

Peak District Local Access Forum Meeting – 6 December, 2012

Consultations on Moorland Management Planning Item 5

At the Access Sub Group on 21 November, there was an overall view that it was important for the LAF voice to be heard and it was agreed to report back to the Forum.

Eastern Moors Partnership

This consultation by the National Trust/RSPB partnership as lessee from the Peak District NPA finished some time ago and there is now a representative stakeholder Group. Terry Howard and Henry Folkard are on this group and the implementation of the Management Plan is going forward.

Proposal :

That both Terry Howard and Henry Folkard also represent the Peak District LAF for this Stakeholder group.

Sheffield Moors Masterplan

This draws in part of the Eastern moors as well. This is a proposal to establish a Plan and approaches to Landscape use. There is again user interest involvement from Terry Howard and Henry Folkard. The approach is a welcome step forward in terms of co-ordinated land management and integrated recreation and access provision. There is concern for the LAF to have a voice although there is no mechanism for this at present. The master plan will go to Sheffield City Council to adopt or reject at some stage. The consultation on current ideas ends on 30 November.

Proposal -

**Ask for Peak District LAF to be included and consulted at all stages.
Terry Howard to represent Peak District LAF at any meetings – no Steering Group at present**

Action – Mike Rhodes to contact Nick Selwood (Sheffield CC) to register our interest, stating that we welcome the document and will be interested to be included and take part in future consultations. It is a step forward in land management planning. Also to outline that the process has been confusing. (Mike has contacted Sheffield C.C. officers).

National Trust High Peak Moors Vision and Plan 2013 – 2038 - Consultation Draft

Bob Berzins has fed back concerns of fell runners and had spoken to Sophie Milner at the Trust. There have been discussions about overnight use, codes of practice, talking to user groups rather than signage, and highlighting the Upper Derwent consultation group. Also views have been expressed about birds of prey issues in the document

Henry indicated that the BMC have comments in draft at present and will be sending these. Other user groups have commented. There has been much involvement in this consultation from landowners and gamekeepers - need to make sure the views of other users are heard.

Potential reply

LAF to make a comment on the overall policy and outline that we are a consensus organisation. We are concerned with CROW Access land and that present use should be maintained and if possible that any opportunities to develop this should be taken. The LAF would want to be involved in any stakeholder group. Also to highlight that links with the RoWIP are missing.

Proposal: John T to draft something on behalf of the LAF for discussion at the meeting – see draft below which members of LAF are invited to consider and support with appropriate amendments or additions and offers to help – e.g. on recreation routes.

Lesley Rechert, Access Officer

Suggested Draft Response from Peak District Local Access Forum

Background

1. Jon Stewart (General Manager of the Peak District National Trust Property), who is also a Peak District LAF Member, has previously presented to LAF information about their approach and consultations regarding this 25 year plan for the High Peak Moors. I have shared this paper in advance with Jon Stewart who hopes to attend the LAF meeting and get feedback. He is reasonably happy with the draft, but has kindly clarified several points, most of which I have referred to for highlighting and discussion when we meet – (*see italics in brackets*). Jon stresses their position remains they want to achieve excellence in Trust purposes of conservation and access.
2. Mike Rhodes circulated details of a Draft Management Plan to all LAF members – <http://www.high-peak-moors.co.uk>. The Access Sub Group looked at this on 21 November, 2012. It is understood that the National Park Authority will also be considering a report on this on 7 December and Jane Chapman is leading on that. The report can be viewed at <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/npa/committees/authority-meeting>.

Draft Comments

3. This is a very extensive and important Plan for the future in the Peak District. It seems appropriate to record largely strategic (rather than detailed), comments here so the LAF can hopefully agree a response at its meeting today. These are offered in accordance with our role under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise the appointing authorities (Peak District NPA and Derbyshire CC), on the improvement of public access for the purpose of open-air recreation and enjoyment. The LAF represents a wide range of interests and has a diverse, informed and experienced membership enabling us to offer balanced and independent advice.
4. The production of a long term Management Plan for these iconic and very popular moorland areas close to major cities and conurbations is a major piece of work and is key in relation to partnership action and delivery of the National Park Management Plan which we supported. The landscape scale vision for the future management of the High Peak Moors is very welcome. The approach by the National Trust involving public meetings and wide consultation is excellent.
5. This is an extensive area where access is widely available and covered under the provisions of the CROW Act 2000, and before that through agreements with the Peak District NPA. These are moors where access was fought for and won and this gives them a very special status in the hearts and minds of many walkers,

climbers, social historians et al. Moorland Access and rights of way are popular, greatly valued and provide inspiration and enjoyment. The LAF is keen to see this maintained to high standards and enhanced where possible so that access, routes and recreation opportunities can give increased enjoyment to all for future generations.

6. We are pleased to see a strong commitment to access in your vision statement. That having been said, we would like to see your equal commitment to access and recreation reflected explicitly in your ten guiding principles which are strong on conservation and land management, but only principles 4 (inspiring and refreshing people), and 8 (encouraging people to experience the areas), touch on visitor enjoyment and understanding. Something related to the National Park Management Plan vision which includes a "Welcoming and Inspiring Place" and specifically W14 – "accessible and diverse recreation opportunities will be available for all, encouraging healthy living, enjoyment of the landscape and a sense of adventure" would be welcome along with a sense that opportunities will be developed and enhanced and benefits of recreation will be fully realised. (*Jon Stewart advises that these guiding principles are pretty fixed and apply to all N.T. land in the Peak District and he feels they provide a good balance around their purposes and objectives. They have been interpreted for the High Peak Moors and Jon concurs that as I say access is very important to the Vision. The Trust would be happy through LAF members or contacts to suggest specific access and recreation routes and links*).
7. The suggestions related to fencing and creating more blanket bogs are understandable in land management and conservation terms. (*The Trust aim to make enhancements to the landscape through implementation of the vision making the visitors experience more enjoyable and rewarding and to promote understanding of how implementing the vision can have real benefits for wildlife, water and carbon conservation*). However, such issues can be sensitive from access and landscape points of view and need careful thought, explanation and handling. If there have to be fences it should be made clear these will be temporary and that neither they nor resulting growth of vegetation will provide barriers to open access and will have appropriately sited stiles. Access restrictions suggested are of concern and an area we would wish to discuss further – e.g. re Kinder plateau. Recreation groups information networks will be crucial to the dissemination of any agreed approach working with the National Trust.
8. As the workshops were largely taken up with land management issues, the consultation draft does focus on those issues and perhaps less on access and recreation. User Groups make a huge contribution to enjoyment and care of the land and it is crucial to involve them in the future plans and their implementation, including liaison meetings. A commitment to work with representative user groups would be welcome to understand the demands of particular activities (both existing and, as these emerge, new activities), to agree how they may best be accommodated.
9. There is a good network of rights of way and there could therefore be a commitment to work with Highway Authorities (mainly Derbyshire C.C.), to identify future opportunities and priorities in reviewing and implementing Rights of Way Improvement Plans. (*Jon Stewart indicates they could really do with some input and help to identify anything they should be doing better or differently. He stresses that they take a lot of care to provide really good access to their part of the rights of way network, but would be very happy to receive advice and other views. They have not had many comments on extending or enhancing the network so far from our their own or NPA Rangers*). I suggest that we should be

able to help with this through PDLAF members and/or user group contacts. Do colleagues agree and how can you help?

10. There is already a good infrastructure of relevant consultative bodies like Kinder and High Peak Advisory Committee, Eastern Moors Stakeholder groups, Stange Forum, representative membership user groups, Heads of Outdoor Education Centres plus consultative exercises like that for the Rights of Way Improvement Plans. It would be sensible to continue to use these (perhaps rationalising in some cases), rather than create new mechanisms.

11. You refer to a number of key issues being given further consideration as the "Your Moors Your Ideas" public consultation produced some interesting suggestions, which need more time to develop, and some of which we need to consider further before you are in a position to develop them into firm plans. These issues below are topics we would wish to be involved in please as ideas are developed:

- Regular meetings between PDNPA, NT and moorland grazing and shooting tenants to discuss access issues and ideas
- Integrated path network to link existing routes and create circular routes
- Visitor code of practice
- Mountain bikers code of practice
- Night time use – how to promote best practice messages
- Fire risk management / moorland vegetation management plans
- Removing conifer regeneration from moors
- Educating people about the sensitivities of certain areas and encouraging them to use alternatives. Suggestion of a voluntary access restriction on
- Kinder plateau (or at least making people aware of the damage their feet may be causing)
- Historical information about old workings or routes across the area
- Archaeological and historic landscape information for moorland tenants
- More regular contact with neighbouring moorland owners to discuss work proposals
- More NT presence at organised events and recognition or input from those that organise the events and participate in them
- Public involvement in wildlife surveys
- More circular routes for riders and cyclists
- More motorbike barriers
- Rangers being more available and contactable in the evening and at weekends
- NT employed gamekeepers
- Engage tenants and local contractors in delivering moorland restoration and potential woodland expansion works (a variety of actions and suggestions from the MFF partners workshop)
- Secure bike parking areas

12. Hopefully this response in effect addresses your questions in chapter 10 of the Plan. We look forward to your response and future consultation and involvement in pursuing this vision, plan and future consultation, steering and delivery arrangements.

John Thompson 27 November, 2012