

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Northumberland National Park
and Countryside Joint Local Access Forum
Held on Tuesday 8th June 2004 at 6.00 pm.
At The Clock Room, Blagdon Estate**

PRESENT:

Members

Bryan Harwood
James Boulton
Erica Bamford
Nick Rossiter
Pat Scott
Ted Liddle

Kevin Heymann
Mark Wood
Pam Neal
Pamela Brooks
Jo Deniel-Rowe
Peter Clark

**Officers from the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and
Northumberland County Council (NCC):**

Catriona Mulligan, Director Access & Communications	(NNPA)
Robert Mayhew, Team Leader (Recreation and Access)	(NNPA)
Clive Crossley, Countryside Service Manager	(NCC)
Karen Fallon, Local Access Forum Administration Officer	(NNPA)
Linda Pinkham, Team Leader Corporate Administration	(NNPA)
Peter Howe, Principal Countryside & ROW Access Officer	(NCC)

1. Election of Chair

Mr T Hardy proposed that Mr B Harwood be elected as Chair of the Local Access Forum. This proposal was seconded by Mr M Wood. There were no other nominations.

2. Election of Vice Chair

Mr T Hardy proposed that Mr R Cross be elected as Vice Chair of the Local Access Forum. This proposal was seconded by Mr T Liddle. There were no other nominations.

3. Appointment of Members

Forum members had already received their length of tenure on the Forum by letter.

Forum members were advised that subsequent to the letters having been issued, there had been two resignations; Ian Douglas and Richard Fordham. Thanks were given to both Ian and Richard for their valuable contribution to the LAF to date. Chair to write letter of thanks to both Ian and Richard.

The recruitment process for two new members would need to be carried out publicly, however the group were advised that if they knew of anyone who might be interested in becoming a member, the individual concerned should contact Karen Fallon for a recruitment pack.

The regulations require that a balance in membership should be maintained between landowners/land management and recreation; however this balance did not apply to the area of other interests.

4. **Apologies:** Janet Robinson Sue Bolam
 Richard Cross Graham Gill
 Trevor Hardy Michael Walton

5. **Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

6. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising from the Minutes.**

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting subject to the following amendments:

- Page 3, item 7 – photographic evidence circulated identified damage on The Street, not Salters Road.

Matters Arising

8.0 Forum Response to CA on Provisional Maps

- Forum had requested CA report for the designation of Lordenshaw.
- Update – spoken to CA regionally to try and find out more information. Audit trail can not be established locally so info has been requested from CA offices in Cheltenham (Head of Mapping). It would appear though from initial investigations that a site visit was not made. Rationale for why site visit not made and reasoning for exclusion from Open Access awaited from Cheltenham.
- Review Process – in the letter to the Countryside Agency voicing number of concerns Forum had asked that review process might be brought forward in some circumstances. It was felt this might be asking for something that was not possible within current legislation.
- Update - CA have power within CROW Act to determine the length of reviews. The maximum period between reviews is 10 years, but they have power to reduce that to any length of time they see fit.

9.0 Working Groups

- Groups 2 & 3 have now met. As consequence meetings have been arranged with Countryside Agency/Northumberland County Council & NNPA – looking at implementation of Open Access in LAF area, and secondly meeting with Northumberland County Council and NNPA to establish who is responsible for what elements of the ROW network.
- Group 1 to elect Chair and convene first meeting – Chair yet to be agreed – Richard Fordham had agreed, but has now resigned from Forum. Group 1 will meet on 2nd July 2004 at 2.00 pm at National Park Headquarters, Eastburn to discuss remit.

12.0 Appeals in Area 4/5 – Update

- Had been difficulties obtaining information as to numbers of appeals received for respective areas.
- Can now advise (as at 3rd June 2004) 311 appeals have been received for Area 5 and 708 for Area 4. (Information from CA Mapping Appeals Team). Limited information is available on the Planning Inspectorate website, but would suggest all members regularly have a look at the Countryside Agency site for updates and information.

14 Removal or Relaxation of General Restrictions Consultation

- Concerns were raised about the legislation proposed in that it could result in the legality of higher rights clashing with permitted development.
- Update – still to be resolved.

15 Any Other Business

- 15(a) Tranquility Awareness session took place in April, facilitated by University of Northumbria, which a number of Forum members attended. Have now been invited to a presentation of all the information received from stakeholders and countryside users. Some initial maps of the study areas will be presented, showing degrees of tranquility on them. Presentation will be taking place over 2 days – 21st & 22nd June, from 11am to 7pm, at the University of Northumbria, Stage Two of the Students Union building. (More info available if required from KF).
- 15(c) how are Countryside Stewardship Access Agreements to be mapped in relation to Open Access? Update – the Countryside Agency are aware of the situation. There are some concerns over accuracy of mapping of Stewardship Access land. When information is available it will be captured as a separate layer of information on Access website. Forum members are recommended

to check this website regularly for up to date information: [Open Access Website](#)

- 15(d) Concerns expressed at previous meeting over AONB Consultation Document, regarding inaccuracies. Have now received copy of Draft Management Plan Consultation Document. Keen to receive as many comments/views as possible from different organisations and individuals. Invited to consultation road shows:

Tuesday 15th June – Embleton Crichton Memorial Hall 2pm – 7pm

Wednesday 16th June – Alnmouth, Hindmarsh Hall 2pm – 7pm

Thursday 17th June – Bamburgh Cricket Pavillion 2pm – 7pm

Paper copies are available from Karen Fallon, however it is possible to view plan online and respond online at

www.northumberland.gov.uk/services/coastplan.htm

Action: Comments to be received by Karen Fallon by 25th June 2004. Draft response to be circulated to members. Deadline for submission of comments is Friday 9th July 2004.

7. Public Participation

No questions had been received from members of the public, prior to the meeting. No questions were raised by the members of the public present at the meeting.

8. First Annual Report

Members had received a draft copy of the First Annual Report. The Annual Report was approved subject to typographical amendments.

Action: Copies to be formally sent to Countryside Agency, Northumberland National Park and Northumberland County Council. Copies also to be forwarded to surrounding Local Access Fora. Copy to be available on National Park web site.

9. Implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Members were given an update by Peter Howe, Principal Countryside & Rights of Way Act Officer with Northumberland County Council.

The County Council wishes to obtain information from stakeholders to assist it with the preparation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. A number of stakeholder meetings will be arranged and the Rights of Way Network Working Group are invited to these meetings. Other Forum members not part of the ROW Working Group are also welcome to attend.

The issues to be discussed at these meetings will include: the extent to which ROW meet current and future needs; the size, positioning and condition of the ROW network in Northumberland; awareness and promotion of the network; the extent to which the network meets the needs of different user groups; conflict between user groups; accommodating other interests e.g. landowners, heritage and nature conservation and; links with other strategies and documents.

The question was asked as to what stage the Forum would learn how the ROWIP is to be implemented. The Forum were advised that the ROWIP has to be adopted by November 2007. The next round of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) is from 2006. DEFRA is indicating it would like ROWIP to become a strand of LTP. DEFRA are now saying that if the ROWIP is not complete by the time of the LTP process, highway authorities will need to produce a statement of intent. DEFRA are still having problems deciding how it becomes a strand of the LTP - guidance was promised in April.

There is still a considerable amount of work to be done, as only 25% of the County has been looked at; now looking at rest of County.'

Action: P. Howe to forward copy of ROWIP when complete to Forum.

10. Northumberland National Park Authority ROW Performance Indicators

Members had previously received a copy of a report that had gone to the Northumberland National Park Authority on Rights of Way Performance Indicators.

Catriona Mulligan provided the members with background information to the report. One of the observations made by a DEFRA review sometime ago was that National Parks were not meeting the requirements of Section 62 Environment Act. As a consequence most National Parks Authorities are now starting to review their relationships with highway authorities. National Park Authorities are required to monitor and record information for publication in annual reports. There are a number of Performance Indicators the National Park Authorities are required to meet, with one of the key indicators being 'Ease of Use', which is a particularly difficult indicator to meet. Performance is in fact going down. A lot of effort has gone into the National Trails in recent months to the detriment of other areas of the rights of way network. This needs to be rectified. Northumberland National Park is not a highway authority but has always invested significant resources of it's own into the rights of way network on behalf of Northumberland County Council, who are the highway authority for the area covered by the National Park.

National context: In 2000 the Countryside Agency carried out a Rights of Way Condition Survey. The survey highlighted that no region had actually obtained the national target, estimating that some sixty million pounds was required to ensure that all routes met the national targets.

Action: web site address of link to Countryside Agency Rights of Way Condition Survey 2000 to be circulated to those members with internet access. Paper copy to remainder.

11. Voluntary Dedication of Access Land

Members had previously been circulated with a copy of a Northumberland National Park Authority report on the dedication of authority land for open access; and information on Forest Enterprise dedication of land for open access.

Members were advised that the report to the National Park Authority had been agreed with the exception of Greenlee & Stonefolds. Together with access on foot it was agreed that the potential to consider dedication of higher rights (on horse and cycle – possibly linear rather than open access) at Greenlee/Stonefold should also be considered at this site.

The County Council do not have extensive landholdings other than those already open for access i.e. country parks. Other landholdings i.e. schools were obviously not suited to open access

12. Designation of Simonside Hills Candidate Special Area of Conservation: European Habitats Directive

Members had previously been supplied with a copy of the report advising of the designation of Simonside Hills. Members welcomed the designation.

13. Update on Countryside Agency/DEFRA activities

- Few details were available with regard to new structure of Countryside Agency, although it was anticipated that it would be going back to being a smaller organisation with a focused policy brief.
- Article by Alan Kind in Bridleways & Byways publication regarding the review of the Countryside Agency. No mention of footpaths, bridleways, byways etc. (Copy of article to be included with minutes).
- Department of Transport is now considering rights of way as transport corridors. May be able to access funding as a result.
- Feeling that perhaps ROWIP's should be called 'Access Improvement Plans'. ROWIP has huge potential to improve way people move around.

14. Members Expenses

Members were provided with a revised expenses scheme and were advised that the maximum journey which could be claimed for was now 400 miles. Members were also informed that expenses claims should be submitted by the 4th of the month to ensure timely processing.

15. Update on Chillingham Cattle

Members had previously received copies of correspondence from Lord Joicey advising the Forum as to the current situation with regards to the possibility of open access on part of the Chillingham Cattle Park. No action was required.

16. Forum Response to DEFRA re: Consultation on use of mechanically propelled vehicles on rights of way.

Forum members had previously been circulated with a copy of the response submitted to DEFRA on behalf of the Forum.

Forum Members again commented that Police Authorities have key role to play in preventing miss-use. Members were advised that in Northumberland National Park, the Police Authority have, for some time, been putting significant resource, including the use of helicopters, in to trying to combat the problem.

Members were advised that the Northumberland County Council Framework for Managing Boats was still under consultation. Guidance is awaited within next few weeks.

17. Access Newsletter

Members had previously been provided with a copy of issue 2 of the new Access newsletter produced by DEFRA.

Members to receive copy of Issue 1 via email or a paper copy with the minutes, where email facilities are not available.

Future copies to be provided electronically to members where possible.

18. Any Other Business

18(a) Hadrian's Wall Path Trust. The Chair advised the group that this organisation was hoping attract charitable trust status. Details to be circulated with the minutes. The members were also advised the Bryan Harwood sits on the committee representing the YHA, not the LAF.

18(b) Update of Members Activities. This item to appear regularly on the agenda for future meetings. Provide an opportunity for members to inform the group of activities/meetings they have

been involved in (not necessarily as a representative of the LAF) that may be of interest to the group as a whole.

Mark Wood advised that he had attended a Rights of Way Committee Meeting at County Hall. A number of questions had been raised by the Improving Rights of Way Working Group at the last meeting with regard to the digital version of the definitive map, which Mark had agreed to ask at the ROW meeting. The members were advised that the ROW are now of GIS. A consolidation exercise is currently taking place at present to sort out a number of outstanding issues. It is anticipated that parishes and user groups will be provided with a disk late 2004/early 2005. It is anticipated that the information will be available in public libraries and eventually on-line.

- 18(c)** Lost Ways Project. The question was asked as to what was happening with the Lost Ways Project. Members were informed that at present there was little progress. The Countryside Agency have let a contract to a consultant to consider what is now appropriate for the project.

Members asked how they should get the County Council to consider routes that they are aware of. Members were advised that they should bring the routes to the attention of the County Council team and there was perhaps an opportunity for interested parties to work together to find the appropriate 20 year history. It is thought there are in the region of 200 routes to be investigated.

- 18(d)** North East Tourism Strategy. Members were advised that this had now been issued for consultation. The deadline for comments on the strategy is 6th August 2004. It was agreed that it was felt to be relevant to the Forum and that some comment should be submitted on behalf of the group. It was agreed that it may be appropriate for two of the working groups to look at the report in detail; the group looking at a recreation and access strategy and also the group looking at improving the rights of way network.

- 18(e)** Re-routing of The Pennine Way through Hareshaw Linn. Members were advised that correspondence had been received from Trevor Hardy, who was unable to attend this meeting, with regard to Agenda Item 11 – Voluntary Dedication of Land. The comments are as follows: “The note describing this section refers to a ‘large area of proposed Open Country to the north-east of the site, however there is no link’. It has long been the view of the Pennine Way Council (now Association) that the Pennine Way should be re-routed through the Linn and there has been correspondence with Northumberland County Council and National Park Authority about this proposal. It seems to me that we have an ideal opportunity to re-route the Pennine Way

through the Linn with access out of the northern part, making this section much more attractive and safer for walkers, who at the moment have to use in part a public road with no pavements.”

Forum members agreed that the views of the local community would need to be taken on board, as Hareshaw Linn is viewed as a local treasure. Members were advised that there was strong local interest in creating a small circular walk incorporating the Linn. It was agreed that the above comments should be passed to Bellingham Community Trust.

19. Date of Next Meeting

Members were advised that Joint Local Access Forum meetings arranged for 2004 had clashed with the dates of the North Pennines LAF meetings. As some members and officers were involved with both LAF's, it was agreed that the date for the September and December meetings should be changed.

The date of the next meeting will now be Monday 6th September 2004 at Rothbury. It is anticipated that this meeting will include a site visit to Lordenshaws & Simonside Hills.

The December meeting will now take place on Wednesday 8th December 2004. Venue to be confirmed.