

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2008 at Losehill Hall, Castleton

Members Present:

Bob Berzins	Henry Folkard
Jacque Bevan	Terry Howard
Charlotte Bright	James Kellie
Jon Clennell	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Andrew Critchlow	Andrew Murley
Edwina Edwards	Geoff Nickolds
Richard Entwistle	Keith Pennyfather
Sue Fisher	Richard Peart

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA)	Bob Kelly (Ramblers)
Jane Beech (NE)	Roy Malkin (Kirklees MC)
Richard Campen (PDNPA)	Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)
Terence Cavanagh (Oldham MBC)	Gill Millward (DCC)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Richard Pett (PDNPA)
Andy Jones (PDNPA)	Susan Smith (PDNPA)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Felicity Edmeston, Stuart Elliott, Mike Innerdale and Lorna Wilson.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

Page 6, paragraph 11 'across the National Park ' should be 'across National Parks'. With this amendment, the Minutes of the meeting on 15 March 2008 were agreed as correct.

3. Matters Arising

Terry spoke regarding access issues – page 2, and what constituted reasonable access to open country. It wasn't clear in his mind whether decisions or clarification had been made. What is reasonable to, say a rambler, may not be reasonable to a landowner or the Access Authority. It would be useful for the LAF to discuss this in more detail and form a view on what reasonable means so it can advise the authority. The Chair noted this and will consider it as a future agenda item – he suggested the issue is also brought up at this afternoon's question time.

ACTION: CHAIR

Chair – re National Trails Review – it has been agreed that the National Park Authority will get the ball rolling and report back to the LAF in due course for fuller consultation. Chair – finished copies of the Annual Report for 2007 are now available. There has been a minimal print run this year – it is available electronically via the LAF web page.

4. Motor Vehicle Strategy – LAF Involvement

A report had been circulated and Richard Pett updated the meeting. He brought two maps along prepared by DCC – one shows the confirmed Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) and the other the unresolved BOAT claims. Richard asked for feedback on what to do with these maps – eg put on the website? Members of the Forum agreed this was a good idea and asked that a date should be added to make clear when it was accurate. The Police have copies of these maps.

Of the 180 routes surveyed, 23 may be unsustainable. So far, action plans have been created for 3 routes which suffer illegal use. On site electronic data loggers (4 of which have been funded by DCC) have been useful for collecting information and will allow resources to be concentrated more effectively. Richard updated the Forum on various sites. A report will be presented to PDNPA Members in September. Specific sites were discussed with regard to damage and the cost of repairs. Richard talked in more detail about Moss Road (Appendix B of his report) and stressed how much work needs to be done. Richard's report includes a link to Cumbria County Council's website – he encourages all to have a look at this as he feels this is an excellent example of what can be achieved.

ACTION: ALL

Richard will shortly be circulating a pack of 6-8 "may be unsustainable" routes which he would like LAF sub group members to visit and give their views. These will be fed into action plans which will be brought back to the LAF for comment before being finalised. The Chair said this work was very resource intensive and to an extent there is a public perception is that 'nothing is happening'. The update is illuminating and timely – he thanked Richard for attending. The Chair also thanked sub group members for their hard work on this issue.

Henry asked that the Forum draws this matter to the attention of PDNPA more formally. The Chair confirmed it has been done in past and Jacque Bevan confirmed that most NPA members are aware that it is an important issue – but a back up letter would be a good idea.

Geoff Nickolds acknowledged that access issues are very difficult to balance with budget/resources.

LAF Members are encouraged to lobby particular local authorities about sites in their areas where action is not being taken.

Mike said that in general PDNPA is concentrating on Derbyshire at the moment and intends to progress into other areas later on. This approach was agreed at an early stage and is in the policy and strategy.

Jacque Bevan said the work Richard Pett and DCC are doing is marvellous. DCC has been asked for a map with all the information on – bridleways/footpaths as well as vehicular routes. The problem is very large and Jacque is worried about amount of work involved for officers.

The Chair will write to the Chair of PDNPA to express concern.

ACTION: CHAIR

Gill Millward summarised 'the Winchester Court of Appeal case' – a DCC briefing note had been circulated to LAF members. This case has profound implications for BOAT claims submitted before 20 January 2005. These claims may no longer be valid in terms of establishing a public right of way for motor vehicles if they have not been made in the prescribed form and importantly if they do not include copies of all documentary evidence which is being relied on. The Chair thanked Richard and Gill for their work.

5. National Park Recreation Strategy

Judy Merryfield updated the meeting. The workshop on 7 May was useful and she thanked those members who attended – the conference report has been circulated. Next stage is data gathering – resources/ opportunities for recreation and surveying users – looking at current data but more qualitative data is needed. Plan to target user groups and recreation organisations here. LAF members were asked to help trial a questionnaire which will be circulated in next two weeks. **ACTION: ALL** Barriers to non users will also be investigated, with focus groups planned for the Autumn and a citizens panel survey to provide views from local residents. Judy asked if any members were interested in getting involved with the strategy and the possibility of a LAF sub group was discussed. There was interest from Sue Fisher, Terry Howard, Henry Folkard, Richard Peart, Andrew Murley and Charlotte Bright. Henry felt that any recreation strategy in this National Park is about the way the National Park is used and managed. It is essential that proper dialogue is fundamentally right at the outset with various groups such as conservation interests and local communities. Jon Clennell reminded Judy that the Institute for Outdoor Learning should be on the consultation list.

6. PDNPA Recreation Management Scrutiny Panel Report

Geoff Nickolds reported on the PDNPA Scrutiny group which had been looking at recreation management. Partners were interviewed and this Forum was consulted – members were thanked for their responses. Geoff summarised the report. Many views were very positive about access in the National Park and the good partnerships which exist. This must be kept in sight and the situation not allowed to deteriorate in the face of competing resources. Geoff asked for any points arising from the report. A draft is with the Chair of Audit and Performance and will go to Committee on 18 July, following which an action plan will be produced. Geoff will report back to the LAF on progress. The Chair asked how are rights of way are measured eg in 'good' condition. Geoff responded that Performance Indicator data (BVPI 178) is used. Jacque Bevan said that grants may be available for multi user groups. The Chair said it is almost certainly not within the LAF's remit to lead a funding bid but it could be a partner and offer support. Andrew Critchlow felt 'he has seen it all before'. Where will money come from? The lack of resources and the use of companies and non-NPA staff was discussed. Richard Peart mentioned students from surrounding universities who could be a useful resource and are always looking for projects and research work. The Chair thanked Geoff Nickolds

7. England Access Forum

The Chair attended this meeting on 15 May and the minutes had been circulated. Although he was keen to see the new body succeed and give LAFs a national voice, the Chair felt that there were still many basic issues to resolve before a proper two-way dialogue was established with Natural England, who he felt were not yet prepared to fully engage LAFs. For instance, a regional framework for LAFs was requested but Natural England was not supportive of this. Also the LAF Members Handbook has just been produced – it was felt that a few hard copies should be available but Natural England will not be producing any. Henry Folkard felt a common understanding was needed and expressed concern about Natural England and resources/new role but did not think this was a reason to shirk the challenge. Jane Beech reported that a meeting with regional LAF Chairs is being planned. The Chair will keep the Forum informed of any developments.

Jacque Bevan left the meeting at this point.

8. Rights of Way Improvement Plans Updates

Derbyshire

The Monitoring Report for 2007/08 had been circulated – the work programme was used as a basis for this and each item has an indication of progress against it and reasons given for red and amber indicators. It will help with setting targets for future work programmes. Information was included on external funding. A summary report will be produced with highlights and headline statistics. This will be available on the website. A press release is also planned. Comments on the amount of detail and layout of the report were sought from LAF members.

Terry asked if DCC public transport guides will continue? Gill to check. **ACTION: GM**
The Forum agreed it was a good representation of type and amount of work carried out and congratulated Gill on clear reporting.

Oldham (Unity Partnership)

Terence Cavanagh reported that a bid for £45,000 had been successful. 6-8 improvement schemes across the Borough will go ahead, including digitisation of the definitive map. The RoWIP has been useful as both a working and strategic document.

Kirklees MC

Roy Malkin had nothing major to report.

The Chair thanked Terence and Roy for attending.

9. Feedback from Members

Chair

The Chair had circulated a response from Natural England regarding the continuation of the Access Management Grant Scheme.

Terry advised the meeting that J H B Ward (Clarion Books) had bequeathed £37,000 to the Ramblers Association. Part of this has been invested in the Moorland Discovery Centre at Longshaw (£26K on landscaping and providing suitable wheelchair access). A further £1K has been spent on two interpretation and education projects targeted at children and young people.

Jon Clennell said an account was given at the last meeting of the Institute of Outdoor Learning (Peak District branch) about difficulties reported at Cromford Canal – regular users book canoeing through DCC. Problems occur as other casual users do not know about nesting birds and wildlife. Institute members are getting flak which is not deserved. He asked if there could be a notice at the wharf about booking with Middleton Top. It was an example of so little watersports availability in the area.

Gill will take the issue back to staff at DCC. **ACTION: GM**

10. Any other business

The Chair said that Moors for the Future has been short listed for a National Lottery Award and encouraged Forum Members to vote.

Bob Berzins raised the matter of 3 areas of access land in the Peak District where closures have occurred. Mike said there were less problems this year which may be due to people getting used to the fact that some access land may be closed.

Andrew Critchlow asked if the LAF can avoid using too much paper – send papers electronically or do double sided printing at the very least.

Please advise Mike if you do not want paper copies.

ACTION: ALL

11. Dates of Next Meetings for 2008:

Saturday 27 September – venue Losehill Hall
Thursday 4 December

The meeting closed at 1pm

After lunch a Question and Answer session on Access and PRow was held