

Peak District Local Access Forum

Date: 11th September 2014

Item: 4

Title: Possible 'merger' of function of recreation strategy steering group with LAF

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Purpose of the Report

This report considers the possibility of the LAF taking over the responsibility currently undertaken by the Recreation Strategy Steering Group (RSSG) to guide the implementation of the Peak District recreation strategy 'Active in the Outdoors'. The strategy can be found here:

http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/191844/PDNPA-Recreation-Strategy-Action-Plan-2013-15.pdf

The proposal in the report has the merit of reducing the duplication of functions of the RSSG and LAF and furthermore the statutory functions, experience and diversity of the LAF will add new impetus into the recreation strategy implementation.

Report

Recreation Strategy & Recreation Strategy Steering Group (RSSG)

The Recreation Strategy is a reasonably accurate and up to date collective view of 'recreation in the Peak District'. It outlines broad themes and long term 'headline actions' that were derived from stakeholders via a collaborative and consensus building process. In practice, the delivery and management of recreation is driven as much by what is pragmatic & opportunistic, and the partnerships that deliver them – public sector, voluntary and community sector and private sector organisations – are more complex and evolve more quickly than the strategy acknowledges.

Nevertheless it is useful and necessary (duty) to maintain a strategic overview of recreation in the Peak District, and a mechanism for forging new partnerships and projects.

Currently, the RSSG has this role, meeting twice a year (full membership is shown in the table at the end of this report). Its stated purposes are:

- To guide the implementation of the Peak District recreation strategy 'Active in the Outdoors'
- To draw from own experience / expertise
- To help identify current and future actions, and make recommendations as appropriate
- To monitor progress / evaluate what is working and share learning

There are concerns about whether the RSSG is fulfilling its purposes. In part this is due to:

- Apparent duplication with other standing partnerships (eg the LAF) where the same individuals are being invited to different groups to discuss similar issues.
- Lack of representation on the RSSG from voluntary & community organisations, the private sector and user groups

- Lack of 'buy in' from partners to the recreation strategy and/or the necessity of a 'strategic approach'
- Partners using other ways of working to deliver

Role of a LAF in the context of recreation strategy

The CROW Act and LAF regulations empower the LAF to advise the Authority on:

“improvement of public access (whether on foot or by horse, cycle, mechanically propelled vehicle or any other lawful means) to land in the area *for the purposes of open-air recreation*”; and

“recreation and access provision across their area, *including local strategies, plans or initiatives* which incorporate or affect access and recreation”

Issues

There are no legal barriers to merging the functions and it is a positive move in terms of efficiency, decision making and delivery. There are practical considerations in terms of membership and operation, which will be addressed in turn.

Membership

- Regulations stipulate that a LAF should consist of at least 10 and not more than 22 members. Current membership stands at 20. Membership is restricted to 3 local authority members (if >17 in number) but unrestricted for local authority employees.
- Current RSSG members Helen Dale (Staffs Wildlife Trust), Ian Bunting (Severn Trent Water) and Matt Hutson (Duke of Edinburgh's Award) would be invited to apply to become formal members of the LAF.
- Other RSSG members would be invited to attend meetings as 'observers'.

Operation

- Recreation Strategy would be a regular item on the agenda and be facilitated by attendance of the responsible officer of the NPA . It could take the form of a written or verbal update, with questions and answers.
- For more intensive pieces of work (for example reviewing the strategy or developing new projects & partnerships) a sub-group could be formed.

Recommendation

The LAF supports in principle the proposition of assuming responsibility for steering the implementation of the Peak District recreation strategy and to receive a report with further details of the operation and membership at the next meeting

RSSG	Representing	LAF
Mary Bagley	PDNPA (field services & enterprise)	Edwina Edwards (chair)
Caroline Thomas	Natural England	John Thompson (vice-chair)
Edwina Edwards		Bob Berzins
Gill Chapman	DDDC (tourism)	Jon Clennell
Gill Millward	Gill Millward	Richard Entwistle
Rachel Gillis	PDNPA (Policy & Partnerships)	Henry Folkard
Helen Dale	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Charlotte Gilbert
Ian Bunting	Severn Trent Water Ltd	Clare Griffin
James Creaghan	Derbyshire County Council	John Hall
Jane Price	HPBC	Caroline Hanson
Margaret Blount	Derbyshire County Council	Terry Howard
Emma Martin	PDNPA (community policy)	Mike Johnson
Matt Hutson	Duke of Edinburgh Award	James Kellie
Carol Parsons	PDNPA (recreation strategy)	Adge Last
Mike Rhodes	PDNPA (access & rights of way)	Richard Peart
		Jon Stewart
		Ally Turner
		Sue Weatherley
		Nicola Turner
		Damien Greenhalgh