

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 26 September 2009
at Losehill Hall, Castleton

Members Present:

Bob Berzins	Mike Innerdale
Jon Clennell	Mike Johnson
Felicity Edmeston	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Richard Entwistle	Andrew Murley
Sue Fisher	Richard Peart
Henry Folkard	Sue Weatherley
Charlotte Gilbert (formerly Bright)	John Thompson
Terry Howard	

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA) Secretary	Gill Millward (DCC)
Evelyn Aris-Fowkes (Pilsley Parish Council and Bradley Lane Action Group)	Sue Smith (PDNPA)
Richard Campen (PDNPA)	Richard Taylor (DCC)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Roy Taylor (RSPB)
Roy Malkin (Kirklees MC)	Danny Udall (PDNPA)
Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)	Zoe Wareham (Pilsley Parish Council and Bradley Lane Action Group)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Geoff Nickolds, Andrew Critchlow, Edwina Edwards, James Kellie, Jean Wharmby (new DCC appointee), Kate Maltby (Natural England) and Richard Pett (PDNPA).

The Chair advised that Andrew Critchlow was stepping down from the Forum – he had been involved from the outset, serving as Chair for several years. Mike Rhodes and Andrew McCloy have both written to express gratitude for his time and effort and thanks for his commitment and level headed leadership. This means there are now two vacancies to be filled. Farmers and land managers continue to be targeted and it is hoped someone will come forward very soon. Natural England has funded a brochure for the East Midlands region (copies circulated at the meeting) to encourage land owners/managers to join LAFs.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Terry Howard expressed disappointment that public transport was not on this agenda. The Chair said a speaker from DCC's Transport section has been arranged for the next meeting in December.

John Thompson asked about the item on page 5 regarding a letter being sent to Derbyshire County Council's new deputy leader and cabinet member for highways and transport. The Chair has written to Councillor Chris Jackson highlighting the LAF's priorities and offering a briefing. No response has been received as yet. The Chair will follow this up when things have settled down at County Hall. **ACTION: CHAIR**

Richard Taylor reported that the County Council has instigated a highway's response team who were responding to calls about problems on the county's roads – a similar scheme may be considered for rights of way. With regard to County Council efficiency savings – so far no negative news for the Countryside Service.

4. Election of Chair / Vice Chair

It was reported that both Chair and Vice Chair are happy to stand for next the 12 months – and in fact no other nominations have been received. Henry Folkard proposed Andrew McCloy as Chair for the next year, this was seconded by Bob Berzins and agreed unanimously. John Thompson proposed Mike Innerdale as Vice Chair, this was seconded by Jon Clennell and again agreed unanimously.

Andrew McCloy said he would definitely be standing down as Chair after this year – he asked members to consider the post over the next 12 months and if anyone wants more information or a general chat with the Chair, Mike Rhodes or Gill Millward please feel free to make contact. **ACTION: ALL**

5. RSPB Partnerships in the Peak District

Dove Stone

Roy Taylor, RSPB Area Reserves Manager for the Peak District, spoke to the meeting. The RSPB is in the midst of public consultations for the Dove Stone area. He gave some background to the 40km² area which is owned by United Utilities and has benefited from the £9m Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP). This was developed in association with the RSPB, which also has a strong partnership ethos with PDNPA and Oldham Council. Originally a land management concept – this is being developed to include recreation, public access and community use.

In conjunction with species and habitat conservation, the RSPB wanted to use the uplands as an advocacy tool to promote best practice in upland management. Currently 150,000 people per annum go through the car park at Dove Stone – it is a wonderful opportunity to enhance visitor experience, quality and understanding, connecting people from diverse communities with nature - not only the 'usual' outdoor types but also city residents. This is a new style nature reserve for the RSPB and in fact will not be called a nature reserve – the challenge is to make wildlife relevant to a diverse audience and to embrace the different activities that take place there and work with user groups and communities. There are plans to link Dove Stone with other attractions in the area as part of the Northern Gateway project and to look at expanding the trails network/ introducing natural play areas.

In terms of community engagement and involvement – part of the rationale for the consultation was to take on board the views of the 150,000 regular users and also to get communities involved in the long term management of the site. There is a proposal to employ a community officer based in Oldham to work with a range of community groups to manage the site which will engender pride and ownership.

The lease agreement is currently being finalised, with operational responsibility taking effect from 1 April 2010. Dave O'Hara has just been appointed as Site Manager and

the rest of the team are being recruited. They will initially be based at the United Utilities offices in Longdendale. The long term intention is to create a new multi purpose Visitor Centre (including an Education Centre) at Dove Stone on the footprint of the existing sailing club. An Education Officer is planned to start in April 2010 and ultimately the Visitor Centre building will be used by all partners.

Roy asked LAF members for feedback on the consultation which closes at the end of October, either by completing the on line survey or the forms provided at the meeting.

ACTION: ALL

Responding to questions, Roy stated that the RSPB will work with National Park Rangers and volunteers. He is aware of the National Park Management Plan and emerging Recreation Strategy. The results of public consultation will be taken on board to produce the visitor experience plan in January 2010.

Public transport was identified as an issue, with 95% of people travelling to the site by car – the RSPB will be encouraging local authority investment in Dove Stone, including park and ride schemes, such as the one being trialled by Oldham Council in Summer 2010. There was also some discussion about sporting rights and predator control.

In response to a question regarding Moors for the Future, Roy confirmed that RSPB has become a funding partner of MFF. There will be a key role for MFF at Dove Stone – all work will be contracted out by United Utilities with larger works being delivered by contractors and some provided through the wardening and estate team plus volunteers.

Eastern Moors

Roy said there was a strong partnership with the PDNPA and National Trust. In terms of a timetable, Heads of Terms should be agreed by the end of March 2010 with the lease being operational by November 2010. He is working with Mike Innerdale and the partnership to start management plan preparation, governance and public consultation planning. A series of pathfinder meetings will be held – most organisations represented at this Forum will be invited to site visits, public meetings etc to seek views. The need to build all aspects of recreational management into the RSPB 5 year vision is understood. The management plan will be shaped by users of the site and RSPB intend to explore innovative ways to engage with users and involve them in the subsequent management of the site.

Terry Howard was pleased to hear that 'reserve' terminology is being dropped as it can be seen as a threat to access – people need to be able to access wildlife. Roy clarified that there are no proposals to curb access on either site. In fact it is hoped to add access value to both sites. At Dove Stone the visitor experience will be enhanced, for example by creating trails away from the reservoir and explaining the carbon story. Outdoor picnic and barbeque sites are to be embraced and good safe facilities created.

Mike Innerdale reported that Sheffield City Council has recently transferred the management of its property portfolio (both housing and open moorland) to Kier Sheffield LLP. However decisions on the land regarding recreation or grazing etc will continue to be made by SCC Councillors. It is very important to have an overarching joined up vision (in terms of conservation, access and recreation) for the whole landscape from Sheffield to Chatsworth. Mike sees the partnership role as brokering that vision. Richard Campen (Director of Operations, PDNPA) recently attended a presentation by Sheffield CC on its Green and Open Space Strategy. He is confident that senior members of the Council will buy into the Eastern Moors vision and enable it to be delivered.

Henry Folkard added that 5 members of this LAF are also members of the Stange Forum. Predator control is a major problem and information from the Stange Forum

is available to the RSPB. There is scope to dedicate areas of woodland on the Eastern Moors estate for open access and this will be raised under the new partnership. The Chair thanked Roy very much for talking to the Forum.

6. Peak District Recreation Strategy - Consultation

The Chair explained that a LAF sub-group had been formed very early on and the Forum appreciated the opportunity to feed into the process. Although consultation ended on 25 September, the Chair will make a collective response next week and will represent all views expressed by Forum members. **ACTION: CHAIR**

Judy Merryfield (Recreation Strategy Team Manager, PDNPA) gave some background information – comments received, both written and online, are much appreciated. It was meant to be a positive and enthusiastic document, deliberately broad in scope but focused on encouraging appropriate (landscape biased) activities. Future plans include more engagement with urban communities and sustainable links. More work needs to be done to refine the action plan – only by talking to delivering partners can progress be made with actions and targets.

The draft Strategy was endorsed at an Authority meeting on 31 July then available online for an 8 week consultation period which partners and stakeholders were alerted to. The draft will be refined to incorporate appropriate comments over the next 4 weeks and if there are no major amendments, approval for the final version will be sought from Geoff Nickolds (as NPA member representative for recreation) and the Director of Strategy & Development, John Lomas. It will then be printed and circulated to partners; with a formal launch on 24 April 2010. The implementation process is being considered. Several LAF members have responded directly and during a general discussion the following points were made by one or more members of the Forum:

- It would be appropriate to include access in the title eg 'Access the Peak District'
- Quiet enjoyment should be highlighted. Welcoming, safety, confidence phrases should be used more frequently.
- Public transport should be promoted.
- More emphasis on possibilities of access to water – a long neglected area – need to be more ambitious in encouraging this.
- LAF's relationship with the proposed recreation forum is not clear. The LAF is a strategic/ statutory body and more clarity is needed on where the recreation forum sits in relation to the LAF – is there duplication and how will they interact?
- Action plans and monitoring. It is understood the NPA is under pressure to produce information on targets but with limited resources for the Authority and its partners – is there a hidden bureaucratic time bomb here if these targets cannot be met? Focus has to be more external to benefit recreation than internal to meet bureaucratic needs of the organisation. Monitoring – there has been a lack of trends/ baseline information in the past - this is useful to draw in extra resources and attract funding.
- Attempt in way document is written to adhere to National Park Management Plan and its outputs. Twin NPA duties not clear regarding the interface between conservation and recreation, especially in increasing participation in recreation – needs to be thought through before something irreversible happens.
- Well written as partnership document. Overall approach and 6 themes/ aims welcomed, with good links to landscape character areas.
- Helpful to see examples of good practice.
- Helpful to know how it ties in with Natural England's strategic approach, the surrounding local authorities' strategies (including Local Transport Plans) and the Peak District biodiversity and sustainable tourism plans.

- Too many 'high' priorities for action – 10 seems rather ambitious but partners could really help here. How will specific success be measured? Priorities – too many and difficulty with deciding between high and medium priorities.
- Local communities - 38,000 people live in the NP, their needs are different to those of visitors. Include more emphasis on opportunities for local residents to enjoy recreation facilities on their doorstep – walking/cycling links to schools etc.
- Look at management but people who come into the park will decide if it works and it's not always clear whether you are in (for instance) the Hope Valley. May be issues between different recreation groups. Feedback on people's recreation experience is needed (interactive screens?) as they leave the area. Must be lines of communication between users and NPA – use information to enhance people's enjoyment. Want them to have a positive experience and feel welcome.
- 'Horizon scanning' - not convinced document reflects on changing recreational demands or looks forward enough. Are emerging new sports recognised eg Geocache-ing emerging as an accessible activity which is hard to manage.
- Barriers – avoids discussing thorny issues in terms of barriers to recreation – eg no section on off-roading. No discussion about conflicts of increased recreational use and environmental drivers and how they will be managed.
- Surprised to see cycling and mountain biking as one group – they are very different sports. But good to hear about the funding for the Matlock route.
- Shied away from difficult subjects, ie off road motor vehicles in the countryside 'stay on the right track' should have been included as a case study. Strategy has to face up to modern recreational demands and address conflict issues.
- Comment re photograph on partnership working page (climbing) - one person has trainers, rope is slack and top person does not have a belay – no crash hats (this publication should give better examples which reflect good practice and cover health & safety issues).
- More guidance needed for access to moorland during nesting season.
- Separate cycling and mountain biking - also difference between mountain biking and 'off road' cycling eg around Ladybower. Mountain bikers not an organised group of people and do not visit traditional hubs, such as Visitor Centres, therefore need to target them through the bike shops or cafés they visit and place information leaflets in these businesses. More people are mountain biking than ever before and the sport will increase greatly in the future – better vision is needed. Need to understand audiences/ individual user groups better – some by nature may be hard to reach – possibly a challenge for a future task group.
- No mention of wild camping – clarify the NP position.
- Horse riding. Many riding 5-10 miles from home. Many bring horses into Peak District – an area at back of car parks is needed for trailers/horse boxes to be unloaded safely where there are fewer people. More circular routes eg 20 miles would be good. Outstanding facilities for horse riders at Hartington Station but no publicity so consequently very under used.
- Encourage responsibility in all using the land and Rights of Way – codes of respect. People need to understand their impact on land, landscape, food production etc.
- Is there enough information to direct people to where they can enjoy their sport. Need more opportunity to develop personally within particular sports – eg navigation for 'newer' walkers and build confidence - expand this out across other activities. More signposting needed to enable people to develop.

The Chair summed up by saying that this was a positive and balanced document that contained much the LAF could support, but there were areas that could be strengthened and specific points to be addressed. He cited the need to bring out the interplay of recreation and conservation; face up to off-road motor vehicle issue; and be bolder and more thoughtful in its vision for the future. The Chair will draw these comments together and respond to Judy.

ACTION: CHAIR

Judy confirmed it is intended to involve the LAF in the implementation process – the wider Recreation Partnership will be an annual meeting of key stakeholders to look at current priorities and raise awareness of future plans as well as look at achievements; it will include user groups. The Strategic Management Group will steer the implementation of the Strategy – it could be this LAF if they wish to take this role on. Ideally to meet 2-4 times per year supported by a NP management group (ie the recreation team). Then separate Task Groups to work with particular issues ie needs of specific groups or looking at particular activities eg water-based activities.

The Chair responded that the LAF has to be mindful of its statutory duties in the first instance and would want to be sure DCC is comfortable with this arrangement but it is a good opportunity to be well placed for the future. Also have to bear in mind workload and commitment and that the LAF is an advisory body which doesn't do officers' work for them. Chair will talk to NP Officers and will bring back to future meeting to discuss further details.

ACTION: CHAIR

Terry Howard noted that there hasn't been an annual recreational user group meeting for several years.

The Chair thanked Judy for attending.

7. Update on review of directions to restrict access

A paper was tabled at the meeting and Sue Smith gave a brief summary. The LAF sub group has met on 3 occasions and statutory reviews have been concluded for sites at Deer Hill, Meltham; Diggle and West Nab, Bradfield. Taking into account revised guidance the duration of these long term directions has been reduced to six years from the previous end date of 2999. One site remains to be reviewed this year – Hollins Hill, Hollinsclough, which relates to the exclusion of dogs.

8. Recreational Motor Vehicles update

In Richard Pett's absence a paper had been tabled today and Mike Rhodes gave a brief update. The proposed actions from the first 8 management plans are to be finalised at a meeting scheduled for 22 October. The next 7 draft plans have been prepared ready to send to LAF subgroup members.

Advisory signage is about to be erected at Brushfield, Beeley Hilltop, Edensor NCH and Rowland. More signs are being considered (eg at Chelmorton and on the Pennine Bridleway). Signs have been erected on Silly Dale which is now a bridleway.

The Chair reported that he had received several representations from Parish Councils regarding the lack of progress regarding motor vehicles, such as at the recent Peak Park Parishes Liaison evening and the Parishes Day. Efforts have been made to explain the due process and how much work goes on behind the scenes. Communities' frustration is building over a lack of activity on the ground and also a lack of communication about what is happening. The meeting on 22 October will hopefully move this forward and may alleviate some residents' concerns.

Mike Innerdale has been lobbied about the lack of progress and whilst he supports the process he also shares the concerns. Meanwhile extensive damage to routes continues. There must be better communication as expectations have been raised.

Bob Berzins said he has had similar contact regarding Chapel Gate.

Terry Howard said walkers were frustrated about a lack of action on the ground. Will the public be consulted on the management plans which would lead to further delays? Is the sub group wasting its time undertaking surveys if there is no apparent progress?

Henry Folkard reported that at the recent Operation Blackbrook meeting it was stated that the current approach is not working – this LAF has involved itself in much work and has received no feedback. The Forum knows DCC has difficult choices to make but non classified highways and other routes have got progressively worse. This is not acceptable for users whose rights are being compromised. Something has to change and better communication is essential as it affects local communities, recreation users and the economy. Working with user groups is essential - DCC needs to be made aware that all this work seems to disappear into a black hole.

The Chair said that we as a Forum have supported this process, put in a lot of effort, but it is taking longer and longer and nothing seems to be happening.

Richard Taylor, Head of Countryside Service, DCC spoke to the Forum (although the Countryside Service is not responsible for the non classified highway network). The efforts of officers and Forum members have been immense. Over the last 50 years very limited resources have been invested in the non classified highway network. Highway engineers have a responsibility to spend on class A and B roads to ensure they are safe and in a good state of repair. Officers from the Countryside Service are working with the National Park Authority to try and secure more resources for the non classified highway network. The sub group has done a great job with the surveys for the first 8 routes. The meeting on the 22 October is the first opportunity to get all relevant officers together to agree the management plans – this is a huge step forward which will give focus and a source of much needed funding for these routes. Richard was very encouraged by senior level support at the recent Operation Blackbrook meeting.

Richard Entwistle felt it was useful that two County Council Councillors attended the Operation Blackbrook governance meeting which will help understanding and communication.

The Chair hopes for positive news following the 22 October meeting and thanked Richard Taylor for responding.

9. Derbyshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Progress Report

Gill Millward had circulated a report and gave a brief summary as time was short.

Aim 1 - there may be better news on signposting and Gill will provide an update at the next meeting. The new metal sign designs were available for members to see after the meeting. DCC/PDNPA Rangers can assist with providing signs on any non classified highways where the legal status has recently been determined. **ACTION: GM**

Aim 2 - the legal order data requested at the last meeting will be e-mailed to everyone as soon as possible. An additional member of staff is being recruited to help with Legal Order work. Details of any temporary closures affecting public rights of way should be available on line very shortly and will hopefully be useful in helping people to plan their visits.

Aim 3 - the PRow Inspectors are continuing to target stiles and gates in disrepair for another month. This is also an opportunity to encourage landowners to replace any damaged stiles with gates wherever possible.

Aim 4 - The 'Highlights' report is nearly finished and will be circulated in due course. The visits for young people to experience horse riding and cycling on the Pennine Bridleway went very well.

Rights and responsibilities – it is intended that the Code of Respect for vehicle users will be rolled out into publications for other users (RoWIP Action 4c iii). The input of both LAFs would be very much welcomed and members who were interested in contributing to this were asked to contact Gill. This could range from pulling together examples of good practice from elsewhere or getting involved in the design stage etc

ACTION: ALL

The Chair welcomed LAF input into Codes of Conduct and thanked Gill for attending.

10. Feedback from Members

Chair

A LAF co-ordinator (funded by Natural England) is being appointed to administer the East Midlands Regional LAF network, so interaction should be smoother from now on. England Access Forum – there are internal issues with Natural England over roles and resources. The Chair will keep the Forum updated on progress. **ACTION: CHAIR**

Other items

Terry said there was a Peak District event in December to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. He will forward information to Mike R for circulation. Details are on the PDNPA website. **ACTION: TH**
There will be several Martin Doughty memorial walks on Sunday 11 October – further information is available on Natural England and National Park Authority websites.

11. Any other business

Black Hill site meeting arrangements. Purpose: to meet people involved in the restoration work and colleagues on the West Yorkshire LAF.
Meet at Losehill Hall at 10:00am on Monday 28 September. Bring packed lunch and suitable clothing. We aim to be at the Holme Moss lay by (on same side as TV mast) at 11:00am.

12. Date of Next Meeting in 2009

Thursday 3 December – Aldern House, Bakewell at 10:30am

Suggested dates for 2010:

Saturday 20 March

Thursday 17 June

Saturday 25 September

Thursday 2 December

The meeting finished at 1.10pm.