

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 23 June 2016 at Aldern House, Bakewell

Members Present:

Bob Berzins
Ian Bunting
Henry Folkard
John Hall
Terry Howard
Mike Johnson
Andrew Murley
John Thompson
Sue Weatherley

Edwina Edwards (Chair)

Caitlin Bisknell
Richard Entwistle
Charlotte Gilbert
Caroline Hanson
Matt Hutson
Adge Last
Jon Stewart
Ally Turner

Others Present:

Joe Glentworth, (PDNPA)
Tim Nicholson, (PDNPA)
Richard Pett, (PDNPA)
Sue Smith, (PDNPA)
Debra Wilson, (Moors for the Future)

Gill Millward, (DCC)
Claire O'Reilly, (DCC)
Mike Rhodes, (PDNPA) (Secretary)
Richard Taylor, (DCC)
Andy Farmer (PDNPA)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Laura D'Cruz, Clare Griffin, Simon Malcolm and Jason Spencer – it was noted that the recording is now planned for the next meeting.

2. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2016 at the Moorland Discovery Centre, Longshaw Estate had been circulated and were unanimously approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

P2 Resources - a good meeting was held with Derbyshire CC and the LAF has since responded to the Hayfield Countryside Centre consultation. There has also been some helpful feedback on RoWIP work to follow up with several Highway Authorities, perhaps through the Joint LAF Sub Group, along with useful future contacts mainly at officer level.

P3 Green Lanes Update – there has been no further news about the one-off Forum to be arranged by Defra. This is likely to be linked with progress on the Deregulation Act.

P4 Peak District Geotrail – Mike Rhodes has drafted a letter of support on behalf of the LAF and is waiting for an update from Rhodri Thomas before sending it.
ACTION: RT and MJR

P6 National Trust Outdoor Activity Licensing Proposal – Jon Stewart will circulate the link to the Lake District events scheme. Discussions about the licensing proposal are on-going, with recognition at a national level that there needs to be local flexibility. Jon will keep LAF members updated.
ACTION: JS

P6 LAF Annual Report 2015 – hard copies of the report were provided at the meeting for people to take away and distribute. It is also available on the website and has been emailed to Defra, Natural England, Constituent Authorities and other interested organisations.

P7 British Mountaineering Council Mend Our Mountains Campaign – this has raised over £100k for urgent upland path repairs across the UK. The PDNPA has been awarded £17.5k for the route below Ringing Roger on Kinder Scout and is currently waiting for tenders to be returned. Hopefully there will be enough money to allow work to get underway in the Autumn. Lots of lessons have been learnt from the campaign which has been very successful in raising public awareness of the issue of erosion to paths of upland areas.

P7 Campaign for National Parks – although the link to the on-line survey (Help Shape National Parks for the Future) was not circulated, there has been a good response and the survey is now closed.

4. MOORLIFE 2020

Debra Wilson, MoorLIFE Communications Officer with Moors for the Future (MFTF) gave a very informative presentation on MoorLIFE 2020, a 5 year project which aims to protect remaining active blanket bog in the South Pennines Special Area of Conservation. The £16million project led by the Peak District National Park Authority is funded by the European Union LIFE programme and also by Severn Trent Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities.

Debra described the work which is being carried out to increase the health of the moors and counteract the damage caused by years of pollution and wildfires, as well as on-going monitoring to measure its effectiveness and produce best practice techniques/ agreed guidelines for future moorland management.

A programme of engagement activities includes guided walks over restored areas of moorland, work with land owners and managers, engaging with urban and rural communities using the travelling “Bogtastic” van and building on the Be Fire Aware Campaign. Engagement with young people will be achieved by working with youth groups and setting up a Junior Ranger Group, which could benefit anyone thinking about a career in conservation. Further information can be found at: www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/moorlife2020

Questions were asked about the controversial practice of heather burning which can also increase biodiversity if managed properly. MFTF is looking at alternatives, including cutting heather which can then be used as brush. Debra confirmed that there are no access improvements or fencing carried out through

the MoorLIFE project, but paths repairs are undertaken by MFTF as part of its wider moorland restoration work. The massive improvements at Brown Knoll were mentioned – this is now a far more attractive and diverse landscape to walk in, with wet areas being much more obvious. However it was noted that the effect of keeping water on the moors can be to make areas of open access land more difficult to negotiate and this message needs to be got across to people.

There was concern about the supposedly biodegradable plastic pegs which are still being found all over Bleaklow, lasting longer than their expected five years. Debra responded by saying that there is now less reliance on geotextiles and that cut heather is being used which complements the landscape and is biodegradable. There was also mention of the cultural heritage of the moorlands and work with the PDNPA's Archaeological team.

The Chair thanked Debra for her interesting presentation and the excellent works.

5. PEDAL PEAK

Claire O'Reilly, Senior Project Officer for Pedal Peak II provided the LAF with a presentation on the final project report, now all the work for the Department for Transport funding is coming to an end. She explained that Pedal Peak II has been all about improving cycling into and around the National Park and was a very ambitious 2.5 year project – although the focus has been on cycling, other user groups such as horse riders should also benefit.

DCC has been directly responsible for delivering sections of the White Peak Loop and Hope Valley Link. Claire outlined what had been achieved as summarised in the newsletter which was circulated to LAF members before the meeting. She also referred to the work of other authorities on the Staffordshire Moorlands Link and Little Don Trail in Sheffield and Barnsley. There was also mention of the Cycle Friendly Places Grant which has supported 29 projects to make businesses more cycle friendly, as well as providing 64 new cycle parking spaces. Responsible use is also being encouraged through the promotion of the Share with Care messages.

There has been tremendous support and interest in the project, with lots of partnership working with both the public and private sectors to achieve the results. There have also been many challenges, such as timescales, environmental/ legal issues, geographical constraints etc which have delayed the completion of the two Derbyshire routes, along with the question of future maintenance.

DCC has funded a 4.5km section of trail up to Rowsley which is due to be built by September 2016 and is committed to finding the funding needed to complete both the White Peak Loop and Phase 2 of the Hope Valley Link. There is also further transport funding in place to complete the Little Don Trail by 2019.

LAF members discussed the possibility of using the Pennine Bridleway in the short term to make a connection between the top of the High Peak Trail and the Monsal Trail at Blackwell Mill Cottages. Funding opportunities were also discussed, along with the possibility of liaising with Sustrans over future maintenance. At this point Claire mentioned a recent meeting to investigate

involving volunteers in the on-going management and maintenance of the White Peak Loop. Peak Horsepower is very keen to develop more circular routes and to help fill in the gaps for horse riders. There is also scope to involve user groups and volunteers in a lot of this work.

Tim Nicholson from the PDNPA then gave a presentation on the Evaluation Report for Pedal Peak II. Tim summarised the different methods which had been used, including cycle counts, interviews and on-line surveys and presented the key findings in a series of powerpoint slides.

The conclusions from the study show that the routes attract different user groups; that users value the routes and want more and support Claire's comments that delivery of the off road sections is more complicated and time consuming than providing sections within the highway. The study also concluded that the new routes can bring economic benefits to the area.

Discussion then followed about the differences between the trails, with the Monsal Trail being the most well-known and attracting lots of visitors, while the Staffordshire Moorlands Link which is a really attractive route tends to attract more local use and may benefit from wider promotion.

As far as the Wider Peak District Cycle Strategy is concerned, Tim confirmed that the aims and action plan will be reviewed and updated to increase the chance of securing funding in the future.

The Chair thanked both Claire and Tim for their presentations.

6. GREEN LANES UPDATE

A background paper had been circulated to LAF members confirming that the Action Plans approved by the Audit, Resources and Performance (ARP) Committee on 20 May were available on the National Park Authority's website at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/vehicles. It was pointed out that NPA members recognised the value of these routes for different users, as wildlife corridors and for their cultural heritage.

During 2016/17, the LAF will start its assessment of priority routes in Kirklees and Sheffield. Progress updates, including the legal status of routes in Derbyshire, will be provided to the Green Lanes Sub Group in October and be reported to a subsequent meeting of the full Forum. The LAF will also be consulted on the repairs which Derbyshire County Council intends to carry out once drawings have been finalised.

LAF responses to proposals to prohibit mechanically propelled vehicles on Washgate, near Hollinsclough and Derby Lane at Monyash will be reported to the ARP committee in the Autumn. In the response for Derby Lane, it was also suggested by LAF members that it would be helpful to look at the PDNPA's approach to its Strategy for Managing Recreational Motor Vehicles, as approved in February 2012 and that this could initially be pursued through the Green Lanes Sub Group. Sue undertook to circulate suggested Sub Group meeting dates and visits to routes in the Kirklees and Sheffield areas.

ACTION: SS

Henry pointed out that the culverts on a recently repaired section towards the Edale end of Chapel Gate had still not been cleared and the resulting water erosion was causing the route to deteriorate significantly. He asked for this to be raised again with DCC's Rights of Way Officer. **ACTION: RT**

7. DERBYSHIRE'S RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) – WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016/17

A report had been circulated to LAF members outlining the annual work programme for delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan during 2016/17 under each of the five RoWIP aims. Gill mentioned that the joint RoWIP sub group met on 19 May and had come up with some good suggestions/ ideas as part of the ten year review. The notes of the meeting would be circulated to officers and members of both LAFs to see if anyone has anything further to add. Another meeting would be arranged later in the Summer to look at how well the local rights of way network meets the needs of different users, as well as exploring approaches being taken by other highway authorities. **ACTION: GM**

There was some discussion about Lost Ways and the 2026 cut-off date. Since the Deregulation Act 2015 became law, guidance and regulations were being drafted for publication towards the end of 2016. Terry Howard pointed out that several groups are starting to research routes and wondered where they could go for advice. Information is available on DCC's Rights of Way web pages and people can also access the reports of the Regulatory – Licensing and Appeals Committee which makes decisions on Definitive Map Modification Orders, including those based on documentary evidence. Sue Smith referred to the book "Rights of Way - Restoring the Record" as being a good source of reference and the possibility of asking the author to talk to a future meeting to which members of DADLAF and the Sheffield LAF could also be invited. **ACTION: SS**

Concern was expressed about the delays in completing the Pennine Bridleway National Trail. After one of its members recently rode the entire route, Peak Horsepower is keen to ensure that the Trail is actively promoted to encourage more people to ride it and for more businesses to get involved in the provision of accommodation etc.

Henry mentioned how public expectations and needs have changed since the original RoWIP was published in 2007, particularly with regard to mountain biking. There was also scope to extend the concessionary bridleway model which has been developed in places like the Eastern Moors and that there was opportunity for some radical thought here. He also highlighted the importance of giving more emphasis to upland paths and the demands placed on them by nature as well as people. Gill said that consideration would be given to the Peak District National Park and whether it should have more of its own identity within the RoWIP in recognition of its special qualities and to allow issues relating to upland paths, for example, to be addressed.

The recent threat to funding for the maintenance of the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway National Trail was raised and LAF members wondered what they could do to stress the importance of these routes and the need for

continued investment. Although there has been a last minute reprieve for 2016/17, it is not known what will happen next year. A letter was proposed to Natural England in liaison with Richard Taylor and Mike Rhodes. **ACTION: JT**

It was suggested that whilst there are various sources of funding available eg £60m Defra Access Fund, DCC's Communities Priorities Fund for deprived wards, there needs to be more evidence about the public health benefits of walking and cycling. The RoWIP should link in with this so that opportunities are maximised.

8. ACCESS UPDATE

Sue Smith referred to the intention to map items on the access wish list so more people are aware of them and opportunities were less likely to be missed. There is a meeting of the Access Sub Group on 28 July when the information will be marked on a map which can then be digitised and brought to the LAF meeting in September. There should also hopefully be a map of concessionary routes ready to look at in September. **ACTION:SS**

Sue reported that the Access Fund had a healthy balance thanks to people's generosity, including the sale of Clarion Ramblers handbooks and donations from Dark Peak Fell Runners. The money was being used to fund access improvements across the Peak District and more could be achieved by landowners and communities working together. She has held meetings with several significant landowners, including Yorkshire Water.

9. SW PEAK LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP – ACCESS WORKSHOP

John referred to the Access Workshop held on 18 May, with the aim of prioritising a selection of routes for improvements which would benefit a wide range of users, including disabled/ less mobile people. LAF members were being asked to provide a letter of support for further match funding bids for two of the routes, but felt they needed more information and asked for a copy of the workshop report to be circulated. **ACTION: GM or MJR**

A comment was made about access not featuring very strongly in the work of the SW Peak Landscape Partnership and whether links had been established with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust which has been carrying out some positive improvements on The Roaches.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Although progress has been delayed, things are now back on track and Joe Glentworth is keen to work with groups like the LAF to help prioritise and agree the key issues and aspirations to be taken forward. Edwina will attend a meeting of the NPMP advisory group on 13 July, and Joe is hoping to arrange a meeting of the LAF sub group towards the end of August and a further meeting in September.

b) Horseshoe Quarry

Adge referred to discussions with the British Mountaineering Council to establish an abseiling site in Horseshoe Quarry as part of an integrated package. There are issues to be addressed around car parking and footpath access, but this is

being welcomed as a positive development and will hopefully help to relieve pressures and impacts elsewhere.

c) Derwent Bridleway 5 Cutthroat Bridge

The archaeological assessment which has delayed the moorland restoration work is due to take place in July. A specification for the path repairs is being drawn up, with wider consultation planned for the end of August. Bob Berzins will provide Mike Rhodes with a contact for the concessionary route on Derwent Edge. **ACTION: BB**

d) Letter from Member of the Public

Mike Rhodes read out a letter from a member of the public about mountain bikers riding recklessly and at speed through Coombs Dale, a concessionary bridleway near Stoney Middleton. Cyclists were reported to have forced their way past walkers without slowing down or giving any warning of their approach. This was not an isolated incident, with similar concerns at Padley Gorge and Derwent Edge. The letter calls for some means of governing this type of behaviour to be put in place.

Mike has written back outlining what action the National Park Authority is already taking to encourage responsible behaviour through signage, route design, share with care messages and engaging with user groups.

LAF members thought it was important to engage with people through contactable responsible user groups to exert peer pressure on those who act irresponsibly. There was also a role for mountain biking retailers in distributing information about good behaviour etc.

Other suggestions included the need to provide more dedicated facilities to cater for the growing demand, like those at Lady Cannings Wood; the possibility of byelaws or a speed restriction being imposed on other routes. The legality/ negative effects of social networks and on-line video footage which encourages people to ride routes at speed causing excessive damage were also discussed.

Mike agreed to give some further thought to how the discussion might be widened out and who to involve. **ACTION: MJR**

e) Annual Peak District Litter Pick

Terry Howard mentioned the Peak District Pick and Play 2016 organised by a local outdoor activity provider in conjunction with the National Park Ranger Service and Peak Park Conservation Volunteers. The event took place back in May and combined litter picking with an afternoon of free adventure activities.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum will be held on Thursday 22 September 2016, at Aldern House, Bakewell commencing at 10.00am.

Meeting ended - 1.00 pm

