

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 18 September 2010
At Losehill Hall, Castleton

Members Present:

Edwina Edwards	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Richard Entwistle	Andrew Murley
Henry Folkard	Geoff Nickolds
Charlotte Gilbert	Richard Peart
Terry Howard	Ben Rayner
Mike Innerdale	John Thompson
Mike Johnson	Sue Weatherley
James Kellie	

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA) Secretary	Bob Kelly (Ramblers' Association)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Roy Malkin (Kirklees MC)
Narendra Bajarla (PDNPA)	Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)
Richard Campen (PDNPA)	Claire O'Reilly (DCC)
Terence Cavanagh (Oldham MBC)	Sue Smith (PDNPA)
Rob Gornall (Natural England)	Richard Taylor (DCC)

It is Andrew McCloy's last meeting as Chair and Narendra Bajarla, Chair of the Peak District National Park Authority, spoke of how the Authority values the work of the LAF enormously and on behalf of both the Forum and Authority thanked Andrew for his commitment and enthusiasm for the LAF and the National Park. A member of the Forum since 2003, Andrew became deputy and then Chair six years ago. Amongst many achievements were hosting the LAF Conference in 2006, meeting the then Minister Jim Knight, serving on the East Midlands LAF and indeed representing the East Midlands on the England Access Forum – so a regional and national presence too.

Andrew has also been part of the National Park Management Plan Monitoring Group and Recreation Strategy steering group, and also contributed to the interpretation partnership. He has shown considerable understanding of the complexity of managing recreation in the National Park – his knowledge has been enormously valuable. Narendra wished Andrew every success in any new ventures and we will continue to rely on his support, knowledge and experience - he is delighted that Andrew is to remain on the Forum.

Andrew McCloy thanked Narendra for coming along and also was grateful to Forum members past and present as well as officers - especially Mike Rhodes and Gill Millward - for their support. He has enjoyed six very worthwhile and fruitful years. Weighty issues have been discussed and considered, thoughtful and impartial advice given which has fed into important documents. The calibre of discussions has given Andrew immense satisfaction and pride - long may it continue; he wished that there was more representation from National Park Authority members and DCC Cabinet members here to listen to the Forum.

On behalf of the Forum Charlotte Gilbert said thank you to Andrew for being an exceptional Chairman and made a presentation of a gift from the Forum members.

1. Apologies and welcomes

Apologies had been received from Jon Clennell, Felicity Edmeston and Sue Fisher. The Chair reported that Felicity Edmeston has resigned due to pressure of work and Sue Fisher is also stepping down after today's meeting; Sue will be sad to no longer be involved but is expecting twins in December and will then have three children under two. The Chair said Sue's input would be missed, but completely understands – she will be welcomed back if and when she has some free time.

The Chair introduced a new Member - Ben Rayner - PDNPA appointee, who is an important link to the Authority and essential for information flow back to the Authority.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

a) Open Access - Mike Rhodes and Sue Smith were to discuss the issue of access land with few or no access points further – possibly involve sub group. **ACTION: MR/ SAS** With regard to 'reasonable access', Terry Howard had seen a barrister (no charge!) who advised it is a matter of fact and degree. A better scenario, instead of tackling isolated problems, is to compile a list of problem areas which gives a better case than trying to deal with them on an individual basis. Terry felt it was important to maintain a high profile of access in uncertain times.

The Chair was aware that more discussion was needed between Mike and Sue, but it was intended to link this to the CRoW mapping review. He will discuss with the new Chair and sort out a feasible way forward. **ACTION: Chair**

Henry Folkard reported that the British Mountaineering Council had met with Richard Benyon (Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries). He was quite responsive in general – the review will still happen but will be postponed by two years.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mike Rhodes said there had been one nomination for Chair – Edwina Edwards - who had been proposed by Jon Clennell and seconded by John Thompson; this was carried unanimously on a show of hands. It was agreed that as Edwina is opening the county Girl Guiding event (and therefore leaving at 11am) Andrew will chair today's meeting.

Vice Chair – there were two nominations – John Thompson, proposed by Sue Weatherley, seconded by Edwina Edwards; Mike Innerdale, proposed by Henry Folkard and seconded by Sue Fisher. John and Mike briefly outlined why they would be the best candidate.

Members voted by ballot – there were 7 votes for Mike Innerdale and 8 for John Thompson, therefore carried that John Thompson be appointed Vice Chair. John agreed he was happy for Andrew McCloy to Chair the rest of this meeting. The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, said a big thank you to Mike Innerdale as Vice Chair for his wealth of knowledge and experience. He really appreciated the advice and support given by Mike and hopes this will continue.

5. Walking for Health Project

Rob Gornall, Natural England Walking for Health Co-ordinator for Derbyshire, gave a presentation on the Walking for Health Project. Natural England is known for its work on Biodiversity on farms and farmland but is also engaged in access to the countryside. This project aims to get more people out into open space. It promotes organised walking for health benefits – it is estimated that £1.8 billion savings in health costs could be made per year if the population could be encouraged to be more physically active. The target group is predominantly sedentary people – to reach people in areas of high health deprivation (eg Bolsover and Chesterfield) in Derbyshire. Walking is seen as a stepping stone into other physical activity.

Health walks are led by a volunteer walk leader, with another at the rear, particularly catering for new walkers on easy flat terrain, as accessible as possible to encourage walkers. The aim is to get people active and manage their health; get out into natural environments; engage and take ownership, show how they can get more involved eg East Lindsay walking group has become a conservation group. There has been positive feedback from those who have benefited – social, emotional, as well as physical, giving a sense of routine and something to look forward to.

The Department of Health target for March 2012 is an increase from 40,000 to 130,000 people walking regularly every week. In Derbyshire the aim is 3,000 walkers (currently 1,000). Data is gathered via a Local Authority questionnaire process. There has been encouraging progress to date with 25 walk schemes across the county – 80 walks per week with a healthy number of walk leaders, training needs to continue to cope with turnover and more interest.

This Forum is asked to pass on the message about the project and a list of walks - contact Rob with walk suggestions and feedback. Join a walking group or support a local scheme – or become a walk leader – it requires 1 day training, and to lead a walk 1-2 times per month, initially supporting another leader. There are 6 month network meetings with leaders – Rob is to meet with Claire and Gill about them attending one of these meetings.

There was general discussion and the initiative is fully supported. It is important not to forget the good work being carried out by the voluntary sector and other partnership work. Apart from moving up, these walks also suit those moving down or with less mobility. Concern was expressed about Primary Care Trusts being cut which could have a major effect on health walks and the exercise referral programme.

Andrew Murley felt lots of people are aware of the walking for life campaign, but it is how to capture sedentary groups. Rob responded that walk leaders do attend doctors' surgeries (at GP request) talking to patients as they wait at the surgery. Works best with GP recommendation/support/referral, educate that the gym is not for everybody. 26 September is Walk for Life Day.

The Chair said this is a hugely worthwhile project, with a direct link to the recreation strategy. He thanked Rob for coming along today.

6. Future Size and Shape of the Peak District National Park Authority

A paper by Jim Dixon, Chief Executive of the PDNPA, had been circulated. The Chair reminded the Forum it is pertinent to discuss here as the National Park statutory adviser for access and recreation, however anything we say has to be tempered with realism.

John Thompson understands that this is a very difficult situation and it would be helpful to know:

- 1) the outcome of the meeting in relation to the recommendations in the paper
- 2) whether through PDNP or National Parks generally any active lobbying or effort has/will be made to demonstrate the special needs of national parks in advance of the announcement on 20 October and
- 3) ask specifically about what is on pages 5 and 6.

Henry said that the Authority gets high marks for circulating the paper – it is a difficult time and being open is laudable. However the paper is more about how to deliver cuts than how the *raison d'être* should prevail in current circumstances. There is no vision, very little about statutory purposes and little about duty, the community is neglected. He applauded section 14 and was glad this has been recorded – he has a great deal of sympathy for staff for whom this must be a thoroughly dispiriting document. The repute of this national park pivots on local access arrangements and the local economy; the message about access is not adequately covered in this document. Clarification is needed about heritage - in particular the assumed volunteer role – it is unclear where they will come from; a lack of a support group behind volunteers will mean that they do not flourish. He was sorry to read the recommendation on Losehill Hall and hopes this will be revisited. The document is unclear about agricultural services and FWAG; there is nothing about the Ranger service nor has the future of rangers been contextualised in the asset review – it is not joined up thinking although the priority on landscape and diversity is welcomed. It is authored by people whose heart is delivering to Whitehall not to the primary and secondary statutory purposes and duty. The paper will contribute to the demise of both. The Forum unanimously agreed with these sentiments.

Other points raised were that historically the National Park has been both inspirational and aspirational regarding access – it is a sad move to become reactive. To lose Losehill Hall would be a tragedy. There was concern about the lack of connectivity between conservation, land management and access. To rely on a third party to deliver on your behalf is a worry and there are capacity issues. In terms of access and education, with the possible demise of Natural England it is a double whammy in terms of funding and support. The combination of factors is most worrying – there is a lack of clarity about delivery mechanisms around rangers etc. The Chair added that it was difficult to quantify vision, aspiration and inspiration.

Geoff Nickolds said the general view of the NPA Members was that while Government is setting some priorities – the focus should be delivering those core purposes in the best way we can, whilst working within budget so difficult decisions have to be taken. The principle outlined that 'we don't have to do everything ourselves' is a sensible thing to say as others can fulfil some of that role. The Big Society is very focussed on urban environment for delivering community issues – the rural environment already works in that way. He said that Members expressed a lot of resistance to moving away from core purposes but recognised the National Park is facing a massive challenge. Ben Rayner pointed out that any opportunity to refocus is good, including who is best placed to deliver. It was recognised that the pool of volunteers is restricted.

Richard Campen commented that it was difficult to respond to everything said – the Authority supported all of the points with relatively minor changes. Cultural heritage was moved to be on a par with land management and biodiversity. A cut in the 2011/12 access and recreation budget is not proposed but the access and recreation direct spend may have to be revisited as we head into 2013/14 year – whether and to what extent depends on the Government settlement and also on other cuts eg if Defra front load savings this will add to complexity. Lobbying has gone on at the highest possible levels, ie Defra, Ministers pre and post coalition. The strong message coming back is that Defra and those responsible for National Parks are pressing the case

strongly - the debate between Defra and the Treasury was described as 'bloody'. We have been told we are seen as a frontline service and have an important role for many reasons and are valued at a high level – the question remains what will survive and what won't. There is still lot of work to do on detail – but we have to make cuts whilst doing our best to protect higher priorities of work – statutory duties were definitely taken into consideration. The comment on the balance between primary and secondary purposes has been listened to. Reallocation of resources will be important – areas that are really vital, bringing in external funding to access and recreation are taken into consideration but the cost neutral facilities has to be pursued.

The PDNPA management team is acutely aware that the voluntary sector has capacity issues. A workshop for Members is planned in October/Nov to talk about the voluntary sector issue. The Ranger service will have to make savings - there is a very strategic approach with very few budgets completely safe, there will be cuts through efficiency savings or tougher decisions have to be made. Rangers trying to get into flexible field services front line team, working harder to focus those teams of people. Richard will take individual points back to Management Team on Monday morning. **ACTION: RC**

The Chair noted that cultural heritage had been raised – does the LAF need to do anything to raise access and recreation? RC replied that cultural heritage has taken cuts already. Geoff Nickolds stressed that at times like this having a good and competent LAF was very important.

The Chair commented that land management and access cannot be divorced. He suggested that, in consultation with the new Chair and Vice Chair, he formulates a letter to summarise the points made today and sends it to the Chair of the National Park Authority. This Forum needs to shout from the rooftops about the value of access and recreation in this National Park – he will copy Forum members in so they can also fly the flag. All to send any further thoughts to Andrew McCloy. **ACTION: ALL, Chair**

Recommendations on the Authority asset management plans and future of Losehill Hall go before committee next Friday (24 September). Henry remarked that regarding the Asset Review members should be aware that both Hobhouse and Dower said the purchase of land was integral to their vision of National Parks.

7. Recreational Motor Vehicles

a) Update report

Richard Pett had sent his apologies - papers had been circulated. Mike Rhodes reported that a great deal of work had been carried out. The National Park Authority has to justify its approach on the motor vehicles issue – he asked LAF members to read and be aware of the report, the 23 'priority' routes and work such as Minninglow and Gallowlow Lane. The on-going work with police via Operation Blackbrook is proving very successful - feedback from communities, user groups and the police is all good.

b) LAF sub-group report

Papers had been circulated on the 'next 7' routes.

The 3 sites (of the first 8) causing the most concern had been revisited - Brough Lane, Long Causeway and Chapelgate. The management plan actions require considerable funds, so these are being looked at again to identify alternative solutions.

Mike Rhodes reported that DCC has now secured £71,000 through the LTP programme for capital works to repair these routes – this will make a significant impact on bringing Long Causeway and Brough Lane up to standard. However Chapelgate is of enormous concern. Officers are determined to do something, conscious of sub group recommendations and carrying those forward.

The Chair thanked JNT and the LAF sub group for an excellent report and a very balanced, informed and sensible set of suggestions. He is conscious it is taking a long time but it looks like there is light at the end of the tunnel. The recommendation for a temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has been seriously entertained by the PDNPA – there are steps to go through but sub-group advice is most welcome. In response to a discussion and questions about a TRO on Chapelgate, Mike Rhodes reported that if the NPA is to use its TRO powers there has to be clarity on the basis for a TRO – ie not due to lack of maintenance; it has to be for environmental protection so therefore environmental impact has to be identified. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will strengthen the case for a TRO – officers are investigating an EIA and if it is decided it will take too long and prove too expensive may miss that step out and go straight to public consultation on a possible temporary TRO.

Forum members thought that time is not on our side – there is a head of steam building up in the local community – each little bit of delay adds to the howl of protest from outside. The impact on the reputation of this Forum is the concern, not whether DCC or the NPA are functioning. It is perceived by groups that things are constantly being put in the way and slowing down any progress. The sub group felt it is really important to make sure there is clear communication around timescales if the EIA course is decided on.

John Thompson was encouraged that DCC had found additional money – the sub group is reflecting local feeling in the urgency about this in its recommendation. Concern was expressed about the ability to get work completed during winter months and the need to get the work carried out as soon as possible. Claire confirmed that the capital money obtained through the LTP programme had to be spent by the end of March 2011 and that contracts were already being drawn up to carry out the work. All agreed it was important for real action to take place as quickly as possible.

The Chair thanked the sub group for their efforts.

8. Derbyshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Progress Report 2010/11

A paper had been circulated – Gill Millward sent apologies for today and Claire O'Reilly (aware of such a full agenda) highlighted Aim 4, promotion and publicity – lots of progress is being made with regard to the provision of information, especially with the redesign of the County Council's website and in relation to the health agenda.

The Chair thanked Claire for attending today.

9. Horse Riding Issues - update

Charlotte reported that riders have now formed a group called Peak Horsepower. The first route they are working on will take riders off the main road between Hathersage and Bamford, a very worthwhile loop. She understands an article will go in a future issue of Parklife. Riders are now marking bridleways on maps and will work as a group to come up with circular routes and feedback to DCC and PDNPA. Damage to paths has been highlighted and noted that other users are also restricted by this, lack of availability is a major concern. 'Horse Ride Derbyshire' was very well received but considered limited in routes; it is hoped that when the map is reprinted more routes are added and the network will build up gradually. Websites continue to have information for cyclists rather than horse riders and it is hoped this is brought to the attention of web masters.

The British Horse Society has been in contact with Charlotte and asked to be kept informed. It is all about driving equestrian tourism into the National Park - the tourism board is also in contact with Peak Horsepower via Charlotte, along with the Hallamshire Riding Society. Mike Innerdale added that he (on behalf of Ride the Peak) and Charlotte are to talk about jointly influencing route connectivity for the benefit of horse riders and cyclists. **ACTION: CG, MI**

Judy Merryfield said that the horse riding pages on the PDNPA website have been updated and links inserted; Claire O'Reilly reported that DCC has now also produced a horse ride page on their website.

The Chair thought excellent progress had been made – a great example of the positive influence of LAF - and he thanked Charlotte very much for the work she has done.

10. Black Harry Trails Project

A paper had been circulated and Sue Smith reported that Derbyshire Environmental Trust has offered just under 13k for the Stoney Middleton area for work on this project – this will be moved forward and completed by March 2011 – the work will be widely promoted and publicised. There has been excellent feedback and support from residents and users.

Members reported that there had been some objections to this work – it had been debated before and the Forum reiterated its support. The Chair had also written a letter of support from the LAF.

11. Feedback from Members

PDNPA Recreation Strategy

The Chair said the Recreation Strategy Steering Group is meeting next Wednesday (22 Sept) morning. The LAF Chair has gone along previously – he suggested this should continue and will talk to John and Edwina to try and arrange attendance. Similarly on Wednesday afternoon the Water Access Task Group is meeting and looking for LAF representation – he will discuss with Edwina. **ACTION: Chair**

60th Anniversary

Terry reminded the Forum that next year is the 60th Anniversary of this National Park. The Chair will revert on that subject. **ACTION: Chair**

Eastern Moors Partnership

Mike Innerdale updated the Forum on the Eastern Moors partnership. Consultations have been well attended – the final summary workshop took place last Saturday. He thanked all for their involvement and hopes to report back on active work in December. He said that the next phase of restoration was being planned for moorland on Kinder - £2m has been secured. Stockproofing is proposed on the north and eastern edges. Conversations have taken place with the Kinder and High Peak Advisory Committee and they have given advice. Consultation on access points etc will be taking place in Oct/ Nov – let Mike know if LAF wants a more active role. **ACTION: ALL via Chair**

Henry had attended a Planning Systems presentation on behalf of the LAF – a newsletter has been circulated. He suggested that this Forum ought to discuss (a future agenda item?) its involvement in the planning process.

The BMC meeting with Minister Richard Benyon also covered coastal access and the feedback was that the Government was committed to coastal access, but it may take a bit longer. Henry mentioned the PDNPA Asset Review which the Minister was unaware

of. He asked to be briefed and they spoke about old quarries being used for recreation. Henry also read an excerpt from a letter written in June 1950 regarding Footpath Surveys.

Geoff Nickolds reported that the Bakewell to Buxton cycle trail project is going well and should be delivered by end March 2011.

12. Any Other Business

Defra consultation: An invitation to Shape the Nature of England

A reminder that comments are welcomed by Mike Rhodes who will formulate a response on behalf of the LAF.

ACTION: ALL

DCC Car Parking consultation

Please respond to Chris Coombs before 30 September 2010.

ACTION: ALL

13. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 2 December – Aldern House at 10:30am

Suggested dates for 2011:

Saturday 26 March

Thursday 16 June

Saturday 24 September

Thursday 1 December

The meeting finished at 1pm.