

# Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 18 March 2006 at Losehill Hall

Members Present:

Simon Brister	John Lees
Jon Clennell	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Andrew Critchlow	Geoff Nickolds
Henry Folkard	Keith Pennyfather
Sarah Harlen	Roger Wilkinson
Terry Howard	Lorna Wilson
James Kellie	

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA)	Gill Millward (DCC)
Jane Beech (Countryside Agency)	Crispin Percival-Hughes (Staffs County Council)
Neil Fitzmaurice	John Thompson (PDNPA)
Andy Jones (PDNPA)	
Roy Malkin (Kirklees MC)	

## 1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Charlotte Bright, Richard Marshall, Barry Neville, Richard Peart and Roger Wardle.

## 2. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Chair had observed that under 'Others Present' Sean Prendergast should be included.

On page 4 the Draft Cheshire RoWIP meeting had been held in Chester (also repeated on the report).

On page 3, paragraph 3, should read the Institute for Outdoor Learning and not the National Association for Outdoor Education

With these amendments, the Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## 3. Matters Arising

It was recorded at an earlier meeting that the National Audit Office were to report back following the stakeholder discussion group meeting. The Chair had contacted NAO and had received a reply thanking the group for taking part. The NAO hope to have a report prepared for early spring – and this will be made available to those individuals and groups that participated in the discussion groups. The report is currently in draft form and the Chair said he will remind the Audit Commission in the summer if nothing is heard before then.

**ACTION: Chair**

Terry Howard reminded the forum that following the September 2005 meeting (the item regarding making sure adjacent forums are aware of funding for RoWIPs) a draft letter has now been written by the sub-group for circulation and has been circulated to forum members. Gill reminded the forum that funding within LTP is not always ring fenced – certain targets have to be hit and priorities have to be set out. Terry said forums have to be imaginative and seek other sources of funding. Terry would like this letter to go to Chief Execs and copied to forums. Gill to liaise with Mike to arrange to send to constituent authorities.

**ACTION: Gill Millward and Mike Rhodes**

#### **4. Draft Annual Report 2005**

Mike Rhodes has circulated a (black and white) copy of the draft annual report and asked for comments. Henry Folkard thought the style and tone of the Chair's introduction, along with the rest of the text, was a good job. Terry Howard thought it was excellent but would like to see more positive photos of work done and achievements – for example images of disabled routes or new access points would enhance the report. The Chair liked the photograph on page 10 (Dovestones) in particular and would like to see more photos taken in general, of site visits etc. Simon Brister hoped that the colour image of boundaries would be clearer than the black and white version. Lorna Wilson thought it would be a good idea to have captions alongside the images, and perhaps include members' names. Jon Clennell felt images of work in progress, also some 'before and after' shots should be included. The report will be printed shortly with amendments made. It was important to strike a balance between an over the top glossy brochure and a professional publication.

In terms of distribution, Mike informed the forum that the report goes to all neighbouring LAFs, Defra, the Countryside Agency. In addition, the Chair takes copies to all events he attends. Sarah asked if it was possible to have copies available at briefing centres? The Chair distributed to libraries, Visitor Centres, and encourages forum members to take here and there, to other bodies. John Thompson added that it was circulated to all Members of the Authority and will be included in the members' training programme in 2006 to inform them what is going on. James Kellie offered to arrange for copies to be passed to FWAG. Roy Malkin felt it important to circulate publications to other local authorities, in particular the leaflets.

#### **5. National Park Authority access budget**

The Chair introduced John Thompson, Director of Recreation and Education, to speak about this subject. Background information had been circulated.

John explained that the Authority had to set the budget in a very tough situation – there was a freeze on funding for 2006/07 and very probably for 2007/08 too. Difficult decisions were inevitable. Discussions during Jim Knight's recent visit did not suggest hope for anything more optimistic but at today's date we still don't know the settlement amount. In anticipation of a flat settlement, the Authority has had to find savings of £320,000. In addition, some very complex, resource intensive minerals issues have had to be made a priority. The back page of the report gives information in the form of a news release – the front page has more general information, with paragraph 4 on access agreements. When Paul Hopkins left as Rights of Way Officer, it was an opportunity to review the structure of Access & Recreation; an integrated access & rights of way team has now been formed. Mike reported that the calibre of applicants for the new post was excellent and he was pleased to report that Richard Pett, currently Rights of Way Officer at Rotherham,

and with previous experience gained at DDDC and Nottingham, will be joining on a part time basis. Support to that area in clerical and technical work has been strengthened, with the team working closely with rangers. This has led to a more co-ordinated structure and efficient budget.

Generally, savings have been made from various areas – effectively there is a recruitment freeze on patrol rangers, and Countryside Maintenance Team posts have been disestablished following long term vacancies. We have to cope with a static settlement which equals a reduction in current terms.

The Chair appreciated being consulted about the budget, but still felt it was a worrying state of affairs. He understands the overall situation but obviously the impact on the access budget concerns this forum. The Chair accepted that reorganisation was necessary, but had expressed concern that secretarial back up to the forum would continue – he has been reassured on this matter. General concern re future years' funding was expressed by the forum.

Henry felt that the forum should be concerned about this, but also realise this situation is not of the National Park's own making. Fixed costs mean that room for manoeuvre is small. A principle should be in place for better communication between the park and the Chair of the forum regarding the access budget. He felt that it would be wrong to let this cut go by without saying anything. A letter from CNP, CPRE, BMC, RA and the Open Society to Gordon Brown to register the point about concern for this position has been drafted. Henry proposed that the forum write to Gordon Brown, Jim Knight or Defra to express concern (given that it is set to get worse) and state that the situation should be reversed next year. John Lees said the forum should support this and express extreme concern when responsibilities for access are growing rather than shrinking. Sarah felt that getting in touch with local MPs to encourage them to lobby ministers would be more effective. Lorna asked if local authority budgets were affected or was it just the National Park? It was understood it was just the National Park. Chair said that some other National Parks are in a similar predicament, particularly the Lake District.

James Kellie felt that this indicated a lack of joined up thinking by Government. Jon Clennell felt that access issues deserved nurturing – and not to be stifled at birth. Geoff Nickolds asked if JNT could show cuts in this area to compared to other parts of the park budget, and were any grants (eg via MFF) available? John Thompson said that grants were available for delivery of access via the Countryside Agency (the Access Management Grant Scheme) but were not available to National Parks. Conservation work grants have been cut back, along with looking at income from cycle hire, visitor centres, Losehill Hall, any savings opportunities have to be looked at. John said he will provide information on percentage cuts.

**ACTION: John Thompson**

The Chair will write to Jim Knight registering concerns and support for the National Park – lobbying MPs is certainly worth considering by individual forum members – should be considered when the annual report is handed out. This message should be taken to the organisations we all belong to.

Defra comment – John Thompson thought that Defra feels access costs are one off – and don't necessarily appreciate on-going issues or that this is such special area geographically. John T offered to provide relevant MPs' contact details to allow forum members to lobby.

**ACTION: John Thompson**

Andrew Critchlow joined the meeting at this point

Simon Brister felt that access cuts feel disproportionately heavy. John T acknowledged his concern but said that this difficult budget situation was across the board.

Henry recognised that the National Park does generate income itself but is limited in scope. He felt that with regard to the unique position regarding landholdings, the Authority should be proud of its landholdings, not apologise. The worst thing that could happen is fragmentation. The BMC is very concerned about the impact that potential new leasing arrangements may have on social inclusion provision. This leads to a gradual lessening of coherent policies for socially disadvantaged people.

A discussion followed about funding, with John Lees proposing a resolution to express deep concern about funding to the National Park and its effect on the access budget, other points being made that we should not only complain to Government but also to the PDNPA itself; concern being reiterated that access & recreation had taken a bigger hit than other areas of the authority; understanding that non-core services would be cut back but that surely access & recreation **is** core service; care was needed to keep access profile; promoting understanding and enjoyment – a primary purpose in the 1995 Act; concern felt from all sides – users and landowners – the CRoW Act was sold as ‘no cost’ but if funding is to be cut this will not be the case.

John Thompson felt a letter to Jim Knight and Defra, with a covering note to Tony Hams would be appropriate, with a reminder that the process in future should bear in mind that access is a core role and its relevance to encourage all to enjoy.

A show of hands was sought for the Chair to construct a letter to Jim Knight and constituent MPs, supported by a letter to Tony Hams expressing the forum’s extreme concern about restrictions on the budget at a time when in particular, access is in the forefront of activities. This was agreed unanimously.

Any comments to Mike or the Chair within the next week.

**ACTION: All**

John Thompson thanked the forum for the opportunity to speak and respond. The Chair thanked John for attending today.

## **6. Moors for the Future Visitor Surveys**

Andy Jones gave a presentation about the first year results of the visitor attitude and recreational use survey of Peak District Moorlands. The survey will be continuing. The complete report is available on the Moors for the Future website – this just a summary. The survey was carried out 6 times during 2004/05, summer, shoulder and winter.

14 key moorland gateway sites were surveyed. 5138 visitors were observed, 3778 face to face interviews (exit surveys) were conducted and 1878 in-depth questionnaires returned. 10 questions were asked face to face and the questionnaire consisted of 35 more detailed questions to be sent back in a pre-paid envelope. The response rate for the questionnaires was excellent – over 50% returned.

General trends showed visitors being 59% male, 41% female. In terms of age profile, males between 35 and 44 were most heavily represented. Regarding ethnicity – 5% did not consider themselves to be White British, compared to 13% of the population in national census data, illustrating ethnic groups are under-represented in moorland areas. Langsett saw the lowest black and ethnic groups at

2% (surprisingly as it is close to Sheffield) and the Snake summit highest – perhaps reflecting the good transport links with Manchester.

Mobility – people who consider themselves having mobility problems tend to visit weekdays – averaging 2%. 6% of groups surveyed contained at least 1 person with a mobility problem, 10% of groups contained 1 person with mobility problems in weekdays.

In terms of destination, 80% were day visitors 13% were staying away from home. Of the day visitors – 42% of postcodes in England were represented. Of those staying, 77.8% of postcodes in England were represented. 27% of respondents had a Sheffield postcode, 24% had a Stockport postcode

A map of route usage has been produced from the survey – this has proved a useful tool in terms of land management. Over 95% quoted their purpose as recreation and leisure use. Scenery, tranquillity and rugged environment were cited as the main for reasons for attendance. 40% quoted local use. 2-10 mile walks were the most frequent quoted. Dogs – a high percentage of owners stated that their dogs were off the lead for some part of the time (it is to be remembered that this was an anonymous questionnaire)

Public Transport - 36% of people didn't even consider public transport. Most people found information via the internet, not from visitor centres. 28% said they didn't know whether public transport existed for their destination.

98% were satisfied with their visit – the reasons quoted for dissatisfaction were weather, motorbikes, litter/dog fouling and poor footpaths. Possible improvements identified were new walking routes, public transport, guided leaflets, dogs under control. The split was exactly 50-50 for wanting more signage/less signage.

When asked about moorland characteristics – people said they enjoyed the open moorland, challenging terrain, open access. Threats to moorland were erosion, fire, human erosion. 84% of visitors had heard of CROW act, 14% had not.

If anyone would like a paper copy of the report, please let Andy know – otherwise the report is on the website.

Chair thanked Andy for an interesting presentation.

## **7. Dogs on access moorland**

The Chair introduced this item by reminding the forum that this subject had been discussed before and a paper had been circulated. On the final page was the recommendation proposed to be made to the Countryside Agency and DEFRA, along with one of three points for consideration. He briefly explained the possibilities and history and wants a vote to clarify a way forward or whether we stop now. Do we as a forum recognise the concerns in the paper and if we do agree, then we should go on to decide which option(s) to take forward.

A letter received from Neil Fitzmaurice had been circulated for information.

Jon Clennell felt that a prohibitive/restrictive path could be a dangerous one – it could lead to confrontation and dog owners could feel put under pressure. He agreed that the 72hr exclusion is a nonsense but felt that information and education was the way forward. Terry felt that the proposal on page 3 (regarding fixed leads

at all items on designated land) related to every piece of moorland in the Peak District. He felt this was a massive move and could not accept. Although not a dog owner or dog lover (and doesn't have dogs on his walks) he has concerns over alienating responsible dog owners, who are allies in responsible behaviour in general.

Chair – we looked recently and similarly at off road vehicles – a voluntary code of conduct, educational approach is one option amongst others to be looked at here.

Andrew Critchlow commented that contained within the report are proposals 1-6 – he felt that everyone would accept proposal 1, some members would have difficulty with all or some of the others.

The Chair asked if we should vote on the recommendation in the paper, recognising the concerns in the report and for it to be forwarded to various bodies:

Sarah felt that if we said to other bodies that we endorsed the report it sounds like whole report endorsed, not just some aspects.

A general discussion ensued, in terms of which if any of the 3 proposals we should endorse and possible ways forward. John Lees was asked about the frequency of National LAF meetings and he said they are usually every 6months. The last one was October/November, and although he doesn't have a firm date, he would expect the next one to be late spring/early summer.

John Lees spoke regarding options 2 and 3 – the background on bye laws or primary legislation. He feels there should be a greater emphasis on dogs on leads in SSSIs. People are now be fined for litter dropping in towns, legislation here is now working, likewise with speeding offences. Law, and enforcement of law works. Unless there is the back up of law and a penalty if needed for people who are belligerent or difficult information and education alone are not enough. The Peak Park Moorland Owners & Tenants Association has received a letter of support on the subject from the South Pennines Access Forum.

There was a vote and it was agreed unanimously that the Recommendation on the final page be amended to read:

### **Recommendation**

The Forum recognises the concerns expressed in the attached report and proposes that it be forwarded to NCAF, the Countryside Agency, English Nature and Defra for consideration and the necessary action to resolve issues.

The Forum recommends that the national restrictions on dogs, as laid out in the CROW Act, should be enforced by a combination of education, information and direct contact.

## **8. Derbyshire CC ROWIP Progress Report**

Gill Millward explained that a joint sub group has been set up with Derby & Derbyshire forum; with Henry, Terry and Chair attending on behalf of this forum. It will be used as sounding board, assessing the network in terms of the condition of the network, data, connections and provision. When information is collated, probably in April or May, it is intended to hold a workshop to ascertain themes etc.

With regard to the Local Transport Plan – the chapter re RoWIP is now finalised.

The RoWIP timetable has slipped because of LTP work, a formal revision of the timetable has been circulated – support from members of forum is sought on the revised timetable.

## **9. ROWIP Updates from other Authorities**

Staffordshire – Crispin Percival-Hughes told the forum that information gathering has finished and evaluation is now underway. User surveys and desk top research has now been completed. The draft document should be available for the forum in late spring/ early summer.

Kirklees – Roy Malkin reported that the draft RoWIP is now agreed but could not say when it would be available.

An update on the Oldham ROWIP had been tabled

Cheshire – a summary has been circulated - Mike has full version of the Cheshire RoWIP – if anyone would like a copy please let him know.

Sheffield – Terry reported that draft should be ready by summer; public consultation will take place during January to April 2007, so by Sept 2007 it should be finalised. Mean time 'easy wins' are being looked at.

## **10. Derbyshire County Council Open Access Report**

Gill – reported that £700 was available from the Countryside Agency for access symbols on Public Rights of way eg for new access points.

She asked if we should form a sub group to look at detail (eg specific access points) or if Gill should carry on as she is and bring information to meetings. Responding to a question, Gill explained that land around Buxton, some around Glossop and some individual dales – all within the forum's area – is that currently being considered.

Henry felt that coherence and communication with the National Park is crucial. It was agreed not to form a sub group and Gill to continue to bring proposals to the forum. The Chair felt that individuals' specific interest and expertise would be useful for particular areas.

## **11. Peak District LAF Regional Event**

The Chair recounted that at a steering group meeting in Dec 2004, it was agreed there would be a Peak District LAF event, organised by us; bringing in LAF neighbours. It will be an Autumn event – in October (possibly Friday 20) at Losehill Hall, a 1 day event, exploring cross-boundary issues, looking at good practice. Better liaison with other forums is supported generally, and it should improve relationships with regional forums too. He understands that funding is possible from the Countryside Agency and although not until October, we need to start planning. There was general consensus around the table for supporting such an event. It was asked whether new Regulations for LAFs would be produced by then? Terry said he will let the Chair have information from the Future of Access Conference - who will prepare a discussion document to circulate amongst the members.

**ACTION: Terry Howard and Chair**

The Chair welcomes input and ideas for the day from Members.

**ACTION: All**

## 12. Feedback from Members

### Members

Henry Folkard – 1) both Chairs of Gt Hucklow and Foolow Parish Meetings have asked him to bring to the forum's attention the fact that they are seeking that the Park acquires the area of Silence Mine – for public access

2) He quoted a poem by John Clare – and expressed concern about the large number of fences being erected on the moors around Longdendale and Chunal – restricting access, no stiles, barbed wire (used unnecessarily?) – people being denied open access by stealth and old fences just piled up. He understands that this fencing is funded by Defra so could we write to them about the effect of cumulative fences – bad practice about the way they are put up and old debris removed. Temporary fences do not require consent, but the Authority is consulted – and it is understood that the PDNPA does stipulate stiles. Enforcement of regulations by Defra should be carried out.

The Chair will speak to Henry and Mike and pen a general letter **ACTION: Chair**

3) A628 Mottram/Tintwhistle bypass. Henry has looked at the Application. He felt that issues to access in the countryside are poorly addressed, he has specific concern about cross-valley access for the Marsden to Edale walk. He has many other concerns – eg there is no traffic forecast for the impact of the Glossop spur on the Snake. Deadline is circa 1 May for comments to Tameside. Have alternative solutions such as weight restrictions (to take heavy traffic around the park rather than through) been considered? Doesn't want same thing as happened on the M62 to happen in Longdendale and Snake. Henry will be responding as an individual and on behalf of the BMC.

John Thompson informed the meeting that this application will be considered at the Authority meeting on 7 April.

Mike Rhodes will forward the Authority Meeting report to members when available.

**ACTION: Mike Rhodes**

Chair will liaise with Henry and submit a statement of our position to PDNPA

**ACTION: Chair**

John Lees asked if we can include an Agenda item for the next meeting on Fires Issue – concern about 72 hr exclusion during fire risk period. Chair to talk to John on this

**ACTION: Chair**

Keith Pennyfather said that at the last meeting, regarding the Open Access Review – comments from the Agency were that they would consulting in spring – do we have any knowledge of this? Jane Beech said she will find out. **ACTION: Jane Beech**

Andy Jones said he had met with the Countryside Agency on Wednesday – the timetable had been pushed back, it was more likely to be summer for the consultation period.

### Chair

Andrew had attended a ½ day Peak Interpretation Strategy meeting. He had also met Jim Knight – a useful discourse within a very short time frame but he feels that the Minister understands the importance and relevance of access in Peak District. He also attended a guidance workshop at Defra, Bristol which was a 1 day event of LAF representatives, looking at rewording the LAF Regulations (Defra and Countryside Agency's amendments to regulations). Details had been circulated – the workshop outcomes were available on Defra's website. It was a good day for networking and allowing feedback to Defra. Amended regulations are to follow

### **13. Any other Business**

Mike Rhodes had circulated an e-mail from Lynn Crowe e-mail regarding the Countryside for All Forum – aimed at improving the quality of disabled people’s lives Based at Sheffield Hallam University, please speak to Mike or Lynn Crowe if you are interested.

### **14. Dates of Next Meetings:**

Thursday 15 June 2006

Thursday 28 September 2006 (agreed to change from 30 Sept)

Thursday 7 December 2006

The meeting ended at 1pm