

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 21 September 2017 at Moorland Discovery Centre, Longshaw.

Members Present:

Bob Berzins
Councillor Jason Atkin
Richard Entwistle
Clare Griffin
Adge Last
Paul Richardson

John Thompson (Chair)

Charlotte Gilbert
Edwina Edwards
Henry Folkard
Terry Howard
Chris Page
Sue Weatherley

Others Present:

Sarah Fowler, (PDNPA)
Gemma Gregory, (DCC)
Councillor Andrew McCloy, (PDNPA)
Gill Millward, (DCC)

Mike Rhodes, (PDNPA) (Secretary)
Councillor Lesley Roberts, (PDNPA)
Sue Smith, (PDNPA)
Jason Spencer, (Minutes)

1. PRESENTATION TO EDWINA EDWARDS

At the start of the meeting the Chair of the National Park Authority, Cllr Mrs Lesley Roberts made a presentation to Edwina Edwards in recognition of her role as Chair of the Local Access Forum over the past 7 years. On behalf of the National Park Authority and the Forum, Cllr Roberts thanked Edwina for her significant contribution to the work of the Forum and successfully raising the profile of access issues within the Peak District.

Edwina responded by thanking Forum Members and Officers for their support recognising that everyone involved had contributed to the growth of the reputation of the Forum. Edwina specifically thanked John Thompson for his invaluable support as Vice-Chair.

2. APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Murley, Jon Stewart, and John Walton.

Jason Atkin was welcomed to his first meeting of the Forum since his appointment by Derbyshire County Council.

It was noted that due to his relocation to Yorkshire this would be the last meeting to be attended by Chris Page. He was thanked for his contribution to the work of the Forum and was wished well for the future.

It was noted that Gemma Gregory was attending the meeting to represent Richard Taylor.

3. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA

The Forum identified the following issues for discussion at the meeting that were not included on the agenda:

- Terry Howard indicated that he wished to raise issues relating to the Clarion Call and a forthcoming edition of Countryfile

- Henry Folkard advised that he wished to raise issues relating to the Forestry Commission Woods in the Dark Peak, Sheffield Moors Partnership, the Eastern Moors Partnership and problems with access to open access land at West Nab
- Chris Page indicated that he wished to provide an update on proposals for a canoe trail from Ladybower Reservoir to the River Trent
- Charlotte Gilbert wished to raise an issue relating to consultation from the Welsh Assembly

4. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING, 15TH JUNE

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June were approved as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

P2 Issues raised by Bamford Parish Council

It was noted the issues identified had been raised by John with Councillor Simon Spencer as the relevant Cabinet Member at Derbyshire County Council. Simon Spencer agreed to look into them and responded by referring to ongoing work by officers who would keep the Forum updated.

P3 Mountain Biking Initiatives

It was noted that John Horscroft had not given a presentation at the Ramblers AGM but he was to be invited to talk on the issues around a voluntary code of behaviour.

P4 National Park Management Plan Consultation

It was noted that the views of the Forum had been shared at a separate consultation meeting and that the feedback from the consultation would be presented to the forthcoming meeting of the National Park Authority. Bob Berzins would attend the Workshop as the LAF representative on 3rd October.

Following on from the discussion about the history of the National Park, Terry Howard expressed concern that he had heard that the National Park Authority was disposing of historic documents and photographs. Sarah Fowler agreed to look into this.

6. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Mike confirmed that, following Edwina Edwards' decision not to stand for re-election, John Thompson had been nominated to the role of Chair for the following year. Following a vote his appointment was confirmed by the Forum.

AGREED: To appoint John Thompson as Chair of the Forum for one year ending in September 2018.

John took the Chair at 10:20am. He said he was honoured to be appointed and thanked Edwina for her excellent work as Chair over the last 7 years.

Mike reported that two Members had expressed an interest in the role of Vice Chair, Bob Berzins and Charlotte Gilbert. It was suggested that the role could be shared between Bob and Charlotte. This option was put to the vote and confirmed.

AGREED: To appoint Bob Berzins and Charlotte Gilbert as Co-Vice Chairs for one year ending in September 2018.

7. MILES WITHOUT STILES

Sue Smith gave a presentation on the Miles without Stiles initiative being developed by the National Park Authorities. It was anticipated that this would result in good quality mapping of accessible and well maintained routes and an identifiable consistent way marker for designated routes across the Country.

In discussing the initiative the Forum considered issues relating to what constituted an accessible route noting that accessibility was dependent upon the individual user and the equipment they used. The following were discussed:

- Traffic free routes
- Cattle and livestock
- The impact of weather on routes
- The provision of shelter and other facilities and their impact on the landscape.

There was support for the development of consistent branding. The suggestion that this includes a grading assessment was welcomed. It was suggested that use of the word “easy” should be avoided.

The Forum noted possible sources of funding to progress the initiative including the Access Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership, grants from Sport England and others and contributions from the Highways Authority and Landowners.

It was noted that routes could be promoted using interactive maps, the production of handbooks, photo trails and events led by Rangers. It was anticipated that routes would be available towards the end of 2017 and that the handbook would be launched in Spring 2018.

Sue was thanked for the presentation and it was noted.

8. MOORLAND OWNERS' LIAISON

Rhodri Thomas, the Natural Environment and Rural Economy Team Manager from the National Park Authority, presented a request from the Peak District Moorland Owners Liaison Group that the Local Access Forum provides help in addressing issues of concern around visitor engagement.

The request had arisen from a meeting held in May involving Peak District “moorland owners”, the National Park Authority, Natural England and the Moorland Association. Four key moorland issues had been identified for further action-including:

- Visitor Engagement
- Fire Risk
- Resilient Sustainable Moorland Management
- Moorland Birds

Discussions on visitor engagement had centred on issues such as dogs off leads, damage to infrastructure, erosion problems caused by mountain bikes, scramble bikes and 4x4s and organised events. It had been suggested that the Forum may be in a good position to help build on existing publicity campaigns, access point signage, seasonal signage and other measures to encourage responsible behaviour by moorland visitors.

While the Forum was happy to look at these issues further and promote responsible behaviour, it was suggested that it should be a two way process so that improvements to access could be linked to the need for users to behave responsibly and respect the needs of those who own and manage the landscape.

AGREED: That the Chair and Mike Rhodes work together to feedback to the Liaison Group and use this as an opportunity to follow up the need to have appropriate representation on the Local Access Forum following Caroline Hanson's resignation.

9. MEND OUR MOUNTAINS FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN

Sarah Slowther, Fundraising Development Manager at the Peak District National Park Authority attended to provide an update on the Mend Our Mountains Make One Million Appeal to be carried out by the British Mountaineering Council in conjunction with the UK's family of 15 National Parks with the aim of raising £1 million in a year for projects to restore and protect iconic landscapes. 17 projects had been identified to benefit from the campaign and in the Peak District projects to repair paths along The Great Ridge and Cut Gate had been selected.

The campaign was also to be used as an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges of looking after the upland and recreational landscape and foster a sense of collective public responsibility.

Sarah also provided an update on progress made by the National Park Authority in giving consideration to setting up a charity. It was noted that following a discussion at a meeting of the Authority a working group had been set up including Members and Officers with the aim of learning from best practice and making recommendations to the Authority. Sarah also highlighted work carried out in producing a short video "Together we can do more".

During discussion of the presentation, Forum Members expressed concern over how the move towards a Charity would impact on the ring fenced Access Fund which had been successful in raising funds and delivering projects without the need for a Charity vehicle. In response to concerns about a lack of clarity on why a charity was needed, how this would impact on National Park Authority structures and why a Community Interest Company was not being pursued instead. It was confirmed that these issues were being explored by the working group and feedback from the Forum would be welcome.

As Chair of the Authority's Audit Resources and Performance Committee, and a member of the working group, Andrew McCloy provided more background on why the option of setting up a charity was being investigated and gave assurances that the group was exploring the kind of concerns raised by the Forum. The aim was to make sure that when Authority Members were asked to make a decision it was the right one that did not result in any unintended consequences that would adversely affect the Authority and its existing partners.

AGREED:

- 1. John Thompson to pull together the issues raised during the discussion and write to the Authority so that the concerns expressed by the Forum could be considered by the Working Group.**
- 2. To welcome the Mend our Mountains Campaign, and endorse the choice of Peak District sites identified as beneficiaries of the initiative.**
- 3. Mike Rhodes to follow up on the concessionary access issues regarding the Great Ridge.**

Jason Atkin left the meeting at 12 noon during consideration of this item.

10. DERBYSHIRE CC ROWIP UPDATE

Gill Millward presented a report providing an update on progress made towards the delivery of Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

During consideration of the report attention was drawn to progress made in delivering surface improvements at Bamford Clough, Chapel Gate and Hurstclough Lane and in addressing the backlog of legal orders to produce the Definitive Map. Gill also provided an update on work being carried out to identify lost ways and gave feedback from the joint LAF sub-group set up to look at this, with a workshop event planned for Saturday 14 October.

Charlotte Gilbert provided feedback on the Pennine Bridleway and a recent meeting between officers from the County Council, Natural England, the Pennine National Trails Partnership and local user groups to discuss options for funding/delivering the remaining sections of the route around the west side of Glossop. This included looking at possible alternative routes and other funding opportunities, as well as lobbying for an extension of existing funding.

Gill referred to the Key Cycle Network consultation due to take place in the Autumn, which she would circulate to Forum members for comment. She highlighted how the County Council's efforts in developing a network of multi-user Greenways contributed to the "miles without stiles" initiative, with scope for joint working and confirmed the Council was also involved in providing facilities for users on its sites, such as accessible toilets, electric bikes and tramper hire.

Terry Howard reported that, following concerns expressed at a previous meeting about poor communication between the Council and volunteers, he had received positive feedback that suggested this was being addressed and volunteers were much more positive.

AGREED:

- 1. To note and welcome progress made in delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan in 2017/18.**
- 2. To note the 14 October event on Lost Ways.**
- 3. To note the update on the development of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail.**

11. GREEN LANES UPDATE

Sue Smith provided an update on progress with managing recreational motor vehicles in the National Park.

It was noted that the National Park Authority had made a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) permanently prohibiting all mechanically propelled vehicles from Washgate, near Hollinsclough save for the Bemrose Trail and Reliance Cup events on such terms as required by the Authority.

It was also noted that the Authority had resolved to proceed to publicise a proposal to make a permanent TRO to prohibit mechanically propelled vehicles at all times on a route at Wetton.

AGREED: To note the report and note the response submitted by the Forum to the consultation at Wetton.

12. MEMBERS' FEEDBACK

Spirit of Kinder Event

It was noted that although the event had been successful there were no plans to repeat the event during 2018. However there was likely to be an event in 2019 based around issues raised by the Clarion Call. Terry provided an update on a proposal by Sheffield Museums to provide an archive facility at Western Park.

Countryfile

It was noted that the BBC intended to include a piece about the Sheffield Access Pioneers during the 1 October edition of the programme Countryfile.

Forestry Commission land in the Dark Peak

Henry Folkard provided an update on the recently published Forest Plan on Woodlands highlighting that issues raised by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) about recreational access had not been taken into account. It was agreed that the Forum would send in a belated response to the consultation based on the BMC response.

Action - Mike Rhodes

Eastern Moors Partnership

Henry Folkard provided an update on the recent and forthcoming pathfinder events on Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Access. The first event had been very successful so it was hoped that future events would be just as successful.

Stanage Forum

It was noted that the next meeting would be held at the Methodist Hall in Hathersage on Saturday 23 September and all were welcome to attend.

Standing Stones – West Nab

It was noted that access to the site had been restricted by blocking the informal parking space used by visitors. There were limits to what action could be taken as the obstruction was not on access to the site itself, even though the end result was the same. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Access Sub Group.

Action - Sue Smith for agenda

Derwent Canoe Trail

Chris Page advised the Forum that the new Chair of British Canoeing intended to progress the development of a Canoe Trail running from Ladybower Reservoir to the River Trent. It was recognised that this would be a challenge but discussions had already taken place at the Catchment Partnership and additional support was hoped to be found. Mike agreed to discuss with Chris outside of the meeting how the Forum might be able to assist.

Action - Mike Rhodes

Welsh Assembly Consultation on Access

Charlotte Gilbert brought the Forum's attention to a recent consultation from the Welsh Assembly on proposals to allow cycling and horse riding on footpaths. Charlotte will circulate details and encouraged members to respond as the consultation was open to individuals who may visit Wales. If successful, changes in Wales could extend to England in the future.

Forestry Commission West End

Bob Berzins highlighted recent felling that had taken place at West End where dense woodland was a barrier to reach open access land higher up. The Forestry Commission had been approached, but no progress had been made. Mike agreed to raise this with them.

Action - Mike Rhodes

Regional LAF Meeting

It was noted that John Thompson would attend the meeting on 10 October and feedback at the next Peak District LAF meeting.

13. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting on Thursday 7th December 10am in the Boardroom at Aldern House, Bakewell.