

**NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AND COUNTRYSIDE
JOINT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY 24 APRIL 2008 at 1800 - 2100

HIRST MINERS WELFARE CENTRE, ASHINGTON

JLAF Members: Pamela Brooks, Chair Richard Cross, Vice Chair
George Astbury Erica Bamford
James Brown Victoria Brown
Kevin Vigars Angus Collingwood-Cameron
Susan Finch Bryan Harwood
Lorraine Hershon Ted Liddle
Peter Nicholson

Officers: David Brookes, Northumberland County Council (till 2010)
Mike Jeffrey, Northumberland County Council (till 2010)
Marion Hume, Northumberland National Park/JLAF Administrator
Elaine Rigg, Northumberland National Park Authority
Lorna Lazzari, Northumberland National Park Authority

Observers: Sue Vaughan, new member from 1 May 2008
David Baines, new member from 1 May 2008
Elanor Johnston, Northumberland National Park
Kathy Atkinson, Tyne & Wear LAF
PC Rob Burn, Northumberland Police

Apologies: Eddie Carrington Graham Gill
Sue Rogers David Towns
Paul Kelly Gill Featonby
Jonathan Mullard

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted. P Brooks, Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting particularly Sue Vaughan, David Baines, Kathy Atkinson and Elanor Johnston.

P Brooks was delighted to announce that new members had been appointed from 1 May 2008 to 30 April 2011 who are Sue Vaughan, Nicola Thompson and David Baines, with Erica Bamford, George Astbury, Angus Collingwood-Cameron and Sue Rogers re-appointed for a further period of three years.

She also intimated that both Bryan Harwood and Paul Kelly had not sought re-election and therefore would retire from the JLAF with effect from 20 April. She took the opportunity to thank them both for their involvement with the JLAF, particularly Bryan who had been the first JLAF Chair. She said the JLAF looked forward to receiving notification of the three Appointing Authority representatives following their respective Annual Meetings on 21 May and 25 June.

The Chair highlighted the fact that although local access forum meetings are open to members of the public, they are not public meetings.

2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions from members of the public.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 31 January 2008 were approved by members and signed by the Chair.

5 MATTERS ARISING

Item 5:14 – Newbiggin by the Sea: It was noted that the correspondent had replied to G Featonby to say that, despite significant public opposition to this, a ban had been imposed by the relevant Council.

Item 9 – RoWIP: G Featonby asked for thanks to be recorded to M Jeffrey as wheelchair access had now been improved at Druridge Country Park.

- 5.1 Outdoor Activities and Tourism: the notes received from Giles Ingram, Northumberland Tourism, following the Stannington meeting workshop on 31 January 2008, were noted particularly that one of the key issues arising had been networking and meeting new people. P Brooks commented that the latest issue of 'Roebuck', magazine had featured nature tourism and outdoor activities in Northumberland and said she hoped this was as a result of the workshop. She said she would write to them regarding future articles.

6 CHAIR'S REMARKS

P Brooks spoke briefly about a variety of issues including:

- 6.1 Terms of Reference: it was noted these had been published in May 2003 and now needed updating; they had been based on the Terms of Reference drafted for local access forums by DEFRA when local access forums were being set up. Accordingly, P Brooks and R Cross will review these and a draft of the amended version will be available for approval by members at the next meeting. It was agreed the draft should also be sent to the Appointing Authorities for comment.
- 6.2 Marine Bill: it was noted only a few sections apply to the Northumberland Coast and these will be discussed initially by Working Group One at their next meeting on 12 May 2008 and a response to the initial consultation prepared by the working group at that time. Further information will be available at the next meeting of the JLAF.

- 6.3 England Access Forum (EAF): P Brooks gave some background to the EAF, said it had a constitution which reflects partnership working and that Natural England appeared to be committed to making it work. She said she and Steve Scoffin, Chair of Tees Valley LAF had been elected North East representatives on the EAF and would attend the first meeting on 15 May in Cheltenham.
- 6.4 Discovering Lost Ways: members had noted the final report on DLW issued by Natural England. P Brooks advised the subject was on the English Access Forum agenda for the meeting on 15 May and invited members to forward any questions or queries regarding DLW to be raised at this meeting to M Hume as soon as possible
- 6.5 Other issues: P Brooks thanked G Astbury and the Mediation Panel for their work and hoped it would be concluded as soon as possible. She also thanks R Cross and B Harwood for their roles as Chair and Vice Chair, and Chair respectively. She suggested an event towards the end of the year to celebrate the first 5 years of the JLAF and mooted revisiting Kielder to look at work carried out there since the JLAF last visited. M Hume was asked to trawl members for a suitable date and circulate a programme for the day in due course.

7 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR 2008 – 2009

R Cross said that in order that a Chairperson was in place for the start of the new Joint Local Access Forum year, it had been agreed to hold the election of Chair and Vice Chair for the period 1 May 2008 – 30 April 2009 at the meeting. Members had been asked in advance for nominations and accordingly Pam Brooks had been nominated as Chair and James Brown as Vice Chair.

Chair: R Cross proposed Pam Brooks seconded by G Astbury

Vice Chair: R Cross proposed James Brown seconded by T Liddle.

Members offered their congratulations to the new Chair and Vice Chair and thanked R Cross who was retiring as Vice Chair at the end of April.

8 OVERVIEW OF AFTERNOON SESSION

R Cross gave a brief overview of the afternoon session which had included an interesting site visit to the 145 hectare Ashington Community Woodland where members participated in a walk round the woods looking at the paths, walking and cycle tracks, bridleways, access for wheelchair users and other facilities on offer. Members noted there were currently 12 km of paths including 1.8 km of public bridleway.

They also noted that in 2008 a Local Transport Plan grant of between £10,000 and £15,000 will be spent upgrading the forestry tracks to further accommodate walkers, horse riders and cyclists. It was noted there was a need for more forestry management to make it sustainable. R Cross thanked everyone involved for making the visit so worthwhile, particularly the representatives of Groundwork and Northumberland County Council. A short resume of the site visit is attached as Appendix 1.

9 MECHANICALLY PROPELLED VEHICLES

P Brooks welcomed PC Rob Burn, Northumberland Police, who gave an informative talk on mechanically propelled vehicle (mpv) disorder in south east Northumberland, particularly in Ashington and surrounding areas, which is mainly motorcycle-related. He advised the disorder can be seasonal, some illegal use is not deliberate but due to lack of understanding of the law whilst other disorder is carried out with criminal intent. He advised that the police have leaflets about reporting, in confidence, (mpv) disorder and the police did need the public to report incidents, though it was noted this could be difficult given that on occasion, incidents were spotted in inaccessible place off the beaten track and miles away from police presence.

PC Burn also explained about the impact of Section 59 of the Police Reform Act in helping to deter disorder whereby after warnings, vehicles can be removed by the police and, unless the owner pays for its return, it will be crushed.

From the questions and discussions following PC Burns' talk, the following points were noted:

- how to make enforcement work – suggest looking at schemes such as Durham's 'Bike It...' which educates as well as enforces; also in South Tyneside there is a publicity campaign showing photos of crushed bikes and vehicles which was being used as a deterrent;
- police have asked some garages to refuse sales to unlicensed or underage bikers; consider spreading this wider;
- due to the lack of legal places where genuine users can go, safely and without causing disruption, it was clearly identified that provision was needed for the genuine user so areas needed to be identified for legal off-road and bike use;
- consider involving shops selling bikes and equipment by for example, promoting courses to build responsibility and raise awareness;
- the increasing use of mini-motos by inexperienced riders was seen as a potential growing problem;
- M Jeffrey said he would like to highlight some 'hot spots' so would liaise with PC Burn in this regard;
- should a letter be sent to the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police suggesting a force-wide campaign rather than individual forces addressing the problem in their own way?
- there were mpv problems in other areas such as the Cheviots and the North Pennines AONB, where the TRAAX system of reporting incidents was used.

It was agreed that P Brooks would write to the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police as above. D Brookes and L Lazzari would provide some notes, including specific examples of both urban and rural incidents, so that the letter was evidence based. P Brooks thanked PC Burn for his informative talk.

10 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 10.1 D Brookes reported on developments with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan in relation particularly to the urban south-east corner. He said a lot had been

achieved over the years including cycling routes in south east Northumberland, Sustrans trails which were well used by dog walkers and riders; informal recreational areas such as Queen Elizabeth II park; Ashington Woods – noting that the Access to Nature fund application would be submitted (see RoWIP objectives); unadopted footpaths which are recorded as public footpaths but which need improvements to make them adoptable.

In the capital improvement programme, several small scale projects are included which will have significant benefits; planning system improvements e.g. Seghill landfill site, open cast developments, wagon ways projects which included other small scale improvements. He added that he hoped more synergy would come with the introduction of the new unitary authority in April 2009.

When asked how the County Council kept in contact with adjacent authorities, M Jeffrey said no there was no formal process but contact was done on a case-by-case basis for example, Seghill, St Cuthberts Way and coastal paths.

There was a view that more routes for riders were required and many of those in existence needed upgrading. M Jeffrey said some routes were covered in wagon ways improvements. P Brooks took the opportunity to thank M Jeffrey for his thorough report on Wagon Ways and drew members' attention to the content as some of the issues being raised were already in this report. It was also noted that the RoWIP indicated that the county was not as well served with bridleways as it could be.

- 10.2 Members noted E Bamford's report from the Natural England workshop on RoWIPs in Durham on 7 March. She said that whilst it had been a useful event, it was a pity there had been a lack of local access forum representation.
- 10.3 Members noted the report from Working Group Two's meeting on 26 February 2008 and the attached draft list of disconnects which had been included with the meeting papers for information only. P Brooks, on behalf of G Gill, said that the group had kept an steady eye on the implementation of the RoWIP and that Working Group Two had collected some examples of anomalies and disconnects known to members of the group.

D Brookes said he would reply to G Gill but in the meantime has asked him to provide him with an electronic copy of the list of disconnects to facilitate Northumberland County Council's response.

P Brooks invited members to continue to send in any information to update or comment on the draft list of disconnects.

11 MEDIATION PANEL

G Astbury, for the benefit of new members, gave a brief verbal report on the work of the Mediation Panel. P Brooks thanked the Panel for the sensitivity and hard work of the Panel in their approach to the issues raised by the representatives from the North Pennines in an attempt to find a conclusion acceptable to all. She added that letters had been sent to two senior officials at Natural England advising them of the issues in the North Pennines and replies were eagerly

awaited. A letter to the representatives concluding the JLAF's involvement in these issues would be sent when these replies were received.

12 ACTION PLAN 2008 – 2009

Members noted the draft Action Plan 2008 – 2009. Following a few minor amendments, the Action Plan was signed-off and will now be issued to members, the appointing authorities, DEFRA and Natural England on 1 May 2008.

For the forthcoming year it was agreed that more emphasis would be placed on priorities and ways to best utilise members' availability, knowledge and experience. The Action Plan and Annual Report would continue to integrate with each other.

Working Groups: P Brooks took the opportunity to speak about the Working Groups, stressing the importance of these groups in undertaking the work of the JLAF. She drew members' attention to the revised list of working groups and asked members to note which group they were included on. Working Groups would be complete with the appointment of the Appointing Authority representatives. She said members were welcome to attend other working group meetings if they wished.

- Working Group 1 received a copy of the Coastal Access Outline Structure for their next meeting on 12 May. It was suggested that Allan Elliot be invited to attend one of their meetings. Chair: James Brown
- Working Group 2 would continue its work with disconnects, wagon ways and green exercise. Chair: Graham Gill
- Working Group 3 would be looking at ways to re-vamp the Action Plan for next year to include making it more user-friendly and also, look at raising the profile of the JLAF. Chair: Richard Cross

13 GENERAL UPDATES

Cheviot Hills Project: P Brooks introduced Elanor Johnston, the National Park Cheviot Hills Heritage Officer who provided an interesting presentation on the work of the Cheviot Hills project, which is a two year project in partnership with other agencies such as the National Park and Scottish Borders Council, looking at heritage, access, local communities and settlements, a mapping project involving both side of the border, and the landscape itself (views and stories). The aim of the project is to produce a Cheviot Heritage Atlas which would be used to promote sustainable tourism amongst other things. Members said they hoped for further updates on the project at future meetings.

13.1 Northumberland National Park: Members noted the update from Northumberland National Park and key points included:

- The project at King Arthur's well has been completed first from a Natural England under spend from last year;
- Milecastle 38 now had people walking over it but since a major diversion project is now scheduled for the summer months, G Gill had not written another letter in this regard;

- Salters Road – a further update was available in D Brookes report;
- G Featonby's report on the Simonside consultation event was noted.
- Performance indicators were lower than last year due to waymarking and signage.

P Brooks said she would like to invite the National Trust to a future JLAF meeting and hoped that they would attend.

13.2 Northumberland County Council: Members noted the update from Northumberland County Council and key points included:

- the £170,000 awarded through the Local Transport Plan for capital improvements;
- an update by M Jeffrey on the issues surrounding the bridge over the Breamish at Brandon which has been closed to all users for a few years and is part of the promoted Pennine Cycleway.
- Salters Road – noting the request for an independent JLAF member to attend the forthcoming meeting to be held with representatives of path users to discuss enforcement (which will also involve the police, the National Park Authority, the County Council, Forestry Commission and MoD) G Astbury volunteered to be the independent JLAF member. L Lazzari said she would send him a copy of the National Park survey on Salters Road and G Astbury said he would familiarise himself with as much of the route as possible, prior to the meeting.
- The Public Rights of Way website will now include the location and duration of temporary and permanent traffic regulation orders.
- P Brooks thanked M Jeffrey for the rights of way performance indicator report.

13.3 North Pennines AONB: Members noted the helpful update on the North Pennines AONB received from Simon Wilson. P Brooks said she would ask him to provide such an update for each JLAF meeting and added that a return visit to the North Pennines would be planned in the near future.

14 MEMBERS' SECTION

The various reports submitted for this section were noted and P Brooks thanked members for continuing to send these updates in.

Some members felt it would be helpful if the JLAF kept themselves informed on access issues relating to other organisations, partnerships and projects e.g. the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Forestry Commission strategy etc.

P Brooks spoke about a document issued at the last regional LAF meeting by Ingo Schüder, Natural England, titled 'Access in Regional Strategies'. She felt it would be impossible for individual local access forums to liaise with each of the bodies, that regional clout would be more effective than individual approaches and that the JLAF needed to be more selective with what they become involved with given particularly given the constraints of members' availability and other resource implications. She added that currently, the JLAF were already involved with two key consultations with partners - the National Park's Management Plan and the North Pennines AONB Management Plan.

A Collingwood-Cameron said he would be happy to look at the 'Access in Regional Strategies' document and give a steer on what he felt was most relevant to the work of the JLAF. He would forward his report to P Brooks.

15 CONSULTATIONS

The following points relating to consultations were noted:

- the relevant sections of the Government's draft Marine Bill, published on 3 April 2008, would be looked at by Working Group One;
- members noted the several closures which had been consulted on since the last meeting – Lamb's Crag, Cumbria Fire Directions and re-assessments at Snope Common and Coanwood Common;
- the final version of 'Access for All; Diversity Action Plan' had finally been published by DEFRA in late February 2008, information about which was discovered on the DEFRA website as it appeared that formal notification of its issue had been sent out to the national parks but not local access forums;
- the 'Revision of Natural England's Statutory Guidance to CROW Relevant Authorities: Report on Results of Public Consultation' - J Brown said he would review this document and forward any recommendations to P Brooks.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 16.1 P Brooks advised that the results of the North Pennines Management Plan 2009 – 2014 scoping document '*Scoping Report: North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 Review Process*' had been received. Assurance given that the JLAF would be on the list of consultees for the full draft Management Plan consultation which would take place between late August and October 2008.
- 16.2 The working groups met briefly to arrange future meeting dates.

17 DATES OF FUTURE JLAF MEETINGS

The meeting closed at 2035. The next meeting of the JLAF will take place on Thursday 24 July 2008 and further details will be available in due course.

Members were asked to note the dates of meetings. Possible future meeting themes were suggested which included involving the National Trust, looking at environmental and conservation issues, the Tyne River Trust and inland waterways and revisiting the North Pennines, Kielder and the Otterburn Ranges.

Date	Location (venues tbc)	Meeting themes (provisional)
24 July 08	Ingram/Breamish Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land manager perspective of access• Access and harmony with sporting interests• MoD – Access updates
30 October 08	North Pennines Coastal AONB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coastal Access• Marine Bill• Coastal AONB 50th Celebrations
29 January 09		
23 April 09		
23 July 09		
29 October 09		