

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 June 2006 at Losehill Hall

Members Present:

Charlotte Bright	Terry Howard
Simon Brister	Richard Marshall
Jon Clennell	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Andrew Critchlow	Richard Peart
Stuart Elliott	Keith Pennyfather
Henry Folkard	

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA)	Stephen Jenkinson (Kennel Club)
Jane Beech (Countryside Agency)	Andy Jones (PDNPA)
Alan Bowring (Cheshire CC)	Gill Millward (DCC)
Dan Boys (PDNPA)	Crispin Percival-Hughes (Staffs County Council)
Rachel Finney (Calderdale MBC)	Richard Pett (PDNPA)
Sarah Ford (Barnsley MBC)	

1. Apologies

Mike Rhodes had received apologies from Sarah Harlen, James Kellie, John Lees, Barry Neville, Geoff Nickolds and Roger Wilkinson. Roger Wardle has resigned.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Minutes of 18 March 2006 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Page 2 - Terry Howard asked if any progress had been made on contacting other authorities regarding funding. Mike and Gill confirmed that a letter had been sent out to all constituent authorities – so far no responses have been received.

National Park access budget correspondence

The Chair had written to the Minister for Rural Affairs, the Chair of the National Park Authority (Tony Hams) and constituent MPs; expressing the Forum's deep concern that the Peak District National Park Authority had been forced to make cuts to its access budget for 2006/07. Mike had circulated a copy of this letter, together with a summary of responses from MPs and a note of those who hadn't replied. Nick Clegg (MP for Sheffield Hallam) had also sent a note to Andrew McCloy expressing support for National Parks in general.

Barry Gardiner (Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs) had written to the Chair and a copy of the letter had been circulated.

Terry Howard considered it was a worthwhile exercise to raise awareness of the Forum's genuine concerns about the access budget. Henry Folkard felt the last two lines of Barry Gardiner's letter gave a clear steer. He hopes that next year it may be

harder for the Government to make cuts as we made a fuss this year – there may be long-term gain. The followed a general discussion about residual costs of access agreements - some agreements have longer termination clauses. Mike answered questions on some budget issues. Simon Brister suggested lobbying again at budget setting time rather than after the event. The Chair will maintain a close dialogue with John Thompson and others. There was general concern that there is so much reliance on external funding. Chair felt this subject would be brought back to a future meeting before the budget is set.

ACTION: Chair

The Chair had written to PDNPA re the A628 bypass proposals. This had been acknowledged by Emily Davies - thanking the forum for their comments. He had also written to the Highways Agency – and a standard holding letter had been received. The Highways Agency had been taken aback by the scale of opposition and complaints. We wait to see what happens; possible further contributions would be made later in the year.

4. Dogs in the Countryside

Stephen Jenkinson – Access Adviser to the Kennel Club – gave a presentation about dogs and access issues. He said in his experience that dogs were always difficult issues for parish councils, but do need to be addressed. There are 6.2 million dogs in the UK and around 15 million people who take them for walks. The same principles should be applied as when engaging with mountain bikers, horse-riders etc.

Steve then gave some background to the Kennel Club itself – it is a broad church for dog owners of all types. The KC has established networks with dog owners which are good for information/education. The Kennel Club is keen to take a balanced pragmatic approach, working with Local Authorities, schools etc.

He then explained about all types of assistance dogs and how they help people with various needs – not just those with physical impairment. If a total dog ban is suggested it should be carefully thought through, as many people may be excluded/discriminated against. Dogs also have social benefits – they break the ice, give individuals confidence to go out, for example older people, those with mental illness etc. Exercise has major benefits for a large percentage of the population too, dog walking hits lots of health targets for the half an hour, 5 days a week suggested minimum. The Kennel Club is keen to promote the rights and responsibilities of dog owners.

In terms of practical challenges – notices are predominantly negative and unwelcome. Signs can be inconsistent and misleading. There has been little research into more effective approaches – there is a need to find more effective ways forward. Steve gave the example of Pembrokeshire – clear, consistent and timely messages were given, to aid compliance. A strategic approach is needed which is something the Forestry Commission is undertaking. Information needs to be given to people before they arrive – a choice of alternatives, maps where restrictions are in place etc and providing alternative areas for dogs to exercise. As many residents of National Parks in UK have dogs, we cannot exclude as happens in other countries, eg Australia, North America. Enhanced mutual understanding and respect is the aim. A booklet has been produced (and circulated to forum members) this is very useful and positive. It has been jointly produced by the Kennel Club, English Nature, Countryside Agency and Defra. Research is on-going (with

Portsmouth University) into owners' behaviour. The Kennel Club organises workshops which are available for access managers.

In terms of Local Access Forums, an integrated approach between key bodies is to be encouraged to promote consistent, timely, accurate, appropriate local information to dog owners. Consider how best to engage with a significant year-round group of access users. Optimise the positive aspects and minimise the negative aspects of dog owners; taking the opportunity to promote local businesses, B&Bs etc.

Henry Folkard told the forum about his involvement in the Stange Forum where they had tried to find an area of land for dogs owned by climbers and visitors to be exercised – they haven't been able to find a solution.

Moors for the Future have produced a 'Paws on the Moors' leaflet – a copy was circulated. Terry Howard gave some examples of areas where dogs are allowed off leads – there have been difficulties with people not cleaning up after their dogs. He expressed concerns about 'dog areas' being exclusive in terms of people feeling intimidated by loose dogs. It basically comes down to dog owners being responsible. Steve Jenkinson said that one size does not fit all – these issues need to be looked at on an individual basis and some innovative thinking may be needed. Stuart Elliott told the forum that if your farm is producing 'Farm Assured' produce, you have to prove a worming programme for **all** animals on the farm, which obviously you cannot guarantee with 'visiting' animals. This could explain some of the reticence by farmers towards dogs. Again owners need to be responsible. Richard Peart asked if the KC made any allowances for different breed types and behaviours – Steve replied that people need to take responsibility. Andrew Critchlow felt that this was more problematic on urban fringe areas than by walkers in rural areas. Steve finished by giving information on country parks with similar issues – dogs need an 'initial area' to let off steam. The Chair thanked Steve and emphasised how important the issue is.

5. Update on Derbyshire County Council Review of Motorised Vehicles in the Countryside

Richard Taylor, Countryside Services Manager, DCC gave a presentation. The two (Derby & Derbyshire and Peak District) local access forums had contributed to a paper which was presented to DCC Improvement and Scrutiny Committee on March 15. He thanked the forum for their contributions.

The paper had made four recommendations (including a pilot study where LAFs are to be involved and a review of the system carried out after completion). Officers from DCC Countryside Service and PDNPA will be meeting to look at suitable areas and how to put this into practice. The National Park will be the pilot area – this is a big project on the sustainability and maintenance of routes in the future as well as affecting communities/industries that the routes go through and of course issues of multi-user access. Richard said that although Ron Marquand has retired – they hope to have an officer in place in Autumn to continue his good work.

With regard to the Non Classified Highway network – the audit has now taken place and it has consequently been digitally mapped. This gives good baseline data. On the urban fringes, where illegal vehicle access is a problem, there have been several joint Police/PDNPA/DCC approaches made, which seems to be working very well. The Police are now realising the issues regarding illegal use. He will report back to a future meeting.

Richard Marshall made the point that the urban fringe and motor vehicle trespass issue mirrored the matter of dogs in terms of a specialised area. There needs to be positive provision and information, it is not just a matter of telling people where they cannot go.

Richard Taylor also spoke of the Code of Conduct – DCC has adopted the LARA code of practice - but with the addition of night use. He mentioned an initiative (outside the National Park) in the North East of the county which is considering areas where facilities could be developed for motor vehicle use. Signage issues are important, so walkers understand what they might encounter along a route. DCC is committed to providing clear signage. This is important for vehicle users to be confident about routes which they can use.

Forum members felt that the PDNPA and DCC need to have a coherent approach and there is a need for consistency in adjacent authorities to tackle cross boundary issues, some authorities are not communicating.

Richard Taylor felt that lines of communication have never been better between the National Park and DCC, we are very strong on sharing ideas. He recognises there are cross boundary issues. He hopes that the pilot work will involve officers from other authorities and they will take this information on board. Andrew Critchlow asked if the information would be available to the public. Richard replied that it would be eventually and will be brought to a meeting in the future.

Richard also responded to a question about claims for vehicular routes. DCC is working towards a policy to prioritise these applications but it is a massive workload and they are trying to get resources for the legal team. In terms of sustainability, those routes that have vehicle rights will have sustainability criteria applied. Other routes and claims are more problematic and we need more clarity – there is no quick fix.

The Chair thanked Richard Taylor for attending the meeting.

6. Countryside Agency – LAF Learning Network

Jane Beech gave a presentation on the Countryside Agency's LAF Learning Network. The CA had reacted to a suggestion arising from the regional event held at Kinoulton, with a newsletter and web based learning network. One newsletter had been produced (in November 2005), and now a website for use by officers and members of forums in the East Midlands Region has been set up. This will allow us to keep up to date on news, views and trends. Members were given the link:

<http://lafsem.net.countryside.gov.uk/register>

Jane gave information on how the site will work - you will be verified as a bona fide LAF member and will then be sent an e-mail advising how to gain access to the members homepage. Jane explained how to access specific information, eg resources (on line 'library') for searching and/or downloading information, events, news etc. A directory of members with interests logged is available, to aid networking. Lots of other website links are available – and please feel free to suggest further links. There will be an area for a discussion forum and online chat section. There are separate areas for LAF Members and LAF Officers. Any ideas, articles, news please let Jane have the information. This is the first LAF website and, if successful, a national network will be taken forward. The Chair thanked Jane and encouraged all members to look at the site.

ACTION: All

7. Access Points and Ordnance Survey Maps

Previously, the Ordnance Survey had said that access points will not be indicated on maps as they felt maps would be too cluttered. The National Audit Office have noticed a lack of use of these access points – they were of the opinion that people do not have the confidence to access land as they do not know how to get on and off. Terry Howard felt that we could identify those points and should ask OS to put main access points on maps. We could identify those points, particularly on major roads, where people need to know where safe crossing points are etc eg the A628. This was an important safety issue.

Andy Jones reported that he has recently been in dialogue with Rick Morris, Cartographic Design Manager at OS – who is now making positive noises. Access points were taken off primarily because data was out of date, changes had been made and OS were not informed - therefore the information was misleading. They are quite keen to show key access points. They cannot do so just in the Peak District – it has to be national cover – and OS have to be assured they are kept up to date. It was felt unlikely that all access authorities would do so. If all National Parks can give this assurance Andy feels there is a good chance we can do get these points put on. Andy has consulted other National Parks and 80-90% say they can provide base data and assure OS it will be kept up to date. Andy cannot promise anything but feels optimistic. He will co-ordinate feedback from other NPs and there is a meeting at end of June where he will push the subject forward.

A general discussion followed about symbols, parking, maps being out of date as access points may change over time. It was felt that access points were not that fluid - there is a potential for new points to be added but they are unlikely to be removed. Forum members were all in support and The Chair thanked Andy for his time and efforts and said this was a very positive move.

Alan Bowring reported that Cheshire CC is concerned with OS mapping in Cheshire generally. He felt it was key that access information was up to date and was aware that field boundaries were woefully out of date. Safety and access issues made this pertinent, particularly on moorland, where new fencing had been erected.

8. Derbyshire County Council ROWIP

a) Progress Report

Gill Millward had circulated a report. The revised timetable (circulated for 18 March meeting) had now been agreed at a DCC Cabinet Member Meeting. She thanked those who attended the meeting of the sub group on 22 March and who contributed to the RoWIP workshop on 11 May – excellent information had been obtained and both events went very well. A focus group meeting was held with members of the Derbyshire Forum of Local Access Groups on 18 May to look at disability issues. Again £10,000 has been secured from the County Council's consultation budget which will help with the draft RoWIP due in the Autumn. The RoWIP Web page has now been developed and will also assist with consultation. Gill has produced a set of background papers for LAF members and brought packs along – they can also be e-mailed if you ask Gill.

b) Framework for Statement of Action

Gill had circulated papers. The Statement of Action is key to the RoWIP and therefore the entire network. Five aims (agreed at the workshop on 11 May)

are set out in the paper. There will be a specific statement of action for each aim. The first one has been produced (Appendix 1), the others will be worked up over next month and will have input from officers from both DCC and PDNPA. Gill felt the first one needed more work in terms of the resource area and asked for comments on its format and content. Concern was expressed about a preference to see current rights of way put in order first before any improvements were carried out. Gill explained that all five aims will have targets – those in Aim 1 will not necessarily be carried out first but will be done in parallel with the others. Forum members were asked to send comments to Gill. The Chair thanked Gill for the huge amount of work so far.

ACTION: All

9. ROWIP Updates from other Authorities

Crispin Percival-Hughes stated that Staffordshire CC were cracking on with their RoWIP, and from August/September onwards he hopes to have something to bring to the Forum.

Alan Bowring reported that Cheshire CC's RoWIP has been published previously, they were finding that identifying and resources challenging. They had made an application to the Countryside Agency for the new Section 16 dedications project and unfortunately were not successful but hope this will encourage additional dedication of access land.

Sarah Ford (Barnsley MBC) told the forum that their RoWIP was delayed, she hoped it would be out by the end July and will let Mike Rhodes have copy in due course.

Terry Howard reported for Sheffield City Council – phase II of the draft RoWIP has been released; they are on schedule according to their timetable and we should receive copy shortly.

Apologies had been received from Roy Malkin (Kirlees BC).

10. Derbyshire County Council Open Access Report

Gill Millward has produced a list of things to take forward in a further bid to the Countryside Agency for funding under the Access Management Grant Scheme. The work will be subject to discussions with the National Park and landowners and approval from Members. Gill has details if anyone would like copies to comment on. There has been some good progress – DCC is happy to provide information about key access points to the Ordnance Survey as they feel this is crucial. Following some discussion by the forum, it was felt that this information is also needed locally (councils, visitor centres) as well as being available to those with up to date maps.

11. Peak District LAF Regional Event

The Peak District is hosting a regional event (Fri 20 October – at Losehill Hall) for neighbouring local access forums to explore common themes, cross boundary issues, bring forums together etc. There has only been one suggestion so far from members – the Chair is asking for topics for the event as we need to plan now. He asked for an indication that members will participate before and on the day. Henry Folkard, Terry Howard, Keith Pennyfather, Jonathan Clennell and Andrew Critchlow volunteered to join an event planning committee. The Chair will contact these

members to arrange a meeting and sort out a plan of action. There has been a great deal of encouragement from the CA to hold this event this – it is envisaged that it could have many positive outcomes. Jane Beech confirmed that the CA want to encourage this innovative approach.

ACTION: Chair

12. Defra Consultations

Mike Rhodes highlighted two Defra Consultation papers:

Outdoors for All? Draft Diversity Action Plan

A letter had been circulated to members – a draft action plan has been produced and Mike encouraged members to read and comment. A copy can be downloaded from the website or Mike can provide a hard copy on request. Please respond via him or direct to Defra.

ACTION: All

England's trees, woods and forests

Mike said that there are important Access sections in this, apart from general interest in woodlands - please look at this. Chair agrees and asked that members respond collectively or individually respond.

ACTION: All

13. Feedback from Members

Chair

Andrew McCloy reported that he had attended the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) annual dinner in April.

At the end of March, a Recreation Forum had been held at Losehill Hall – Barry Neville and other members attended. The Chair had given a presentation on behalf of the LAF and felt it was a constructive and positive day.

Moors for the Future Stakeholder partnership – Andrew reported that he could not attend the last meeting but will be attending in future. There is a joint National Parks 'shape the future' at the end of June which he is attending and he will report back next meeting.

Members

Henry Folkard reported that John Mann, MP for Bassetlaw, had given a talk at the BMC dinner and had also been shown a number of sites locally, where the economic impact on local businesses had been stressed. Henry also took the opportunity to lobby hard on budgets for National Parks.

Henry and Terry had attended a meeting regarding the 75th anniversary of the Kinder trespass. This major event is planned for 21/22 April 2007 with a week of community based activity.

Terry had also attended the Ramblers Association meeting at the beginning of the year where the theme was 'where do we go with the CRoW Act'. One aspect was welcoming and confidence – many people don't feel welcome and/or confident in the facility. The vision was that the Act would address access for everybody – from both urban and rural areas. This vision has become a policy statement adopted by Sheffield City Council – Terry can provide copies if wanted. They have been bombarded by complaints (he gave the example of a club run – not commercial) where landowners had objected as it was the nesting season. Terry had advised the club on considering their actions – ie is this an appropriate activity for this time of year? He felt a Code of Conduct would be useful for a better understanding of what is legal and/or appropriate.

14. Membership

Roger Wardle has resigned – he is staying on at Chatsworth. There had been expressions of interest from 3 people for 4 places. The Chair proposed that Mike organise a series of interviews with the panel consisting of himself, Barry Neville, Mike Rhodes and Gill Millward.

Mike reminded members that some appointments expire in August 2006. Mike will write to ask individual members if they would like to stay on – this is a formal process – members do not have to be re-interviewed but please respond promptly to Mike's letter. Mike was asked if vacancies have to be advertised. He responded that any vacancies will be filled from open advertisement, but existing members were eligible for their membership to be renewed without competition. The Chair feels it is healthy to have a mix of long standing as well as new members.

ACTION: MR

Members were also asked to consider the positions of Chair and Vice-chair, for which there will be elections at the next meeting of the Forum. Could potential candidates please let Mike know before the meeting.

ACTION: ALL

Richard Marshall had noticed that there was no-one with a specialist conservation interest on the forum – and Mike said that we have been encouraging wildlife trusts to get involved. Andrew Critchlow suggested asking the RSPB.

15. Any other Business

The National Audit Office had provided a copy of 'The right of access to open countryside' – which has been circulated. They had asked that special thanks be given to those who contributed – your input was valued. The Chair invited forum members to read and respond.

ACTION: ALL

16. Dates of next meetings:

Thursday 28 September 2006
Friday 20 October 2006 (LAF Regional event)
Thursday 7 December 2006