro-active in encouraging sustainable use of the National Park. The new Strategy is in the early stages – Andrew McCloy agreed to be part of the steering team and the LAF will be kept fully involved. There is a workshop on 7 May at Losehill Hall from 10am to 3pm - invitations will be issued soon. Mike Rhodes can provide copies of the project framework and timeline. As well as the workshop there will be a wide consultation list. The Chair said this LAF will be closely involved as the strategy develops and as such will be feeding information back and looking for views. Andrew McCloy cannot attend on 7<sup>th</sup> May, but hopes other Forum members will do so. Geoff Nickolds reported that he and Jacque Bevan are involved in a scrutiny panel looking at management of recreation and access across the National Park. Geoff chairs this and would like to involve the LAF in some way. Geoff will talk to Mike Rhodes and Andrew McCloy.

### **ACTION GN**

The NPA is aiming to produce a report on the Recreation Strategy by July and will bring some information to the Forum in June.

Henry Folkard welcomed Judy's work, especially involving different user groups in the process.

Jacque Bevan wanted to flag up that 2 tasks teams are talking to water companies. Linking routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists has been discussed. This led onto looking at funding for mapping the information. The water companies thought the LAF would be ideally placed to look at this if some funding can be found. Sue Fisher reported that the Ride the Peak mountain bike group has started mapping circular routes. It would be great if some proper GIS mapping could be done for all recreation users. Sue said she would be happy to help with any funding application.

Andrew Critchlow asked how this new strategy differed from previous work. Judy responded that the NPA has had an action plan before and a lot of that work is on-going. Following National Park reorganisation, there has been a slight change of direction so more resources can be directed to that area eg surveys and promotion.

Mike Innerdale drew the link to Moors for the Future – partners had agreed that access should move up the MFF agenda and there is a need to attract further funding. The National Park Authority is the key to linking different elements together.

Sue Fisher expressed concern about 'strategy fatigue'. It was important to publicise and say what has been achieved from last strategy before next one is published and also to be upfront about what has not been achieved. Judy will look at this.

Geoff Nickolds said that the conclusion from survey data is that public access routes in the PDNP score highest of all National Parks and the quality of routes in the NP is higher than in surrounding constituent authority areas – is this a true impression? The Chair thanked Judy for attending today.

## **9. Rights of Way Improvement Plans Updates**

### **Derbyshire**

Gill had circulated information on the second annual RoWIP work programme for 2008/09 which takes on board points raised by both this Forum and the Derby and

Derbyshire LAF, particularly smartening up targets where possible. It describes all the proposed actions identified for countywide delivery and details work that the County Council and its partners will undertake in relation to specific actions, as well as identifying the resources available. It is complemented by a work programme listing all the actions applicable to the PDNPA. An end of year monitoring report showing what has been achieved in relation to the targets identified for 2007/08 will be produced for the LAF meeting in June.

Jacque Bevan asked about mapping in terms of a map for the PDNP including non classified highways and links with cycle networks which has still has not been delivered. Gill said there are lots of different aspects to this work. The definitive map is being updated and has been identified as a priority, along with signposting of routes. The routes whose status is not yet determined cannot be added to the definitive map until they have gone through the legal process of a modification order. The West Derbyshire and High Peak Greenway strategy is being finalised for the end of March. The next stage is to begin seeking funding and opportunities to implement these routes on the ground. A map for cyclists and horse riders is planned this year and will be available on the DCC website.

Andrew Critchlow felt that we are now in a digital age it should be easier to produce updatable maps. Is there a timeframe for the Derbyshire area? With regard to claimed routes is the list getting longer? Gill responded that in another 2 years the definitive map for the County should be up to date. There is a rolling programme of work to tackle the claimed routes. Although the number being received has slowed down, there are still several years of work to be done.

It was resolved to note the second annual work programme for delivering Derbyshire's RoWIP in 2008/09.

### **Oldham**

Terence Cavanagh had sent a note which was circulated with the agenda.

### **Sheffield**

Terry Howard reported that lobbying by Sheffield LAF members has been successful in securing funding for the RoWIP. The City Council has agreed to put in £100,000 for this year and £300,000 for next year. This was a massive step forward and helps to enhance access opportunities not only for Sheffield city but also into the Peak District.

### **Staffordshire**

Mike Rhodes has received a copy of Staffordshire's final RoWIP.

## **10. Consultation on draft Access Layer of Higher Level Stewardship targeting map for the East Midlands**

Jane Beech (now back in the Natural England team covering the National Park, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire) gave a presentation on Higher Level Stewardship. A paper had been circulated and comments were invited on the access targeting map which has been produced for the East Midlands. Jane asked for consultation responses to be sent to David Jackson by 4 April. **ACTION: ALL**

There was a discussion around target areas and access priorities. Jane explained that the Natural England approach is more proactive and helps to target agreements with maximum value and public benefit. The overarching access objective to enhance people's recreational experience close to where they live and close to where they visit may help to take pressure off honeypot areas within the National Park. The Chair thanked Jane for attending today.

## 11. Update on the Recreational Motor Vehicle Strategy

Mike Rhodes reported that a report on the Recreational Motor Vehicle Strategy went to PDNPA Services Committee on 7 March – ask if you want a copy of papers. The Strategy was approved and NPA officers are hopeful that resource issues will be looked at as soon as possible. The Chair made the meeting aware that the LAF sub group has continued work investigating routes and attending site visits – this input is on-going and an important part of the evidence base. There are 23 approved priority routes and the LAF is crucial to developing management plans for these.

Richard Pett updated the meeting and circulated a 'business card' which is being handed out to users and an information leaflet which is going to local people. Print runs will be small as these will be updated on an on-going basis. There is also one for bikers – Police and rangers are handing these out and they will be stocked by visitor centres and sent to user groups and Parish Councils. It was welcomed by the Police. Sue Fisher congratulated Richard on the language of the publication, it is very clear. Jacque Bevan commented that things were moving on but she is worried about the lack of resources put into this.

Henry Folkard commented that much of this work is excellent but there is a perception amongst users that there is not consistency across the National Park in general due to the different approaches of the constituent highway authorities.

The Chair said it is now evident that things are happening and officers are pushing forward as quickly but carefully as possible. He felt Services Committee were sympathetic to the resource issue and thanked Richard for reporting.

## 12. National Access Forum

A paper was tabled – a report of a Natural England/LAF liaison meeting the Chair had attended on 24 January in Sheffield. He said it was very positive – the upshot is that a National Access Forum is to be created – it is a national representation for LAFs and a channel for what is happening locally on activities, views, opinions, advice. The Chair asked for any agenda items that Forum members want to take forward to the meeting in May and any views on selection of East Midlands representatives for the May meeting (and future meetings).

Agenda items - Henry Folkard suggested voluntary dedications under the CRoW Act. which has not really taken off possibly due to issues around health and safety).

Keith Pennyfather flagged up the pending ten year review of open access mapping - this is creeping up and could we have clarification about what is happening ?

Jacque Bevan raised the problem of the availability of resources for mapping the access opportunities that already exist. A map must be produced for all users sooner rather than later.

Andrew Critchlow suggested raising the difficulties with the Open Access website.

The Chair explained that the National Access Forum is a totally new body and not a direct replacement for the National Countryside Access Forum (NCAF), which is unlikely to be reconstituted.

A discussion took place around coastal access issues and resources.

Jon Clennell asked if there should be a permanent member from this LAF to represent the East Midlands region as there are 7 constituent authorities and unique problems.

The Chair responded that representation has to be democratic to ensure confidence in the new National Access Forum. The first meeting will be framework setting, after that there will be a firmer idea of what can be taken forward. The Chair will report back on progress in June.

**ACTION: CHAIR**

### **13. Feedback from members**

Jon Clennell reported that he had attended a regional training day in March in Manchester and felt it important to continue to be involved in these events. However the training team didn't manage the session well. Main points arising from the 8 LAFs represented were that RoWIPs were acknowledged as being very important - but each LAF has their own way of dealing with them. It was thought that LAFs had a big responsibility for backing attempts at getting funding. Meeting only 4 times a year could be problematic – some issues are urgent and officers have to deal with them as they cannot consult with the LAF in the meantime. A better process is needed. In the Yorkshire Dales the LAF has a particular local authority contact – so officers know one or two people on their LAF who can be contacted when the need arises. Are we making the best use of the skills and expertise around the table?

The Chair thanked Jon for attending and reporting back.

Lorna Wilson thanked Terry for attending a local history society meeting in Bamford to talk about access. There is local concern about a consultation on an application for the bridleway on Hope Brinks to be reclassified as a Byway.

Bob Berzins thanked Andy Farmer and the rangers for allowing him to attend recent NPA training on wildlife persecution.

Henry Folkard reported on the Backdale Quarry case. In the High Court, Justice Sullivan had overturned the Planning Inspector's decision. Henry asked whether the LAF could bring its weight to bear on this issue in support of the National Park Authority? The Chair said that so long as we concentrated solely on access and recreation issues it was appropriate for him to talk to Rich Campen on this matter and report back to a future LAF meeting.

Terry, Jacque, Andrew Murley and Edwina went to a LAF training event in Derby. They did not find it particularly relevant to work in this area and felt they would have been better served working with other adjacent LAFs with shared problems. It was good for brand new members and networking, but some presentations were ill prepared and could have been carried out in half a day.

Jon Clennell asked if it was the same company as conducted the Manchester training? It was felt that Natural England should be vetting trainers. Jane Beech said it was important to give feedback on the day. NE need to know what people want. Members to feed back to Jane direct.

**ACTION: JB, JC, AM, EE, TH**

The Chair thanked members for comments.

### **14. Any other business**

Andrew Murley reiterated that access from the car park to this building is appalling and he challenged members to get more than 50 yards from most car parks as a wheelchair user.

Richard Campen reported that he had received a letter from Natural England regarding the National Trails Consultation, inviting contributions to the review of its whole approach to the National Trails network. Briefs are to be developed by the end of April with an assessment of trails and business options for future management by 15 September. The consultation process will be completed by 15 November and an implementation plan produced by 15 December. A steering Group has been set up and Richard Campen is on the e-mail group. A workshop is proposed and the issue will be

discussed at the National Access Forum on 15 May. Richard will coordinate a response on behalf of the PDNPA and this LAF should be involved in that process. It was agreed that this will be put on the agenda for the June meeting; the LAF must work with the NPA and for the moment RC will put NP message across and we will follow up after the June meeting.

**ACTION: MR**

**15. Dates of Next Meetings for 2008:**

Thurs 19 June (Losehill Hall)

Sat 27 September

Thurs 4 December

The meeting closed at 1.20pm