

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4 December 2008 at Losehill Hall, Castleton

Members Present:

Bob Berzins	Henry Folkard
Jacque Bevan	Terry Howard
Jon Clennell	James Kellie
Edwina Edwards	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Richard Entwistle	Roger Wilkinson

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA) Secretary	Gill Millward (DCC)
Wayne Bexton (DCC)	Max Norris (Inst for Outdoor Learning)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Richard Pett (PDNPA)
Bob Kelly (Ramblers Association)	Sue Smith (PDNPA)
Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)	Richard Taylor (DCC)

The Chair welcomed everyone and informed the meeting that the afternoon's site visit would be postponed, due to poor weather conditions and few members in attendance.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sue Fisher, Mike Innerdale, Andrew Murley, Geoff Nickolds, Richard Peart, Richard Campen (PDNPA), Matthew Croney (PDNPA), Kate Maltby (Natural England) and Jane Krause (Cheshire CC).

The Chair welcomed Sue Smith to the meeting and congratulated Sue on her appointment as the National Park Authority's Access Officer.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

Terry Howard pointed out that under Item 9, at the bottom of page 4 - Bradfield ribbon area should read Bradfield area and the word George should be deleted. With these amendments, the Minutes of the meeting on 27 September 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Terry referred to item 3 regarding the need to keep the wider topic of what constitutes reasonable access to open country high on the LAF agenda as a strategic item for future discussion. A visit is planned to look at the site specific issues which have been raised. It was agreed that Terry will attend as a LAF Member and report back to the Forum.

ACTION: TH

4. NPA Access Budget

Richard Campen (Director of Operations) was unable to attend the meeting and sent his sincere apologies, but is happy to attend in March. The Chair felt this was unfortunate as the invitation was timed prior to the budget being set, it will be done and dusted by March. This was considered to be a significant issue for the LAF to advise on and to offer a steer on what the priorities should be. Forum members asked to be consulted before the final budget for 2009/10 is presented to Committee. There was concern that any cut backs will have a detrimental effect on access and recreation in the National Park and that it was important to resource the good work which is being undertaken. It was suggested that the Park would benefit from having a full time Rights of Way Officer.

It was agreed that the Chair would arrange to meet Richard Campen as soon as possible, so detailed budget information can be circulated to LAF members for comment. Any observations will be taken forward to the relevant committee meeting.

ACTION: Chair, JB

Mike Rhodes confirmed that as far as the NPA is concerned, any income for Rights of Way work on the ground has to be sourced externally. Jacque was part of the scrutiny team that looked at resources for rights of way. Partners provided good feedback, but she felt disappointed about how officers received the scrutiny report. Water companies are keen to work in partnership with the NPA and have raised the possibility of shared budgets to look after Trails and rights of way, but wonder if the Authority looks far enough ahead to join with the 5 year overview taken by the water companies.

Richard Taylor reported that DCC's spending on access and rights of way has improved in recent years (LTP funding has helped) but like all public bodies, they are under pressure to make efficiency savings (set at £6 million for 2009/10) and also have to make use of external funding. There are real concerns about not having enough cash to cope with, not only visitor demands, but also climate change, particular the effect of increased rainfall on upland routes which can prove very expensive to repair.

5. NPA Asset Review

There was disappointment that Matthew Croney (Head of Property) was not able to attend the meeting. Henry Folkard felt it was relevant for the Forum to be kept in the loop. He understands that several areas of woodland may be in the frame for disposal – whether they are dedicated for open access he doesn't know, but there are issues re ecological/ ornithological points of view, and generally woodland is in short supply. With regard to Eastern Moors – Henry is aware that two bids have been received by the NPA and committee is expected to make a decision in January based on the officer's recommendation. Henry would like to see presumption in favour of dedication in terms of public-owned land. Jacque Bevan commented that she believes the woodland areas involved are very small and isolated but upkeep is very expensive and she didn't have any problem with their disposal. Henry pointed out that in terms of landscape assessment and biodiversity, corridors are very important – providing a link for wildlife.

Henry also referred to rumours about other pockets of land eg Millers Dale and the Roaches Estate. If the NPA takes the Forum seriously it should let LAF members know what is going on. The Chair felt there is a culture not to consult with the LAF and he will ask the Chief Executive to remind officers that they have a statutory duty to consult on matters of access and recreation. The Chair has spoken with Jim Dixon previously and the Forum is recognised as a 'critical friend'. He will stress again that the LAF is there to advise and comment, not make criticism for criticism's sake. The meeting was informed that an asset disposal officer had been appointed - if it is a matter of economics then

LAF members need to be aware of the situation. Terry Howard asked for clarification on other areas ie Sheffield moorlands. Mike Rhodes said that these areas were not part of the current negotiations and Jacque confirmed they did not belong to the PDNPA. The Chair agreed to discuss the situation with Jim Dixon and to also ask Matthew Croney for a written response to circulate to all Forum members. **ACTION: CHAIR**

6. NPA Recreation Strategy

Judy Merryfield reported that the LAF sub group met on 3 December. She also provided feedback on the 1200 responses to the online survey carried out in Sept/Oct. Once the results of the survey and various focus groups have been analysed, Judy's team will be producing the draft recreation strategy and action plan. This will be circulated to all stakeholders, including this Forum, in mid April, before being reported to NPA committee in mid June, with a Launch planned for September 2009.

Judy pointed out that the LAF has a major role to play in helping to decide on priority actions, many of which will be delivered by partners. There is also a need to engage more with user groups and provide better information to people. The 2010 walking festival is being considered to showcase what the National Park has to offer. The Chair said yesterday's sub group was useful and thanked those members who attended.

Jacque Bevan commented on the marvellous work that is being achieved and was particularly pleased to hear that the overnight stay rate had increased from 7% to 20%. However, she does not believe that the NP ranger service is used enough to encourage families etc to visit. More could be done through websites and events like Chatsworth country fair to let people know what is available. The Chair said that time had been spent discussing many different strands such as responsible and sustainable recreation, local communities and under represented groups etc. Edwina felt that ranger walks are already over subscribed and this aspect needs more external funding and partnership working - outcomes for health walks are incredible. Also more could be done to support volunteering - strategies are okay but need action. The Chair asked Edwina to ensure this feedback was made during the consultation. **ACTION: EE**

James Kellie commented on websites - the Cressbrook multimedia website has documented walks – collaborating with that sort of site would be good. The Chair thanked Judy for her work and attending today.

7. Recreation Motor Vehicle Strategy - update

Richard Pett reported that the LAF sub group had met and discussed what were considered to be the 8 worst routes – consensus had been reached on 6 routes, but for the other 2 routes there was a difference of opinion what would be the best solution to the problems. James Kellie said there was a lot of discussion about temporary TROs which often become permanent because there is no budget to fund the necessary repair work. TROs are also very resource intensive to enforce.

As far as illegal sites are concerned, Richard said that 5 action plans have been made and are relatively straightforward. Monitoring of illegal use continues. The Police have been carrying out on the spot inspections – not to discourage legal use, but to encourage responsible use. A friendly approach has been taken by Police and rangers – these operations will continue.

The Chair felt this work was hugely important and thanked both Richard and the Forum members who took part. With regard to the use of signage, Richard explained that agreement had been reached with user groups and circulated examples at the meeting. These received a good response and the first will be used on Stanage. There were

questions about the one way system which Richard explained and some concern about the size of the signs which should be kept as small as possible.

Terry Howard expressed frustration about the lack of a joint approach over Moss Road and Houndkirk Road. The Forum asked Terry to raise this formally. **ACTION: TH**

There was some discussion about the level of staff resources required for this high profile area of work from both PDNPA and DCC (Countryside Service and Highways). Forum members consider motor vehicle issues to be a priority for the National Park and again the need for a full time Rights of Way Officer was raised. The Chair agreed to speak with Richard Campen about the best way to raise this with NPA members and will also convey the LAF thoughts on this subject to Jim Dixon. **ACTION: CHAIR**
The Chair thanked Richard Pett for attending.

8. Proposed Seminar for LAF Members to review Derbyshire County Council's Policy on Managing Vehicle Use in the Countryside

Wayne Bexton outlined the County Council's proposals to revise its policy for the management of motorised vehicle use in the countryside. This was originally published in April 2003 and requires updating in view of recommendations made by the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee and also to reflect subsequent changes in legislation. It has been suggested that a workshop day run by an independent facilitator would allow members of both the Derby & Derbyshire and Peak District LAFs to put forward their views.

The proposed date is 28 January 2009 at Willersley Castle near Cromford, starting around 10am and finishing at 4pm. It was agreed that as much background information as possible should be sent out beforehand to make the best use of the day itself and avoid too many lengthy presentations. **ACTION: WB**

It was also suggested that people from neighbouring authorities/ LAFs could be invited along to bring in their experience of these issues. Terry said he may find it difficult to attend and asked for access by public transport to be considered for future events. The Chair thanked Wayne for attending. He felt this would be a good opportunity to meet members of the other Derbyshire LAF and encouraged as many as possible to attend. **ACTION: ALL**

9. Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan

a) Progress Report on RoWIP delivery in 2008/09

Work is continuing as outlined at last meeting. Funding has been secured to continue to develop the Pennine Bridleway National Trail through Glossop. It is also timely that the "Getting on the Right Track" leaflet has been produced highlighting the main achievements of the first full year of RoWIP delivery. This is intended to provide an easy read and will be e-mailed to LAF members and main stakeholder groups across the County. It can also be viewed on the county council's website at: - www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/Access_recreation/rights_of_way/improvements
Paper copies are available on request. Members were encouraged to pass comments directly to Gill and to forward the information to any interested groups or individuals.

ACTION: ALL

Members agreed this was a useful summary and Edwina asked Gill to confirm the value of the 1500 volunteer days. **ACTION: GM**

b) Proposed Work Programme for 2009/10

Gill had circulated a report outlining the key areas where work will focus in 2009/10. A more detailed document describing all the proposed actions will be produced once budgets have been set. Of particular interest – improved community links to the Monsal trail, including bridleway provision and better signage for local facilities etc. The Chair thanked Gill for her hard work and members resolved to note the key areas of work for delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan in 2009/10.

10. Oldham RoWIP

An update from Terence Cavanagh had been circulated which is self explanatory. It was agreed that it was good to see Andy Valentine's work noted.

11. Feedback from Members

Chair

Annual Strategic Meeting - An e-mail has been sent to Forum members about the annual strategic meeting (which took place on 19 November) and a paper copy circulated today. Useful looking back as well as forward, it also brings senior officers to the table. For 2009 meetings, need to encourage LAF members to be more proactive in suggesting items for the agenda. Other ideas include identifying themes for individual meetings and looking at specific issues in more detail, eg mountain biking, horse riding - bring a specialist in to give short presentation, ask questions and promote discussion. Members are asked to think of ideas and send to Chair for future discussion and decision on priority issues. Bob Berzins has suggested climate change. **ACTION: ALL** This should benefit access and recreation generally and also help the LAF to be more focussed and thematic (existing standing items will continue).

Annual Report – There was a request for Forum members to feed any ideas for the annual report (format, content etc) to the Chair or Mike Rhodes. **ACTION: ALL**

Funding from Natural England - There is a small amount of money available from Natural England to support regional LAFs – the Chair is trying to find out if any funding is available for individual Forums. One idea is to explore whether this LAF is working effectively or if improvements can be made. An independent external facilitator could be invited to a future meeting and explore how the Forum works and use a questionnaire to ask individual members for their views.

With regard to raising the LAF profile amongst NPA members and the public – the Chair has already discussed putting an item in the member's e-zine with Richard Campen.

Members

CRoW Mapping - Henry Folkard has written to the Chair on this issue; the review is relatively soon and the Forum should devote some time looking into inconsistencies and comment on the methodology so it can try and influence. The Chair has included this on the list of agenda items. Terry reminded members that there have been 5 years of CRoW next year. The LAF must be prepared for the 10 year review and build on the past, bearing in mind any change in Government and attitude etc. 2009 is also the 60th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act – the major piece of legislation that gave us National Parks – this should be celebrated. The Chair agreed and thinks the review is also an important issue for the England Access Forum.

Other future items - Jacque Bevan thought water recreation should be included. An issue discussed at the NP Conference revealed how difficult it was to get agreements

with water companies etc. The Forum should also have chance to comment on latest review of the ranger service (a huge asset for the National Park). The Chair reported the Forum was not consulted last time. MR stated that a review of the part time ranger service is on-going, but not yet complete. **ACTION: CHAIR, MR to investigate**

Moorland Discovery Centre - Terry updated the meeting on the £26,000 development at Longshaw. Proposals for a mini moorland area suitable for less able people and children are still waiting for planning permission. Other projects made possible with money from G H Ward – to whom we owe a debt of gratitude – are interpretation boards in and around the Longshaw, Totley, Holmesfield and Millhope areas, with links to Edward Carpenter. A 'Ward Walk' from Holmesfield to Longshaw has been promoted via a website, Explore and Discovery guides aimed at young people and group leaders, centred around Fox House and the MDC at Longshaw have now been produced. Terry distributed copies of the guides to Forum members and the meeting thought these were excellent, the Ramblers are to be congratulated. Jacque Bevan felt that information for visitors in rented accommodation could be improved.

Natural England's Draft Access Policy - Bob Berzins asked about Mike Rhodes' e-mail inviting comments from LAF members. Judy Merryfield attended a workshop in the final stages of the consultation on behalf of the English National Parks Authorities Association – but felt there was insufficient information to make judgement. A complaint had been made about the consultation process – the right people were not reached for comment on the policy. The policy is to be agreed by NE Board in January. The Chair added that the draft paper was presented in September at the England Access Forum – the point was made about lack of consultation. Responses from the LAF regions have apparently been taken on board – we will wait and see.

12. Any other business

Membership - Mike Rhodes told the meeting that the 3 members up for renewal in December (Jon Clennell, Charlotte Bright and James Kellie) are all committed to continuing. Membership remains at 18 with 4 vacancies and 9 applicants on file. Shortlisting and interviewing for new members will take place in the New Year. It is essential to maintain balance in the Forum between users and land owning/farming interests - none of the applicants are from the land owner/occupier sector, despite advertising and a press release. Forum members were asked to approach anyone they know who is a land owner/manager and may be interested in joining. **ACTION: ALL**
The Chair said Mike Innerdale will also raise this at meetings with landowners. Water companies and Wildlife Trusts have been approached in the past – MR will try Wildlife Trusts again and the RSPB. **ACTION: MR**

Cycle Hire - Edwina asked if the Cycle Hire Centre at Parsley Hay closed during December and January. Mike will find out and report back **ACTION: MR**

Local Accessibility Strategy - Gill referred to David Marsden's presentation at the last meeting. She is co-ordinating a response from the Forum to the Issues and Options Consultation and would appreciate further comments by 10 December. **ACTION: ALL**

The meeting finished at 12:55.

The Chair took this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

13. Dates of Next Meetings - 2009

Saturday 14 March, Thursday 18 June, Saturday 26 September and Thursday 3 December