

Peak District Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 June 2009
at Aldern House, Bakewell

Members Present:

Bob Berzins	Terry Howard
Jacque Bevan	Mike Innerdale
Charlotte Bright	Mike Johnson
Jon Clennell	Andrew McCloy (Chair)
Felicity Edmeston	Andrew Murley
Edwina Edwards	Geoff Nickolds
Richard Entwistle	Richard Peart
Sue Fisher	Sue Weatherley
Henry Folkard	John Thompson

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes (PDNPA) Secretary	Roy Malkin (Kirklees Council)
Wayne Bexton (DCC)	Judy Merryfield (PDNPA)
Stephen Brent (DCC)	Gill Millward (DCC)
Matt Croney (PDNPA)	Richard Pett (PDNPA)
Sharon Davison (Minutes)	Sue Smith (PDNPA)
Richard Doran (Cheshire East Council)	Richard Taylor (DCC)
Andy Farmer (PDNPA)	

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Andrew Critchlow.

2. Introduction of New Members

The Chair welcomed Sue Weatherley, Mike Johnson and John Thompson to the Forum. All members gave a brief introduction to themselves. There is now one vacancy for which the Forum is actively seeking a landowner/manager or someone from the farming community. There will also be a new member appointed by Derbyshire County Council following the vacancy created by the recent elections.

3. Minutes from the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

a) The **LAF Annual Report** for 2008 has been circulated and it was agreed the new format works well. A group photograph will be included in next year's report.

b) **Black Hill site visit** West Yorkshire LAF has proposed a joint site visit to look at restoration work at Black Hill. This will be a good cross-boundary opportunity. No date has been proposed as yet; it will be a full day probably in late summer. At least

ten members of this LAF were interested in attending, with the majority preferring a weekday visit. MR will progress and keep everyone informed. **ACTION: MR**

c) **60th Anniversary** Mike had sent an e-mail and 4 volunteers have come forward to help with the event on 26 July at Losehill Hall. Charlotte Bright, Henry Folkard, Mike Innerdale and John Thompson will attend and possibly Jacque Bevan. Terry Howard is leading a walk on the day too.

d) **Rod Moor/Ughill Moor** Sue Smith gave an update on Rod Moor following the third meeting with the landowner, who is being provided with a plan of the proposed roadside access points. Progress will be reported to the next LAF meeting. **ACTION: SS** New stiles have been installed at the agreed locations on Ughill Moor.

e) **Access & Recreation budget** A letter received from Narendra Bajaria (PDNPA Chair) had been circulated. Discussions between Andrew McCloy and Richard Campen about more meaningful LAF input into budgets for access and recreation are on-going. There will be an update at the next meeting in September. **ACTION: AMcC**

f) **Houndkirk Road** Terry Howard requested an update. Mike Rhodes said electronic monitoring of use was on-going and signage on site clearly indicates it is an offence to go off road. Rangers reported that the signage was successful and use is much reduced. Police operations continue and a section 59 notice was served recently. Natural England and Sheffield City Council are to produce a joint management plan for the site, but this is not yet available. The site will be landscaped, re vegetated and a robust fence erected to keep stock out. The Chair reported that Richard Campen will be meeting with Sheffield CC shortly. Henry Folkard said the Police have been very active and the significant efforts of user groups working in the background to inform their members should be appreciated. Jacque Bevan expressed concerned about fencing costs, but it was confirmed that this would be paid for by Natural England and not from the highways budget.

5. **'Access Peak Project' – presentation on disabled access**

Andy Farmer, Area Team Manager (South) introduced this item and spoke briefly about the background on accessible routes. A company – Access Films – has produced information for disabled people relating to historic buildings, houses etc. They then approached all National Park Authorities and as a result produced the 'Access Passport' DVD. The PDNPA's 'You're Welcome' Booklet (free) and the DVD (£2.99) are usually issued together. Films are also downloadable free via the PDNPA website. <http://resources.peakdistrict.gov.uk/accesspeak> Members were shown the Goyt Valley and Parsley Hay films (2 of 10 available). These are intended to highlight the range of access opportunities available to the public across the National Park.

One of the outcomes was to flag up the improvements which are needed to bring some routes up to standard for disabled access – eg Lathkill Dale where this work has been carried out. Field Services are aware that this aspect is very important and is taken seriously. Adequate resources need to be provided for the ongoing inspection and maintenance of "access for all" routes.

As far as wider promotion is concerned, information should be accessible/ readily available. It was suggested that the DVDs could be distributed through holiday accommodation providers, GP surgeries, health visitors and user groups, such as pushchair and wheelchair users. Andy will raise this with Visitor Services. **ACTION: AF**

It was agreed that as not all potential users have access to the internet or a local library the information must be widely circulated and it was recognised that there is a

need to keep up the momentum of publicity and distribution. Andrew Murley will help with providing group contact information. **ACTION: AM**

Richard Peart suggested the need for a proper crossing where the High Peak trail crosses the A515. This can be dangerous for buggies, wheelchairs and some walkers. Andy advised that management plans for the trails are currently being reviewed – these comments are directly relevant to this work and the issue was noted. The Chair reported that the new administration at County Hall has said that they will prioritise roadway and path improvements.

The Disability Discrimination Act was discussed with regard to landowners who were reluctant to put in access points or removed gates and replaced them with stiles. Government guidance recommends the least restrictive option – it is NPA policy to increase accessibility on all routes but also have to take account of ‘what is reasonable’.

Terry was concerned that one of the initial aims of the Moors for the Future (MFF) project to provide a moorland experience for everyone seemed to have lost its momentum, with higher priority being given to conservation and moorland restoration work. Mike Innerdale (MFF Steering Group member) said the first phase funded by the lottery did propose much access work. The project has a new 5 year plan with an access element. He is pushing for the project to prioritise particular access issues. The Chair said the Black Hill site visit will be an opportunity to explore this subject further.

Edwina made the point that the number of older people using wheelchairs will increase due to demographics. There is a need to take a long term view of accessibility and plan ahead for the future. It was already difficult to identify accessible routes more than a mile long because of difficult furniture etc and this denied some people a full life.

The idea of forming a sub group using the enthusiasm and expertise of LAF members to help both the PDNPA and DCC with monitoring of existing routes and suggestions for new easy access routes was put forward. Sue Fisher suggested an audit group to look at all trails, say every 6 months, in the company of someone in a wheelchair and with a pushchair. SF and AM were happy to help here. The Chair agreed that this sort of work was vital and Gill said this was something which was high on the RoWIP agenda. Edwina suggested that accessibility funds may be available via the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3). The Chair asked that this be an agenda item for the September meeting, meanwhile he will talk to Field Services. **ACTION: MR and AMcC**

Richard Taylor suggested that the Parks Officer for Leicester City Council would be a good person to speak on this subject and will pass his contact details to MR.

ACTION: RT

The Chair thanked Andy for his contribution.

6. DCC Countryside Service – recent work on equalities issues

Wayne Bexton reported that the Derbyshire Countryside Service was undertaking work in support of the County Council's bid to attain level 3 of the National Equalities Standard for Local Government. This involves an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), reviewing policies, procedures and services to decide whether they meet the needs of all customers. The work has focused on cycle hire facilities at Middleton Top, the county's network of Greenways and health promotion activities. An important part of the assessment was consulting different customer groups and seeking their opinion on these aspects of the service and whether the proposed changes would give them better access to an improved service.

The list of proposed actions set out in the EIA will be revised in the light of the comments received during the consultation process which is now drawing to a close. A

timeframe for implementation of the actions, along with a review process will be developed. The final step is to formally adopt and publish the EIA. LAF members felt this work linked in well with that outlined in the previous item and the idea of a sub group to explore accessibility issues in more detail was welcomed.

7. Consultation on reviews of direction to restrict access

Sue Smith gave brief background information on the formal 5 year statutory reviews of long term directions to restrict access. Many directions have end dates of 2999, but recently revised guidance suggests they should be for no longer than 6 years.

A paper summarising the progress which has been made since March had been circulated. This includes the recommendations of the LAF sub group in relation to the first three sites involving shooting activities.

The next round of reviews to be undertaken relate to the PDNPA's outline fire directions and will be considered by a further meeting of the LAF sub group due to be held in about two weeks' time.

Sue will report back to the next LAF meeting in September.

ACTION: SS

The Chair thanked Sue and members of the sub group for their work.

8. Derbyshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Monitoring Report for 2008/09

Gill Millward presented the second annual monitoring report for delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) in 2008/09 which had been circulated to LAF members. The report describes progress against each of the 75 actions identified for countywide delivery through the RoWIP and details the work that the County Council and its partners have undertaken.

Gill summarised the progress which had been made under each of the 5 RoWIP aims: Aim 1 relating to the existing Rights of Way network saw 77% of targets being met, with particularly encouraging results for ease of use surveys, roadside signposting and the amount of capital funding (£1.5 million) secured for access projects.

Under Aim 2, 60% of targets were achieved, with digital rights of way maps being made available on line for the High Peak and parts of Amber Valley. Progress has been affected by digitising staff being required to work on other projects, but in the long run these should help to provide the public with better information.

Aim 3 has seen some good progress in improving the network, particularly in relation to Greenways, easy access routes, better off road links between communities and initiatives to benefit horse riders and cyclists.

Aim 4 relating to promotion and publicity has seen the least progress, with several targets being hampered by website issues. Signage improvements are being progressed to include the use of symbols and details of distance/ destination - next year should see some more positive outputs. It was also pleasing to see more promoted routes being regularly inspected and maintained.

Under Aim 5, 100% of targets were met. The increasing amount of work being carried out in conjunction with local councils was very encouraging. Volunteers also made a valuable contribution, dedicating a total of 1,346 days to access work during the year.

The report was noted and it was generally agreed that progress was being made. There was a request for future monitoring information to be identified separately for the National Park area so Forum members can see what is being achieved. **ACTION: GM** Efforts need to continue in areas, such as public transport, which should not be allowed to slide off the agenda and signposting to ensure that this is in keeping and does not

litter the countryside. The lack of useful networks for horse riders and cyclists continues to be a problem – it was suggested that gaps in the network should be identified and decisions made as to how this work is to be tackled. The West Derbyshire and High Peak Greenway Strategy should help here, with new schemes starting to be implemented.

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to Derbyshire County Council's new deputy leader and cabinet member for highways and transport, Councillor Chris Jackson, to highlight the issue of resources and raise awareness of the LAF. **ACTION: AMcC**

9. Motor Vehicles update

Richard Pett reported that the management plans for the first 8 priority routes are near completion. There was a good meeting yesterday helped by the recommendations of the LAF sub group whose work has been outstanding. The sub group has agreed to continue to work on the next batch of 7 routes, with Felicity Edmeston, Mike Johnson and John Thompson all expressing an interest in contributing to this work. The Chair stressed how useful the sub group's contribution has been in providing well informed, independent advice and expertise.

As part of Operation Blackbrook, several hundred vehicle users have been spoken to and responsible use encouraged. Vehicles will be confiscated from anyone who is issued with a second Section 59 Notice (warning about driving on an inappropriate route). Plain clothes police on mountain bikes are patrolling areas too. Richard showed an example of the signs which are being used. Website information has been updated, the 'Stay on the Right Track' leaflet has been reprinted and newsletters circulated. DCC is carrying out excellent work at Washgates on the Staffordshire border. 2 years ago there was little management of routes, but now the situation is beginning to be under control, there is still more to do but it is going in the right direction.

There was concern about the displacement effect of these operations eg Chapel Gate now has more users. Mike Innerdale asked about monitoring in other areas – Richard is mindful that users may be going elsewhere and other routes are being monitored by data loggers and the Police.

Richard Entwistle mentioned the TrailWise web-site – this is a national catalogue of rights of way and provides a collection of data about each route. Although it includes details about legal status, it is not intended to be a definitive guide but a source of information for users to refer and contribute to.

There was some discussion about the length of time it takes to resolve the legal status of routes. However once this has been determined the route will be signed in order to clarify the situation on the ground. Charlotte Bright gave an example of a site where appropriate signage had worked very well on a footpath to deter cyclists from using it – or at least encourage them to push their bikes.

10. DCC Prioritising Rights of Way work (legal orders)

This relates to an item which was originally reported to the LAF in December 2005 when members were asked for their views on the County Council's draft strategy for prioritising legal orders affecting public rights of way.

Richard Taylor provided the Forum with information relating to the backlog of legal orders. Across the county as a whole, there are currently 276 Wildlife and Countryside

Act 1981 claims in the system to modify the Definitive Map and Statement; 10 diversion applications relating to development proposals under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and 68 applications to create or divert routes under the Highways Act 1980. Data for the PDNP area will be provided at the next meeting. **ACTION: GM**

Many claims received by the authority will be affected by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and the more recent Winchester judgement which the Forum has been briefed on in the past. The approach to be adopted by the County Council in dealing with these claims was the subject of a report to the Regulatory - Licensing and Appeals Committee on 18 May 2009. A copy of the report had been circulated and Stephen Brent (DCC Solicitor) briefed LAF members on the background issues involved.

Henry felt the system relating to legal orders was exceedingly complex and difficult to understand, putting local communities at a considerable disadvantage on how to proceed or express their views, especially at a public inquiry. Jacque raised the issue of the length of time that legal order cases can take to resolve. Stephen clarified that there are 3 full time specialist officers and 3 solicitors involved in legal order case work.

In view of the time that has lapsed since the draft legal order strategy was last presented to the LAF, members were asked to feedback any individual comments to Richard Taylor or Gill Millward in the next 2 – 3 weeks. **ACTION: ALL**
The Chair thanked Richard and Stephen for attending.

11. PDNPA Recreation Strategy

Judy Merryfield gave a brief update on progress. Discussions with the PDNPA Management Team in early May resulted in the strategy being redrafted. It is now being finalised to go to the Authority meeting on 31 July, followed by a 6 week consultation period ending on 11 September. The Strategy will be launched in December or possibly an 'official' launch will be delayed until the 2010 walking festival. A stakeholder group will be set up for implementing the Strategy with some involvement from the LAF. Henry felt that it was vital to synchronise the timing of this strategy with the Local Development Framework – joined up thinking is essential. The Chair said access and recreation was integral to the National Park and links directly with many other strategies.

12. Eastern Moors update

Matt Croney, Head of Property for PDNPA, gave an update on Eastern Moors. On 5 June, Authority Members made the decision to set up a partnership with the RSPB and National Trust for leasing Eastern Moors on a 20 year licence, with effect from 1 April 2010. The partnership will carry out the day to day management – the first meeting to discuss the arrangements in more detail will be held next week.

Matt acknowledged the letter received from this Forum. The Chair impressed on the meeting the historical nature of this area – the CRoW Act should be seen as the bare minimum and improved access opportunities for less mobile users are essential. He stressed that he could not envisage any access restrictions (other than an emergency) due to the importance of this area. He was confident that access and recreation will be enhanced. Forum members were positive but have concerns about possible conflicts between birds and people. Matt Croney said that a Stanage Forum type arrangement will be set up and no proposals to restrict public access to the moors were envisaged.

Mike Innerdale explained that a separate legal entity would be set up - nothing is signed yet and much discussion is on-going. It is early days and there is still a lot of work to be done. Joint experience and understanding will be brought together to drive forward the vision. Henry added that the British Mountaineering Council is closely associated as a key stakeholder and they are very happy working with NT and RSPB. SCAM also approve. Jacque raised a warning re dog usage, good practice will be needed. The stakeholder group will develop over time. John Thompson commends the partnership approach and reassurances given.

Matt said that a wider partnership is being explored between Sheffield City Council, RSPB, NT and PDNPA. The Chair hopes there will be a role for this Forum in an advisory capacity.

13. Feedback from Members

Chair

England Access Forum – Huw Irranca-Davies, Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs has reaffirmed support for LAFs. The Chair of the England Access Forum hopes to meet with him soon to raise the profile and discuss current issues.

Other items

Terry raised a number of concerns about public transport. The Sheffield Ramblers Association has an unbroken record of using public transport for its walks programme. It is now totally unreliable, times are changing and routes are cancelled, to the extent that it is difficult to continue to do so. Terry also finds great difficulty in attending these meetings. The whole issue needs addressing. This year timetable production was threatened and eventually issued very late.

It was agreed that the subject was of great concern to the Forum and would be raised as a future agenda item, with input from DCC and others. **ACTION: GM**

Henry updated the Forum on Backdale – the Lords have heard the petition but he does not know the outcome. The Marine Bill is in the Commons. Also there is concern about the poor condition of many bridleways in the area, to the extent that the British Horse Society is advising its members to stay away. This has economic implications for tourism in the National Park and will be discussed at a future LAF meeting.

14. Any other business

Mike Rhodes will be writing to those LAF members whose period of membership expires in August.

The issue of dog management in the Peak District was raised – in particular stock disturbances etc. It was suggested that there is an update on the National Park Authority's current strategy at a future meeting. **ACTION: MR**

15. Dates of Next Meetings in 2009

Saturday 26 September – Losehill Hall, 10:30am

Thursday 3 December – Aldern House, 10:30am

The meeting finished at 1.15pm and was followed by an afternoon of training.