Minutes of JLAF Meeting held on

Thursday 19 July 2018 1735 – 2030

Lesbury Village Hall, Alnwick, Northumberland

Attendance:
Afternoon: Alex MacLennan, Liz Bray, Moray Allan, Roger Morris, Susan Rogers, Ted Liddle, Mike Bell, Amanda Earnshaw, Rob Turner, Sarah Radcliffe.
Evening: Alex MacLennan, Liz Bray, Moray Allan, Roger Morris, Susan Rogers, Ted Liddle, Victoria Brown, Mike Bell, Amanda Earnshaw, Rob Turner, Sarah Radcliffe.
Officers: Pete Trumper, Lorna Lazzari and Marion Hume, Northumberland National Park Authority; Mike Jeffrey, Northumberland County Council;

Hyperlinks are only provided in these Minutes to provide information of interest and more detail of the topic being discussed.

England Coast Path update

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Jim Milner, England Coast Path and Open Access Lead Adviser, Natural England who provided an update on progress with the England Coast Path North East (see link). Some key issues were highlighted including:

- explaining about the impact of the test case around habitat regulations as a lot of the path passes through a European protected site;
- on the Bamburgh to Borders section at Waren Mill, a different crossing was being considered following JLAF advice;
- balancing nature conservation with access remains an issue with the Coast path;
- some landowners remain nervous about issues around dogs, cattle and access;
- will become a National Trail, subject to National Trail funding formula and Trail partnerships will be set up for each section; and
- the South Bents to Amble section is due to open 26 July 2018.

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman noted apologies from Philip Cotton, Ian Glendinning, Steve Blake, Ian Hutchinson, Nick Rossiter, Violet Rook and David Brookes, welcomed Pete Trumper to his first JLAF meeting and was delighted to welcome several visitors: Martin Swinbank, Alnwick Town Council; Neil Allender and Paul Wright, Ramblers, Jim Milner, Natural England, Gill Featonby ex JLAF Chairman and Adrian Vass, Lesbury Parish Council. T

2 Questions from members of the public

A question had been received from a Bamburgh councillor from a visitor to Seahouses:

“A visitor to Seahouses sent a letter to the Northumberland Gazette complaining about restricted wheelchair access to parts of Seahouses, notably decorative pebbles over the path
between Crewe St and South St which is the only access to the cliff top path. There were also issues with building work on the lower end of South St restricting access. The councillor was aware that part of Seahouses is unadopted and asked the JLAF for advice”.

Mike Jeffrey, Northumberland County Council, thanked the councillor for contacting the JLAF and advised the County Council were aware of this issue and an Area Countryside Officer would be in touch with Bamburgh Council in this regard.

3 Declarations of Interest: there were no declarations of interest.

4 Election of JLA F Chairman and vice-chairmen

Mike Jeffrey presided over the election of the Chairman and vice-chairmen. The current Chairman, Amanda Earnshaw and vice chairmen, Moray Allan and Ted Liddle, stood down.

- **Chairman**: Amanda Earnshaw was proposed by Liz Bray, seconded by Moray Allan and there being no other nominations received, was duly elected Chairman till July 2019.
- **Vice Chairman**: Ted Liddle was proposed by Liz Bray, seconded by Alex MacLennan and there being no other nominations received, was duly elected a vice chairman till July 2019.
- **Vice Chairman**: Moray Allan was proposed by Amanda Earnshaw, seconded by Liz Bray and there being no other nominations received, was duly elected a vice chairman till July 2019.

5. Minutes of Meeting held on 19 April 2018

The Minutes were approved by members and signed by Moray Allan, Vice Chairman.

6 Matters ARISING from previous Minutes

i. Page 3 re fingerposts: Sue Rogers thanked NCC for looking into this matter and noted the increase in renewed fingerposts. Lorna Lazzari said the National Park Authority was undertaking similar work to renew fingerposts.

ii. Volunteer work: looking at the comments gathered from the visit to the Allen Valley regarding volunteering, Roger Morris was asked to lead on this topic along with a small group (Liz Bray, Sue Rogers, Alex MacLennan and Nick Rossiter) and to co-ordinate the group’s findings in order to provide information for the JLAF website on access-related volunteering opportunities such as path clearing, footpath work etc. Information would also be shared with Dave Richardson, the National Park Authority’s Volunteer and Apprenticeships Officer.

7 Afternoon session

The theme of the afternoon session was “Multi-user access paths – visit to the Aln Valley Trust Railway project – Restoration, Preservation. Reclamation, Education”. One of the aims of the site visit was to help inform the new JLAF position paper on Multi-user paths. During the site visit members were asked to consider two questions:

1. how can the message ‘Share the space considerately’ be better promoted?
2. re Alnmouth to Warkworth, to consider how the carelessness of some users of the route, where vehicular routes cross the track, could be better addressed.
JLAF members, led by Ted Liddle, visited this project to consider multi-user access path issues including best practice, signage, interpretation and visitor information (such as avoiding use of ‘jargon’), codes of behaviour for use, surfacing issues and accessibility including restrictions, with a view to producing a JLAF position statement.

The members also looked at the previously disused rail path to Alnmouth and the future path which will be adjacent to the rails and track between Alnmouth and Alnwick.

Members were grateful for input from others at the meeting who were keen to see progress being made as quickly as practicably possible and including the provision of a cycle path from the station as the current cinder path is unsuitable for cycle use particularly when walkers are also using the same route. Mike Jeffrey explained about traffic works orders and suggested the Aln Valleys Railway Trust contacted the County Council in this regard.

Ted Liddle thanked everyone for their constructive comments which would be taken on board by the JLAF and three main recommendations were proposed:

i) the JLAF should formulate a Code of Practice for the Aln Valley Trust Railway project and to consider pulling together similar user codes operated in other areas such as the shared use path at Wylam;

ii) being adjacent to the Aln Valley railway it was suggested the name of the shared use path became the Aln Valley Greenway (a **Greenway** is a universal term for a shared-use traffic-free path used for e.g. recreation, commuting, health & wellbeing, access to nature etc.);

iii) the JLAF would assist as much as possible to help progress the scheme and noted that local parish councils were keen to see the full route in place as soon as funding is secured.

Ted Liddle reminded members of the questions for members to address, asked them to send him responses by the end of July, and agreed to update members at the next meeting.

8 **JLAF Activity Plan**

**JLAF Activity Plan Objective 1: JLAF involvement in the RoWIP, Open Access, Coastal Access, 2026 and other access projects**

a) **Updates from appointing authorities**

**Northumberland County Council**

Mike Jeffrey provided a verbal update:

- focus on the England Coast path Seaton Sluice to Amble portion: lengths of new access in place e.g. at Lynemouth so some excellent improvements for local people;
- Hadrian’s Wall Path: funding issues continue with no long term funding in place and a likely revised funding formula forthcoming in light of the England Coast path national trail status. A lot of work was being undertaken nationally to ensure national trials are funded going forward;
- Smoutel Ford: some funds set aside as part of the Revitalising Redesale project
- complaints received about vegetation overgrowth. He explained the County Council’s annual vegetation management programme;
- annual survey of public rights of way continues (started 2000): a randomised survey covering 7% of PRoW annually and was valuable - number of signposts has remained

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stable over this period but acknowledged some go missing for various reasons; there was no specific programme to replace sign posts and fingerposts however;

- NCC were investigating alternative methods of reporting problems through use of an interactive map on the NCC website.

Members raised a number of issues such as one on the East Coast mainline with the danger created due to the proximity to a steep drop and at Stobswood (north side near main road) where it was impossible to walk through due to extreme vegetation, boggy areas and cattle in the field. Mike Jeffrey thanked members for raising these matters and asked them to liaise directly with him on these and similar matters.

Northumberland National Park

L Lazzari provided a verbal report:

- National Trails: tenders were out for the area above Gibbshield with work starting as soon as possible to end in October;
- Tilhill: have clear-felled an area recently; soil reversal will make a difference to users;
- Pennine Way Annual Survey commences in August - no significant issues anticipated;
- Hadrian’s Wall path had been very busy during the year to date with lots of foreign visitors; not much grass cutting had been done due to the hot weather as well as problems with gate posts since the hot weather therefore there was an unplanned increase in the amount of maintenance required going forward; a new part-time ranger had been appointed;
- The Sill: visitor numbers were encouraging and footpath link to Steelrigg was well used.

b) Working Group One update: there was nothing further to report following on from the report provided in April relating to the work the group has been undertaking on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Members hoped for a further update at the October meeting and a meeting of the working group should be organised in the near future.

9 JLAF Activity Plan: Objective 2: Advocacy, Influence and Partnership working to advance access to the countryside.

a) Working Group Two update.

Sarah Radcliffe advised members the group had discussed the tourism fairs earlier this year, which members of the JLAF had attended and handed out information; the group discussed how this could be done differently next year, including planning ahead what kind of information to be given out both to the general public and to providers of e.g. B&Bs and what kind of information the JLAF hoped to garner.

Members noted the update to Activity and Communications Plans made by Working Group 2

b) Parish updates:

Sue Rogers provided an update on various parish matters and informed members that she and Sarah Radcliffe were pushing forward with the Eglinham Parish PRoW Project and were hoping to submit an application to the Middle Moor Windfarm Fund in the autumn.

Sue Rogers asked members if they were aware of their own parish’s rights of way and if so, had they been walked and if not, to make themselves aware of them and pass any findings
on to her. She was keen to obtain information on how used the paths were, where they go, obstacles, vegetation, clearance issues, is there a circular walk, is it suitable for dog walkers, is the current map up to date, finger and sign post issues etc. Other issues discussed by the working group were Revitalising Redesdale.

Sill Working Group: members were interested to learn, now that the Sill was up and running, the Sill Project and Activity Boards had been re-vamped to form the new Sill Advisory Board. Members asked if the Sill JLAF Working Group could be resurrected and Lorna Lazzari said she would look into this.

c) Natural England:

Further to the earlier update on the England Coast Path, Jim Milner provided a more specific update on some changes expected at Natural England including staff changes; funding and resources issues; impact of Brexit negotiations on resources; information about the Coastal Landscape Partnership; whilst the access focus is on the England Coast Path the Access Team were aware of the Open Access Land Review but there was no capacity to review this until the England Coast Path was finished.

Jim Milner drew attention to Natural England’s two-year priorities namely:
- the funding formula for National Trails;
- delivering open access;
- nature friendly schools,
- the ‘Living Coast’,
- Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) a survey which provides trend data for how people use the natural environment in England; and
- volunteering e.g. Lindisfarne Nature Reserve.

d) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty updates

Members were interested to learn about Northumberland Coast AONB’s ‘Coast Care’ project and noted the Lindisfarne Peregrini project, set up to protect, restore, and enhance the Holy Island of Lindisfarne through community, voluntary and public sector organisations.

Iain Robson, the AONB Access and Natural Environment Officer, has also invited the JLAF to visit the Coast AONB during 2019, particularly to discuss issues around the England Coast Path following the JLAF meeting to the Coast AONB in April 2016 when they discussed and advised on, the alignment of the coastal path.

e) Kielder Water and Forest Park

Alex MacLennan updated members on the Borderlands Partnership which brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England border. He advised that he and Ted Liddle were working on the ‘Forgotten Lands’ element and also spoke about connectivity using the forest park network. He also spoke about the conference held in Dumfries on 18 June 2018 which provided the opportunity for the Borderlands Partnership to meet with stakeholders and local and national politicians.
Members were interested to hear how both Kielder Water and Forest Park and the National Park were utilising ‘ViewRanger’, the digital guide to the outdoors with downloadable route guides, outdoor map and powerful GPS navigation features and hoped to learn more about this in the future.

f) Other updates

- Regional LAF event 3 May: Amanda Earnshaw gave a brief summary of the event where topics such as the North East Combined Authority (NECA) Walking and Cycling Strategy, Dogs in the Countryside, Brexit and the Defra ‘Health & Harmony’ consultation.

- Land of Oak and Iron: Liz Bray provided an update on this initiative about restoring the ancient woodland in the Derwent Valley which was a landscape project with shared path development and a good example of partnership working.

10 JLA F Activity Plan: Objective 3: Communication through the provision of advice and information on issues relating to access to the countryside

Working Group Three update:

Sue Rogers suggested a follow-up letter to MP’s (first letter sent in Oct 2017) about funding post-Brexit for access to the countryside, to include comments from Defra consultations, and with an awareness of comments from other organisations to what they might be lobbying on.

Amanda Earnshaw agreed to draft a second letter to MP’s with a focus on using members of local access forums to monitor and evaluate access issues in the lead up to, and post, Brexit. This letter would ensure dialogue was maintained between the JLAF and local MP’s to ensure the JLAF voice is heard within Defra’s Brexit negotiations and inclusion of access within the development any new agri-environment grant scheme.

Designated Landscapes Review: Liz Bray requested a copy of the DLR paper discussed at the National Pak Authority meeting in July 2018. Members noted Amanda Earnshaw would attend any meetings about this matter and asked to be kept informed of developments.

Consultations:

a) Forestry Commission: members noted wrong map was sent with the Forestry Commission consultation at Deadwater (Master Grain) on access restriction of over six months.

b) Highways England: members also noted the Highways England – Vulnerable Road Users consultation related to current plans for dualling two sections of the A1(grade separated crossings). Members commented on a number of issues including the crossing at the River Coquet, for which JLAF members recommended a footbridge.

It was suggested members looked at the relevant sections of the Highways England website at https://highwaysengland.co.uk/programmes/a1-in-northumberland/website or e-mail comments to A1innorthumberland@highwaysengland.gov.uk

c) Transport Committee: members noted the government’s Transport Committee is launching a wide-ranging inquiry into the bus market in England outside London as bus service use is in decline according to annual bus statistics produced by the Department for Transport and bus
use per person has fallen by 40% outside London. MPs will consider the reliability of bus services, how they are run in different areas of the country, how bus services are financed and examples of innovation and best practice.

11 JLA# Communications and Activity Plans

Amanda Earnshaw reminded members they all had a responsibility to keep engaged with both plans and to help keep them up to date, and therefore there would be a dedicated session to discuss and progress both plans at the next meeting.

Particularly with regards to communications, ways of promoting the work of the JLA# should be investigated as a priority for all users (including those not into gadgets) such as:

- use of social media e.g. via Twitter @Nland JLA#;
- a ‘blog’ or electronic newsletter;
- uploading photos to Instagram;
- attendance at events such as the tourism fairs and type of materials designed for use there e.g. an eye-catching poster for businesses to use; and
- achievable methods of highlighting key messages e.g. responsibly taking dogs into the countryside, potential dangers of cattle when out walking and the health benefits of accessing the countryside.

All ideas should be sent to the Communications sub-group (Chairman and two vice-chairs).

12 Any other business

a) Borderlands initiative: this will be covered more fully at the next meeting.

b) Registered Common Land: Jim Milner agreed to provide further information as required.

c) Safety in the Countryside; members noted work being done in the Yorkshire Dales with regards to safety around cattle and dogs in the countryside and the NFU had also produced some signage on this topic. It was agreed this could be discussed further at the workshop on 29 October on Dogs in the Countryside which the Kennel Club had offered as a joint LAF workshop and it was hoped there would be a good turnout of local access forum members and other organisations to this workshop.

13 Dates of future JLA# meetings

Dates of future JLA# meetings: Thursdays 18 October 2018; and 24 January, 25 April, 18 July and 17 October 2019.

The meeting ended at 2030
JLAF Working Groups 2017 as at July 2018

A new working group format was agreed at the July meeting. Members had been assigned by location i.e. Working Group North/ South but members will be assigned according to Action Plan objectives.

1. The JLAF chair and vice chairs will instigate the first working group meeting
2. A lead member should thereafter be appointed to take the lead role on co-ordinating the group and pushing the various actions forward.
3. Members of working groups can attend any working group meeting or feed into discussions, if the topic is of interest to them.
4. Working groups should try to meet at least twice a year, otherwise can carry out their discussions via e-mail/phone.
5. The lead member should arrange any venue for meetings – travel expenses will be paid and if the meeting is in e.g. a cafe, teas/coffees/soft drinks will be reimbursed if a receipt is provided.
6. A couple of topics have been agreed for each working group. Topics may be short or long term and the list will be added to/topics removed throughout the year.
7. Each topic discussed should have a communications outcome and an information position element and members should bear this in mind during their discussions.
8. Working groups should prepare feedback for each JLAF meeting.

Working Groups May 2017 – April 2019: Working groups meet between meetings as and when required. Members are welcome to join other working group meetings if the topic being discussed is of interest to them or if they have relevant experience and knowledge to inform discussions and actions.

1. Objective 1 - Working Group One: To be actively involved in the ROWIP, open access, coastal access, 2026 and other access projects:
   Liz Bray, Violet Lou Rook, Ian Glendinning, Nick Rossiter, Phillip Cotton and Moray Allan
   Objective 1: The Sill working group – Nick, Moray, Ted, Violet, vacancy.

2. Objective 2 - Working Group Two: Through advocacy, influence and partnership JLAF will work to advance access to the countryside:
   Sarah Radcliffe, Rob Turner, Ted Liddle, Vic Brown, Ian Hutchinson and Roger Morris
   Objective 2 Volunteering Working Group: Roger, Liz, Sue, Alex, Nick

3. Objective 3 - Working Group Three: Effectively communicate through provision of advice and information on issues relating to access to countryside:
   Steve Blake, Alex MacLennan, Sue Rogers, Amanda Earnshaw, Mike Bell and vacancy.
   Objective 3: Communications Working Group: Chairman and the two vice chairmen

Representations: the following members will represent the JLAF on these groups for 2017 – 2018:

- National Park Management Plan Partnership: Amanda Earnshaw
- Kielder Water and Forest Park Affiliates: Amanda Earnshaw
- Northumberland Coast AONB: Vic Brown
- North Pennines AONB: Ted Liddle
- North East Local Nature Partnership: Ted Liddle
- Regional Local Access Forum: Chairman and/or Vice Chairmen