

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

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON**

**THURSDAY 19 JULY 2007 at 1745 - 2100**

**DENEHOLME, ALLENDALE**

- JLAF Members: Pamela Brooks, Chair  
Richard Cross, Vice Chair  
George Astbury Erica Bamford  
James Brown Victoria Brown  
Edward Carrington Angus Collingwood-Cameron  
Gill Featonby Susan Finch  
Lorraine Hershon Ted Liddle  
Alasdair Mitchell Susan Rogers  
Kevin Vigars Albert Weir
- Officers: David Brookes, Northumberland County Council  
Mike Jeffrey, Northumberland County Council  
Jonathan Mullard, Northumberland National Park Authority  
Elaine Rigg, Northumberland National Park Authority  
Marion Hume, Northumberland National Park/JLAF Administrator  
Lorna Lazzari, Northumberland National Park Authority
- Others: Mr Simon Wilson, Access Officer, North Pennines AONB  
Mr Mike Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Officer, Durham County Council  
Ms Christine Pope, Natural England - West Durham Land Management Team  
Mr Duncan Graham, Chair, Cumbria Local Access Forum  
Mr Alan Dougherty, Member, Durham Local Access Forum  
Mrs Maggie Keyte, Allen Valleys Action Group  
Mr Alan Kind, Byways and Bridleways Trust/Trail Riders Fellowship  
Representatives from the Allen Valleys Action Group; Allendale, Slaley,  
Blanchland, Hexhamshire and Healy Parish Councils; 4 Parishes BOATS  
Joint Committee; Lord Crewe Estate and other members of the public
- Apologies: Graham Gill Bryan Harwood  
Peter Nicholson Paul Kelly  
David Towns

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and said she was delighted at the turnout of members. She highlighted the fact that although local access forum meetings are open to members of the public, they are not public meetings.

She particularly welcomed speakers, Mr A Kind and Mrs M Keyte, the representatives from the North Pennines AONB, Cumbria LAF, Durham LAF, Durham County Council and Natural England and the representatives from the Allen Valleys Action Group; Allendale, Slaley, Blanchland, Hexhamshire and Healy Parish Councils; 4 Parishes BOATS Joint Committee; Lord Crewe Estate and other members of the public

## **2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Six separate questions from members of the public had been received in writing by the Joint Local Access Forum and these had been noted by the members. The questions had been received from Mr J Barker (member of the public), Mrs M Keyte (Allen Valleys Action Group), Mrs A Grieve (Allendale Parish Council) and Mrs P Wilson (Slaley Parish Council and the 4 Parishes Joint BOATS Committee).

The Chair, on behalf of the JLAF, thanked them for their questions and advised that the question from Mrs Keyte had already been answered. The other five questions would require input from all members and it was hoped that following the afternoon site visit to the North Pennines, discussions at the meeting and follow-up advice and guidance from members and others as required, replies in writing would be sent out to the remaining correspondents as soon as possible after the meeting.

The Chair then gave a brief background report on the issues raised by the correspondents. She said that it was disappointing that no-one in the North Pennines area had applied to join the JLAF during the recent recruitment process. She added that though not wishing to underestimate in any way the complexity of the issues in the North Pennines, that they had been taking up a disproportionate amount of JLAF time in recent months and that the JLAF, as an independent advisory body, could not be seen to be campaigning for one group in Northumberland. She further advised that the JLAF had responded to all questions and queries received over recent months from correspondents, including Mrs M Keyte, and that it had been decided to invite Mrs M Keyte and Mr A Kind to the meeting to explain in person to the JLAF, the issues that were concerning them.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minute of the meeting held on Thursday 19 April 2007 was approved by members. Minor amendments were noted and the Minutes signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.

- a) J Mullard and J Boulton to be added to the list of apologies.
- b) P9 - CRN Conference on Branding – “regarding branding .....a typical example is calling Hadrian’s Wall the Roman Wall when the former name is the branded name.”

## **5 MATTERS ARISING**

P7 – Windfarms – S Rogers updated members on progress following her report to the meeting in April on windfarms and gave examples of how early input and discussions with, for example, environmental consultants, can pay dividends. She would continue to keep the JLAF updated with developments.

P8 – Northumberland County Council – D Brookes said there was no update on Unclassified County Roads and Public Rights of Way (report tabled at the JLAF meeting on 18 January 2007) and that he would provide an electronic copy of the Accord to Marion Hume to be circulated to JLAF members.

*Action: D Brookes*

## 6 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked B Harwood for his initial work in setting up the JLAF and her predecessor R Cross for his service to the JLAF as Chair and looked forward to his support as Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year. She added that the posts of Chair and Vice-Chair were elected on an annual basis and that R Cross had intimated he would only stand as Vice Chair for one more year, therefore a new vice-chair would have to be identified. She mooted the suggestion of deputies to assist the Chair and Vice Chair in their duties and asked willing volunteers for either vice chair or a deputy, to contact Marion Hume in the first instance.

*Action: all members*

## 7 ACTION PLAN 2007 – 2008

Members were reminded this was a dynamic document and that updates and amendments should be anticipated during the year. The Action Plan had been circulated to organisations including the appointing authorities, DEFRA and Natural England as well as being on the website. A six-month review would be made at the October meeting.

Following discussion on updates to the Action Plan it was

- agreed to add 'Walking for Health' to the remit of Working Group Two as it was felt this tied in with work on wagonways.
- noted that the main work of the JLAF would be done by the three working groups, who would remain self-programming, in the first instance, with their outcomes channelled back to all the members through reports from working group meetings and further action at main JLAF meetings.
- agreed Working Group One would liaise with the Coastal AONB re their deliberations on the DEFRA Coastal Access consultation and involve B Harwood as the liaison between the working group and the Coastal AONB. It was noted that 6 members had signed up for the extra consultation event on 2 August 2007, in Durham and any other member with comments on Coastal Access was asked to pass these to M Hume as soon as possible, for forwarding to S Rogers, Acting Chair of the working group, who would be compiling the draft JLAF response.

## 8 OVERVIEW OF THE SITE VISIT

Members had had the opportunity to participate in a site visit during the afternoon which took in a walk along an easy access multi-user path (NY965504 by Blanchland village hall) followed by a presentation by Simon Boyd on 'New Projects in the North Pennines AONB' and a talk by Christine Pope which included an introduction to Natural England including an explanation of the regional and national teams, Natural England's specific duties with regard to the CROW and NERC Acts.

She also provided updates on restrictions and the latest on the Discovering Lost Ways project which included a copy of the latest presentation given on 11 July by A Earnshaw; she advised that the next issue of the 'DLW Newsletter' would have more details including the 'Pathfinder 5' project which would require some input from local access forum members by way of a short questionnaire.

R Cross gave an overview of the afternoon's meeting and highlighted the main points observed from the walk in particular, where members noted that the surface of the easy-access path to Blanchland village hall itself had proven to be unsuitable for wheelchair

users and that the car park was no longer suitable for horses/horseboxes to manoeuvre in easily. Members felt that if money was being spent on public rights of way surfaces then these must be properly built and assessed as multi-user surfaces.

He added that C Pope's talk had resulted in lengthy discussion round various issues which included: criticisms re mapping restrictions; access and conservation; motor vehicles in the North Pennines; investigation into lack of uptake of open access in the North Pennines; access land and rights of way improvement plans; maps as an appendix to rights of way improvement plans; and Discovering Lost Ways all of which C Pope had noted and responded to.

## **9 PRESENTATIONS**

The Chair introduced the invited speakers, Mr S Wilson, Mr A Kind and Mrs M Keyte.

- 9.1 The Chair introduced S Wilson who gave an interesting talk on 'What Makes the North Pennines so Special'. He explained what the AONB was and stressed it was not a planning authority. Some of the subjects relating to access in the North Pennines were mentioned and included the footpath used during the site visit; 'Access for All' consultation; 'Trampers'; problems arising from lack of cohesive public transport links in the AONB resulting in little opportunity to combine this with other activities e.g. cycling; accessibility of promoted materials (availability, format, suitability); cycling issues; equine routes – he spoke about the 'Living North Pennines' Project which was looking at environmental improvements from day rides to tree planting and the condition of the rights of way network (see North Pennines AONB Management Plan).

He also spoke about 'vulnerability' particularly with regard to mapping, upland tracks, UCRs, byways, BOATS; the Blanchland circular equine route; legitimate legal access and current European legislation; and instances of localised illegal use of multi-purpose vehicles for recreation. He said that some routes were vulnerable, some not and for some, not enough information was available. He also spoke about a vulnerability mapping exercise undertaken last year funded by Natural England which had resulted in an assessment toolkit. The methodology was on the Natural England web-site and other AONB's had suggested different layers of vulnerability which might be included.

- 9.2 The Chair introduced Mr Alan Kind who gave a short presentation on Definitive Map Modification Orders in Northumberland. A copy of his presentation is available on request.

He asked the JLAF if they could help ease the passage of applications and orders and assist in reaching correct and equitable outcomes in a shorter timescale. He proposed that the JLAF set up a working group to look at ways in which they might act as a peace envoy in all applications and contested orders and that they might be able to identify the salient issues in each case and advise parties where the 'same issues' get brought forward case-on-case.

- 9.3 The Chair introduced Mrs M Keyte who gave a presentation on issues in the North Pennines. A copy of her presentation is available on request.

She said that work in the context of BOATS and designated and vulnerable sites has been undertaken by Allen Valleys Action Group since July 2000 and by the parish councils, in varying associations, since 2003. She outlined some of the main issues and spoke about the demise of the North Pennines LAF and role of the Northumberland National Park and Countryside JLAF now it had the North Pennines officially in its remit.

- 9.4 The Chair thanked the presenters. D Brookes said the presentations made some valid points, some which were based on fact; he added that the responses from Northumberland County Council in the past had been more or less correct and he had no more to add.

It was agreed, after some deliberation, that investigations would be made into the feasibility of setting up a short-term mediation panel or working group to address issues in the Allen Valley request and the Chair invited willing volunteers to put their names forward to M Hume in the first instance. It was agreed that if the mediation panel was set up and any specific training or visits were required, for example, that Natural England would be approached for funding.

## **10 ROWIP UPDATE**

D Brookes provided an update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and thanked the JLAF for their original responses to the consultation. Members agreed to meet in early August to discuss the response to the formal consultation to the second draft RoWIP to be sent to D Brookes by end of August. It was anticipated the final version of the RoWIP would be available towards the end of the year.

## **11 UPDATES**

Members noted the reports from Northumberland County Council, Northumberland National Park Authority, notes from P Brooks' meeting at Natural England, the Coastal Access Report from B Harwood and the Tramper Report from T Liddle who updated members on progress with this in light of S Wilson's earlier presentation. It was noted they were allowed on a range of access paths and members asked if any charities might be able to help with purchasing these.

Regarding the report from Northumberland County Council, and the item on recent meetings with the Forestry Commission, members asked if similar meetings were planned with privately-owned forest owners. M Jeffrey said this was an on-going initiative with NCC, NPA and the Forestry Commission looking at forestation problems. He updated members on the Forestry Commission meeting which had been to discuss strategy; other issues would be addressed path-to-path on an individual land-owner basis. Members believed there were still problems in forests e.g., Pennine Way and M Jeffrey said as forestry was an on-going process, it was like a moving target and it was impossible to be constantly on the ground. It was noted that Forestry Commission closure applications should now include a diversion as an alternative route.

D Brookes confirmed, regarding an up-to-date list of Definitive Map Modification Orders, that there was a Register of these on the NCC website.

## **12 MEMBERS' SECTION**

There was nothing further to report.

## **13 CONSULTATION**

Members noted the consultation in progress and outcomes of those consulted on, noting the final version of 'Access for All' was still awaited from DEFRA.

**14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members noted the date of the Regional Local Access Forum day being organised by Natural England on Wednesday 10 October 2007, in Durham.

**15 Date of Next meeting**

The meeting closed at 2100. The next meeting of the JLAF will take place on Thursday 25 October 2007 and further details will be available in due course.

Date	Venue	Meeting/Themes
25 October 07	Hadrian's Wall and area; National Park Offices	Hadrian's Wall and Northumberland National Park'.
31 January 08	tbc	Promoting Northumberland as a Tourist Destination
24 April 08		
24 July 08		
30 October 08		