



Minutes of the JLAF Meeting

Thursday 26 January 2023, 10am to 1.04pm via Teams

Present:

Alex MacLennan (Chair)	Helen Hindson
Moray Allan (Vice Chair)	Diane Holmes
Rob Aubrook (observer member)	Ted Liddle
Liz Bray	Cllr Nick Morphet
Vic Brown	Sarah Radcliffe
Philip Cotton	Sue Rogers
Marie Fallon (NNPA Authority Member)	Violet Rook (attended for Item 7)
Fiona Gough (NNPA Authority Member)	

In Attendance:

Neil Dawson (NCC)	Jayne Longlands (NNPA)
Lorna Lazzari (NNPA)	

Apologies for Absence:

Received from; Ian Glendinning (Vice Chair), Jeff Wild, Jen Shaw (NNPA), Duncan Wise (NNPA), and Helen Lamb (NCC).

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Moray Allan outlined Housekeeping expectations for the meeting, including the raising of hands and use of microphones.

Moray explained the protocol for members providing their own personal views rather than JLAF views to external bodies; noting that members needed an awareness of how they worded matters and should be mindful of who they were representing. Lorna Lazzari spoke about Freedom of Information and reiterated the LAF guidance regarding member representation.

2. Questions from Members of the Public *questions previously submitted by members of public*

None received.



- 3. Declarations of Interest:** *In accordance with Paragraph 6:8 of Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002, revised February 2007, members are asked to declare any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial and/or financial interests in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting and shall disclose the nature of those interests to the meeting.*

None.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2022

The draft Minutes of the JLAF Meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2022, as circulated, were signed as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising and updates from previous meetings

(a) Sustrans and Access Strategy Discussions

Vic Brown noted that, within Northumberland Coast AONB, FiPL money was being spent on Sustrans and access strategy discussions were taking place.

With regards to Sustrans, it was noted that it was the Highway Authorities remit to remove signage no longer in use. Cllr Nick Morphet said that red numbers had been removed from the blue signs.

Ted Liddle had been previously contracted by Sustrans to establish a National Cycle Network (NCN) in the North of England. It was noted that the NCN belonged to the Local Authority through which it passed, so NCC would make decisions. However, from 1995 to 2000, the traffic flow was a lot quieter, so roads acceptable at that time for the route were no longer acceptable now. Ted Liddle **AGREED** to prepare a succinct report for presentation to the Walking and Cycling Board (WCB) with the question as to who was making the decisions, on what basis and process.

TL

Rob Aubrook noted the rationale taken by Sustrans for changing the NCN route, as there had been a national policy shift - parts of the route were quite dangerous and no longer fit for purpose. He added that policy must be adhered to when putting active travel routes in place and said this was a work in progress. He added that the democratic process was a powerful tool. It was **AGREED** that Rob Aubrook would engage with Sustrans, with this work to feed into the WCB, though the use of Ted Liddle's paper.

RA

The Chair noted the Destination Management Plan; we were promoting the County and we needed Northumberland to be ready to meet our visitors.



Sue Rogers queried why Sustrans were promoting a route which they considered dangerous. Cllr Nick Morphet replied that they weren't promoting the dangerous parts of the route and were letting people use their own discretion (it was considered that the dangerous sections may be suitable for serious cyclists, rather than families and novices).

6. Strategic JLAF Meeting on 30th January 2022: update for members

Members were notified that a Strategic JLAF Meeting was taking place on Monday 30th January 2022 at which both Tony Gates, Chief Executive of NNPA, and Greg Gavin, Head of Neighbourhood Services for NCC, would be attending.

The Chair noted that this would be an awareness meeting which was due to take place annually. He added that minutes would be taken at this meeting, and they would be shared with members.

Rob Aubrook suggested that those attending the Strategic JLAF Meeting needed to think about what they wanted to get out of it. The Chair replied it was a commitment to the realisation of improving access in the County, with ROWIP being the key driver. Neil Dawson added that he would like to have more resources, although he did note that a lot of great work was already taking place at the current time. Moray Allan said that this was a senior level drive for everything to be resourced properly, reviewing how the work of JLAF could be seen as an integral part of what NNPA and NCC were doing across the County via a tripartite approach.

Cllr Nick Morphet noted that the one-stop shop cycling website had implications for NNPA.

Rob Aubrook remarked on the good working relationship between NCC and NNPA, with Tony Gates from NNPA being engaged with the access agenda. He suggested it was useful to go into the meeting with the ask that we have, i.e. making sure that resources remained and (if possible) increased, clarifying what the picture was at a national level of funding, resources and opportunities.

7. Transport from Newcastle to Northumberland: Violet Rook

Violet Rook's report had been circulated prior to the meeting, together with Duncan Wise's comments.

Violet spoke to the meeting about the need for less carbon emissions and encouraging people to be more active. She added that NNPA's aims and objectives encouraged



people to get out in the Park, promoting health and exercise. She agreed that we needed to promote the paths (as per Duncan Wise’s feedback).

The Chair queried how JLAF could assist with getting children from Blyth out to enjoy the new gravel trails, as well as focussing on wellbeing walks on the eastern side of the County.

Liz Bray agreed there were problems with public transport and noted the mismatch with bus and train timetables. She said that, post-pandemic, private vehicle use had increased and public transport use decreased.

Sarah Radcliffe noted the parking charges at Hadrian’s Wall; she had paid £6 to park at Walltown which was not transferrable to use at other Hadrian Wall car parks. She suggested that, if parking tickets were transferrable, this would encourage people to visit the area. Lorna Lazzari noted that the Park had reviewed their car parking policy in 2017 when The Sill first opened.

It was **AGREED** that:-

- (a) Liz Bray would draft a letter to send to travel companies - for issue to the relevant contacts (which Duncan Wise may be able to assist in providing). LB
LB
- (b) Lorna Lazzari would investigate parking charges further, raising this issue with Rob Mayhew. LL
LL

8. 2023 Shows

Following the last JLAF Meeting, a list of Northumberland Shows and Fairs in 2023 that members had previously expressed an interest in attending were presented, as follows:-

Date	Venue
29 th May 2023	Northumberland County Show
3 rd June 2023	Seghill Fair
11 th June 2023	Morpeth Fair
19th August 2023	Allendale Show
26th August 2023	Bellingham Show
28th August 2023	Glendale Show
7th October 2023	Alwinton Show

The Chair noted partnership working within the area of protection against rural crime; he informed the meeting that this initiative would be promoted within the countryside area at Northumberland County Show this year.

Neil Dawson said that he had some “Public Paths in Northumberland” booklets still in stock which could be distributed at the 2023 Shows.



Members were informed that monies were still available within the JLAF Budget but should be committed before 1st April 2023.

Jayne and Lorna displayed the large A1 framed Northern Heritage cycling poster (compiled by Ted Liddle), which publicised cycle routes around Northumberland's market towns.

It was **AGREED** that:-

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| (a) | Members should submit any outstanding expenses for 2022/23. | ALL |
| (b) | Jayne would contact members to ask for availability in manning the show stands, she would then provide a timetable. | JL |
| (c) | We were looking for new things to promote at the Shows in 2023; members to consider what topics we could talk about this year and let Jayne or Alex know. | ALL |
| (d) | We proceed to order a feather flag from the JLAF Budget (two of these would be ideal if finances allowed). | JL |
| (e) | We would get a framed A1 Walking poster (in the same style as the cycling one); with Sue Rogers happy to provide route maps. This map would include the South East corner - with Neil and Helen happy to help with this. Neil Dawson would take this proposal back to his team to inform them of JLAF plans. | JL
SR/ND/
HH |

The meeting broke at 11.25am for a comfort break, then reconvened at 11.35am.

9. Disused Railway Tracks Position Statement

Ted Liddle reported as follows:-

- Alnwick West Greenway were now a Community Interest Company (CIC) with a website.
- £3 million had been donated to rural communities in Northumberland. The community were encouraging organisations to bid for these monies.
- Activities at Rothbury had gone silent for time being.
- The National Trust at Wallington were re-energising contact with JLAF.
- Ted, Nick, Rob and Alex were currently reviewing the North Tyne DRT proposal.

The Chair noted that, externally, the profile of DRT's was building and senior officers were increasingly talking about relevant proposals.

Sue Rogers had given U3A talks in Alnwick the previous week; she had explained that JLAF were working to get tracks open to the public.



Cllr Nick Morphet updated on the Border Counties North Tyne Railway. Formal landowner engagement was due to take place and discussions about whether this route was to be lit would follow. Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) issues were all being considered. He noted a recent Parish Council meeting he had attended where local people had expressed their interest in opening up the North Tyne DRT.

It was **AGREED** that:-

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| (a) Cllr Nick Morphet would follow-up on whether the remit of the NCWB could be extended to include horse riding. | NM |
| (b) Small groups starting on their own initiative should seek JLAF guidance and involvement; as we needed to be seen as a strategic group and all speaking with the same voice. | ALL |
| (c) The Disused Railway Tracks Position Statement be approved (with all comments to be made by 31 st January 2023) and posted on the website. | ALL
JL |

10. Safety of Women when accessing the Countryside

The Guardian articles by Chris Boardman, as highlighted by Liz Bray, regarding women's safety in the countryside were noted.

Liz added there was a lot of research going on for women and teenager-friendly spaces; this issue was not just about physical safety but also about perception of safety. Liz talked about the behaviour of others and how this came across.

The promotion of cycling groups within the County for women to join; such as the "This Girl Can" initiative were noted.

Ted Liddle said there was a club called 'The Cycling Sisters', he had also observed an increasing number of women joining his own cycling club.

Sue Rogers said that safety was a big issue in the horse world; many women felt safer on a horse than on foot, however there was still an element of vulnerability and this issue needed to be taken seriously.

It was **AGREED** that:-

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| (a) The Chair mention to Kim McGuinness (chair is in a meeting in March with Kim McGuinness to outline NJLAF's concerns about this issue (it was noted that Northumberland Protection against Rural Crime was a project which would continue to expand). | AMcL |
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| (b) Members provide feedback to Jayne about any led walks, cycle trails or horse riding routes available for women. | ALL |
| (c) Provision of a register for women's fitness groups would be considered by the WCB. | NM |
| (d) Women's safety could be considered as part of the JLAF Stand at the 2023 Shows
<i>[It was Subsequently noted that JLAF'S role was supportive within this area, rather than focussing on implementation].</i> | JL |
| (e) The need for NCC and NNPA support for single gender walking groups would be noted and addressed. | ALL |
| (f) Liz Bray would follow up on this area of work and pursue it further. | LB |

11. JLAF Task and Finish Groups

(a) Access to Water

It was **AGREED** that Vic Brown would arrange an Access to Water T&FG Meeting by end March 2023. VB

(b) Communications

The Chair updated the group of a meeting held before Christmas where the priority was to get behind and support the ROWIP.

Diane Holmes said we needed a joint script with the Police about sharing tents at Shows. She added that discussions about the Shows should take place at Communications T&FG Meetings (rather than at Full JLAF Meetings).

The Chair and Liz Bray noted possible suggestions for the 2023 Shows including; responsible access and safety, replacing styles with gates, webpage promotion, taking examples to Shows of broken gate/style as a prop to engage people.

(c) Community Action and Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Liz Bray updated on the outcome of the previous ROWIP Meeting, with tasks assigned for feedback by the end February 2023. We needed to consider what the revised ROWIP would look like and whether it should be different to the old one.

Liz added that local transport and active travel were very topical at the present time, and she would like to see a more joined-up approach within this area. Liz suggested that DRT's should be included as a headline and the protection of historical routes such as the Roman roads.

Members commented as follows:-



- Marie Fallon supported Liz's practical approach and said we needed to identify who was going to do this work and when, looking at how was it was monitored to understand the barriers.
- Fiona Gough suggested that ROWIP should be the strategic document for the WCB, with strands to be taken forward and monitored.
- Cllr Nick Morphet spoke about heritage of the DRT's and the recording and celebrating of heritage assets through the neighbourhood planning process; he was looking into this for a local Humshaugh initiative.
- Neil Dawson concurred with Liz Bray, saying that the new ROWIP needed to be aspirational but have vision of what was achievable. He added he had a meeting the following week to focus on the ROWIP.

The Chair thanked Liz Bray for her hard work and others for their comments.

(d) Climate Change

To be discussed at the next meeting.

12. JLAF Updates from Appointing Authorities and Others

(a) Northumberland County Council

An updated NCO Map had been circulated with the papers, showing Rights of Way Officers geographical areas covered. Neil Dawson's NCC report had also been circulated earlier that day.

Neil Dawson noted that FiPL funding may be available to support Allendale Footpaths. He said that Queen Elizabeth Commemorative Schemes were in the process of being established and that routes were being resurfaced in South East Northumberland.

Marie Fallon said that access was a priority for FiPL within NNPA; and confirmed this funding opportunities were available for both landowners and farmers.

Rob Aubrook noted that we needed to keep the conversation going and ensure that financial support was available across the whole Park and not just the southern area.

It was **AGREED** that:-

ALL



- (a) If anyone had any access routes they were keen to improve within the Park then they should let Lorna Lazzari know, and she could then pass on to the NNPA FIPL team.
- (b) The Chair, Marie Fallon and Lorna Lazzari would meet to discuss funding for the access route from Bellingham to Boe Rigg.

AMcL/
MF/LL

(b) Forestry England (FE)

The Chair's FE report had been previously circulated.

(c) Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA)

Lorna Lazzari's NNPA report had been previously circulated.

**(d) Agriculture Bill, FiPL and ELMS
and**

(e) Northumberland Coast AONB

These reports were noted.

**(f) North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Group
and
Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group**

Ted Liddle had been unable to attend the North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Group Meeting; however he would forward the minutes as soon as he received them.

(g) Gravel Route Project

Rob Aubrook noted that he had presented on this item to Forestry England; he explained that this project required a lot of hard work in order for it to reach fruition.

Rob said he was making progress although going more slowly than anticipated, he had received a draft Memorandum of Understanding from Paul Nichol. Rob explained that the presentation of information was hugely important; he said there was a large level of interest and support for the project. He noted that horse riders' needs would be sought from both Sue and Diane.

13. Items for Information Only

Reports had been circulated regarding Repairs to Elsdon Bridleway and Protect Slaley Forest, and Ted Liddle noted the following points:-



(a) Protect Elsdon Bridleway

There had been 36 improvements, with £10,200 funding having been generated to repair the northern section.

(b) Protect Slaley Forest

The 'Protect Slaley Forest' project, to tackle damage through a steering group, was gathering momentum.

14. Any Other Business

(a) Parish Councils

Sue Rogers asked whether members had spoken to Parish Councils since the last meeting; a few members confirmed that they had done this. Sue said she had been liaising with her own local Parish Council to arrange a circular access route.

15. Date, Time, and Venues of Next Meetings

Williams Cleugh Visit; the Chair would be hiring a minibus and Mr Graham Gill OBE would be the guide. It was **AGREED** that this visit would take place on a Friday in early May 2023, with a couple of suggested dates to be circulated to the group.

JL

Thursday 20 April 2023 at Elsdon and Hepple

Thursday 20 July 2023 at West Chevington

Tuesday 17 October 2023 in Rothbury or Virtual (to be confirmed)

The meeting concluded at 1.04pm

Signed:

Date: