

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 12th October 2011 at Aldern House, Bakewell

Members Present:

Edwina Edwards (Chair)	Terry Howard
Bob Berzins	James Kellie
Jon Clennell	Adge Last
Richard Entwistle	Andrew McCloy
Henry Folkard	Ben Rayner
Charlotte Gilbert	Jon Stewart
Clare Griffin	Ally Turner
John Hall	Sue Weatherley

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA) Secretary	Richard Taylor (DCC)
Christina Porter (Minutes)	Sue Smith (PDNPA)
Gill Millward (DCC)	Rachel Gillis PDNPA
Richard Pett (PDNPA)	Wayne Bexton (DCC)
Richard Campen (PDNPA)	Judy Gould (PDNPA)
Chris Pennell (PDNPA)	Andrew Murley

1. Apologies and welcomes

Apologies had been received from John Thompson, Jean Wharmby, Brenda Harrop and Richard Peart. Mike Rhodes read out a text from John Thompson who is currently in hospital and all wished him well.

The four newly appointed members introduced themselves to the Forum - Clare Griffin, a fell runner, trail rider and canoeist; Jon Stewart, General Manager of National Trust in the Peak District since May and formerly of Natural England; Adge Last, from Thornbridge Outdoor Education Centre and Ally Turner, a horse rider with walking and farming interests.

The Chair also introduced Chris Pennell, the PDNPA Chair of Audit, Resources and Performance Committee and welcomed Andrew Murley to the meeting.

2. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes of the last meeting

a) Regional LAF Co-ordinator - Fiona Groves is the new LAF Co-ordinator for the East Midlands and has been appointed until February 2012.

b) Youth Education Strategy Group - Jon and Terry attended the meeting of 27th September 2011 at Aldern House. There were 17 attendees with a wide range of educators from across the Peak Park. They were able to let everyone know more about the LAF and felt that they should both continue to attend the meetings.

c) Countryside Code - Gill Millward reported that the review of the Code is in its final stages and Natural England expects to publish the refreshed version soon. The LAF contribution was welcomed with comments about simplifying some of the messages and improving the layout by amalgamating bullet points being taken on board. A communications plan is also being drafted to set out how the Code will be promoted and hopefully deal with some issues which the LAF raised about the way it is presented.

4. Review of NPA Recreational Motor Vehicle Strategy

In July 2011 the Audit, Resources and Performance Committee asked for a formal review of the strategy and policy to manage recreational vehicle use. A working group, chaired by Chris Pennell, has met to look in detail at how the strategy is working, along with the procedure for making Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). It is a high level member led exercise set up to respond to public concerns, demands of different user groups and the need for a coherent approach to deal with the issues.

There are three other actions:-

- A new consultative Recreational Vehicles Forum (which Edwina attends) to replace the Operation Blackbrook meetings and provide grass roots feedback
- A series of top level meetings with constituent highway authorities and the Police to prioritise actions and provide a unified response
- Drawing up a business case to secure more funding for work on the ground.

The Committee recognised the work of the vehicle sub group and was keen to hear the LAF's views on the revised documents which will be reported back to the Full Authority meeting on 2nd December. Mike Rhodes produced a summary of the written comments he had received as the basis for agreeing this Forum's response to the National Park Authority. He thanked the seven members for their input which represented a good cross section of the LAF and asked for any further comments.

Henry Folkard referred to a draft DCC Policy Statement on Motor Vehicles in the Countryside which had recently been circulated to some LAF members and stated that mechanically propelled vehicles were inappropriate in the National Park. Richard Taylor (DCC) confirmed that the document had been produced independently by a member of the Ramblers Association. DCC's revised policy was due to be reported to Cabinet on 1 November for approval to go out for a 12 week consultation over the winter months, including the LAF and liaison with the PDNPA. Current work on the ground would still continue while the revised policy was out for consultation.

Both Henry and Sue flagged up the need for both authorities to address safety issues eg horse riders being put off using certain routes because of the presence of vehicles. It was recognised that there is no easy solution – the authorities are bound by a complex legal framework and there may be an issue about how they exercise their powers.

The Chair acknowledged that much had been achieved in the last few years and felt there was a genuine will within the NPA and DCC to find solutions, but it will be difficult as resources are tight. It is a very emotive subject in every community and there is no better time to try and resolve the issues and find compromises.

Andrew McCloy mentioned one of the frustrations previously was the lack of priority given to this work, but it is now being taken seriously. NPA Members do recognise this as a key issue that needs to be dealt with - balancing recreation, access and conservation. The LAF has helped to build consensus throughout the process and provided some realistic and practical suggestions.

The review of the strategy and TRO policy was felt to be a timely and healthy exercise. There was support for a less cautious approach and the need to carefully align and strengthen the policy with the guidance from Defra – although it was recognised that the guidance was just that and had not been tested in the courts. There was no quick fix - it should be applied in an effective, transparent and fair manner in the context of a protected landscape.

Richard Entwistle recommended that the emailed version of the summary of responses prepared by Mike should be submitted as the official LAF response. The Chair asked if everyone was happy with the summary and it was agreed that this document would be taken forward to this afternoon's meeting of the members working group who would try and take the comments on board.

Wayne Bexton then provided an update on Chapel Gate. DCC has spent an extra £15,000 on additional surfacing and drainage work. It was reported that some of the boulders placed across the track had been moved. DCC will revisit this to enforce the TRO.

Mike Rhodes confirmed that there had been a legal challenge to the experimental traffic regulation order. It is not just based on procedural grounds but also questions whether it is a true and honest experiment. The PDNPA will be defending its position in the High Court. Mike has drafted a response and is meeting with the barrister next week.

Chris Pennell concluded by saying that the policy needs to stress that the PDNPA has an open mind on these issues. It may not please everyone and some people may think the Authority is not taking a strong enough stance. The document has been written by NPA members and is being checked though by officers and lawyers.

5. National Park Management Plan (NPMP) - update

Rachel Gillis (Head of Policy) briefly explained the background to the Plan for new members and emphasised the importance of maintaining links between the LAF and the National Park Management Plan which will be reviewed every five years.

The team is in the process of going through the 175 responses received during the summer consultation, including comments from this LAF. The feedback from focus groups, outreach work - which included young people and liaison with officers will also be used to capture as many ideas as possible for inclusion in the Plan which is due to be published in the New Year as a web based document.

It was recognised that the Plan needs to focus more on the legacy of rights of way and access in the National Park and this will be reflected in the redraft. Under the theme "A Welcoming and Inspiring Place", there were comments about visitors' footprint, particularly the impact of transport. The new Tourism Strategy will attempt to deal with some of the negative impacts of visitors, but the NPMP also needs to address transport issues and find some common ground between users and operators.

Rachel thanked individual members, as well as the Forum as a whole, for the contributions received so far and asked how the LAF wanted to continue to be involved in the process. Edwina will be the LAF representative on the NPMP Advisory Group which is seeking an independent Chair and will strengthen links with businesses and farmers/ land managers. The Group will monitor the Plan's performance and provide advice on any issues that arise.

Terry Howard raised concern that public transport is on the decrease. He recently attended the Transport Working Group and suggested it would be useful to bring the LAF up to date on this once the notes are available. **ACTION: TH**

With regard to access and recreation issues, there was some discussion about the use of the word "adventure" which was generally welcomed but which needed to be qualified and linked to the concept of "quiet enjoyment". Different uses of the National Park should complement rather than conflict with each other and it was important to have a view on how this can be managed more effectively eg through codes of respect. Rachel confirmed that the new Recreation Strategy was the main vehicle for taking a lot of these actions forward, but the National Park Management Plan should mirror what is said in this and other relevant strategies so there is joined up thinking.

6. Rights of Way Improvement Plans

a) DCC Progress Report on RoWIP delivery in 2011/12

Gill Millward had circulated a report summarising progress for each of the five RoWIP aims. Some of the highlights from the first half of the year are as follows:- The Rights of Way Charter was approved in July and is starting to be implemented. http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/meetings_decisions/meetings/cabinet_meetings/1272011_cabinet.asp

Targets will be set against the Charter and published on the Council's website as soon as practicable, with monitoring to come into effect from April 2012.

Public rights of way in the Borough of Amber Valley can now be viewed electronically through the mapping portal at <http://derbyshiremaps.derbyshire.gov.uk>. The two remaining areas of Chesterfield and Derbyshire Dales are due to be complete by the end of the year.

Substantial funds are still being secured through the Local Transport Plan (£585,000) and other external sources to allow rights of way improvements and access projects to be undertaken, including an all weather footpath link between Hayfield and Little Hayfield to avoid the busy A624 Glossop Road.

Greenway schemes being delivered on the ground in 2011/12 include a new section of the Pennine Bridleway through Gamesley Sidings, with a link to the Trans Pennine Trail. Continued funding from Natural England also means that a further 3km of the Pennine Bridleway near Charlesworth should be ready to construct next year. Although outside the LAF's area, two other Greenway projects on the Midshires Way deserved a mention – with work imminent on the Hopwell to Dale section in Erewash and Long Horse Bridge finally being lifted into place across the River Trent near Shardlow in September.

DCC's review of its existing policy for the management of motor vehicles in the countryside is nearing completion and should be out for consultation this winter.

In terms of information provision, the Cycle Derbyshire leaflet has been updated and reprinted along with the Horse Ride Derbyshire leaflet - both continue to be very popular. The new Countryside Service banner (on display at the meeting) has now been produced to help promote the county's countryside sites and Greenways.

Despite the failure of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid to develop the Buxton to Matlock cycle route, work is progressing to implement a reduced scheme linking Matlock to Oker/Darley Bridge in 2011/12, as well as investigating its continuation towards Bakewell - with provision for horse riders wherever possible. Wayne Bexton explained that there was considerable support for the project within DCC and it had been agreed that the Authority would try and source the necessary funding to deliver the Buxton to Matlock route. LAF members also stressed the need to focus on finding and designing a route from the Monsal Trail into Buxton.

Charlotte flagged up the importance of volunteers in helping to carry out practical work on the ground and Wayne offered to circulate the link to the relevant DCC web page for anyone wanting to volunteer.

ACTION: WB

Terry Howard asked what was happening about Lost Ways with 2026 fast approaching. Gill replied that there had been some discussions with Defra at the recent Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management (IPRoW) conference and would report back at the next LAF meeting.

ACTION: GM

There was some discussion about RoWIPs in adjoining areas and whether other constituent authorities could be encouraged to communicate more with the Forum, especially with regard to cross boundary issues. This was seen to be very appropriate in the context of the Eastern Moors and Mike Rhodes was hoping that someone from the Sheffield Moors Partnership Project would be able to speak at December's meeting.

ACTION: MR

b) Update on Derbyshire's Second Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Gill had circulated a paper as the basis for discussion and further work with the joint LAF sub group for which Henry, Charlotte and Sue had kindly volunteered. It sets out the thoughts of the Derby and Derbyshire LAF about what worked/ didn't work for the current RoWIP and some ideas for shaping the next one. Gill thought it would be helpful to share this information with all Forum members and would welcome any comments.

ACTION: ALL

Initial discussions suggest that other authorities have kept the review of their RoWIPs fairly simple by refreshing the action plan. Hopefully the first joint LAF sub group meeting will take place in November (possibly the 18th). **ACTION: GM**

7. Update from Access Sub-group

The Access Sub-group met on 5 October 2011 and notes of the meeting were circulated.

In accordance with the Asset Management Plan approved in 2010, the National Park Authority is reviewing the ownership and management of its properties. The report sets out details of the update provided to the sub-group and makes reference to the Roaches, North Lees/Stange, Eastern Moors, Millers Dale Station and land at Edale. The new Head of Property is Keith Jennings.

The report also refers to an application at Moscar Estate to restrict access on public safety grounds. This was referred to the sub-group because of its involvement in the issue of snares. If it is considered that there are grounds for a long-term direction at all or any of the four sites involved then the LAF will be formally consulted. Henry warned that the LAF needs to be extremely careful in connection with this item as the end result may be to restrict access rather than enhancing it.

Information was provided about issues affecting common land, including various online resources. Sue also offered to co-ordinate a response to the current Defra consultation on reforming the system for registering new town or village greens and asked for comments by Friday 14 October. **ACTION: ALL**

Terry pointed out a correction to the notes of the meeting under the item on common land: the matter has been pursued with Sheffield CC and not by them. He also clarified that the national authority has confirmed that no consent has been given for the fencing at High Riggs Road.

Updates were given on access points, the latest funding situation and work to improve the website.

Sue asked for volunteers to join the Water Recreation Task Group which is due to meet on 20 October (Clare Griffin volunteered) and for comments on the latest waterways consultation. **ACTION: ALL**

8. Feedback from Members

a) Regional LAF Chairs Meeting

Richard Entwistle attended the meeting on 27th September and was pleased to report that this LAF is doing well compared to others in the region that are struggling to recruit new members. He also mentioned "huddle" - the latest Defra initiative which is a cross between a database and social networking facility. It is being developed as a means of communication between the different LAFs and training will be offered in due course.

Andrew McCloy added that "huddle" was a resource free way of communicating, but purely on-line methods can be exclusive and are not without their problems. He thought the regional meetings were useful and should continue, but gets the impression that Natural England wants to pull out and leave the hosting of any meetings to local authorities. Regional training events which provide a good opportunity to share good practice are also likely to fall by the wayside.

The Chair thanked Richard for attending and agreed that the future of the East Midlands LAF looks uncertain, especially with Fiona Groves only being in post until February 2012. The situation may be clearer after the next meeting which is scheduled for 24 January.

Jon Clennell asked if the Forums themselves could take on the initiative of continuing with a regional structure and whether there would be any money available from PDNPA or DCC. There was some discussion about the East Midlands possibly not being the most appropriate area for this LAF which may have more in common with those in other National Parks - or perhaps a cross border model with LAFs in surrounding areas such as Sheffield and Staffordshire would be more relevant. Forum members also recognised the practicalities in terms of the amount of funding and time that would be needed to set this up. Mike Rhodes offered to put this on the agenda for a meeting he will be attending with other National Park Officers in 3 weeks time. **ACTION: MR**

9. Any Other Business

a) Planning issues - Henry referred to the meeting he attended in Nottingham about the role of LAFs in the planning process and the suggestion that they should be made aware of applications which affect access and rights of way and given the opportunity to comment where appropriate. There was concern about how this would work in practice given the time constraints involved in dealing with planning applications. Mike Rhodes pointed out that these issues are usually picked up by teams within PDNPA and DCC. Wayne Bexton also offered to provide a link to the draft Derbyshire Infrastructure Plan, which will act as guidance for planning authorities when seeking developer contributions. The document details provision for access and recreation. **ACTION: WB**

b) PDNPA Trails Management Plan - Charlotte reported that she had attended the first Trails Steering Group Workshop and was impressed with the range of people and interests represented. There was a site visit to the Monsal Trail, followed by a meeting to discuss the responses from the "Trails Saturday" and survey monkey consultations. The Group also began to develop a vision for the trails which will be progressed at the next workshop on 24 November 2011.

c) Horse Riding update - Charlotte welcomed Ally Turner, who also sits on the Peak Horsepower group. The group is looking at developing a new 55 mile circular ride around Kinder, including trying to find a link at the A628 Trans Pennine Trail in Barnsley and liaising with Oldham's LAF. Peak Horsepower is also in contact with other bridleway groups and holds regular meetings to sort out problems on the ground and provide a conduit for local riders.

d) Park Life Magazine - The Chair suggested that everyone ought to read the latest issue of the magazine. There is an article on page 17 which features Henry giving his views on the transfers of the PDNPA's estates. **ACTION: ALL**

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 1st December 2011 - 10.30am at Aldern House, Bakewell.

Future meetings in 2012:

Thursday 22 March, Thursday 14 June, Thursday 20 September and Thursday 6 December.

The meeting was closed at 12.35pm with a visit to the Roych in the afternoon by the vehicle sub group.