



**Minutes of the JLAF Meeting**

**Thursday 20 July 2023, 1.30pm to 4.35pm at Druridge Bay Country Park**

*(which followed a site visit to West Chevington (by kind permission of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust) which had taken place earlier that day)*

**Present:**

Alex MacLennan (Chair)	Diane Holmes (part of the meeting)
Moray Allan (Vice Chair)	Ted Liddle
Ian Glendinning (Vice Chair)	Cllr Nick Morphet
Liz Bray	Sarah Radcliffe
Vic Brown	Sue Rogers
Philip Cotton	Violet Rook (via Teams)
Helen Hindson	

**In Attendance:**

Tim Fish (NCC)	Jayne Longlands (NNPA)
Lorna Lazzari (NNPA)	Jen Shaw (NNPA)

Although unable to join the group for the afternoon session, in his absence, the Chair thanked Lee Rankin from Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT) for his time in showing the group around West Chevington earlier that morning. During the lunch break, members had been asked to add their post-visit thoughts to paper; comments were then duly read out at the meeting and documented within a list, as shown at Appendix 1.

Tim Fish informed the meeting that conversations were in-hand between NCC, NWT and other landowners on site about PRow at West Chevington. This was very much at discussion stage and information could not be shared at the present time, although NCC were looking at plans very closely. Sue Rogers hoped that temporary closures would come soon (she noted there were current breaches in place, with no signs to say that members of the public could not access the land). Tim Fish explained that this case was complicated and time-consuming, although the NCC Officers were working through it with the landowners, and NCC were optimistic of beneficial outcomes. It was noted that consultation documents were issued.

It was **AGREED** that JLAF would write to NWT, stating that JLAF has a very strong interest in work at the West Chevington site and they would be willing to support NWT in their endeavours.

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**Apologies for Absence:**

Received from; Marie Fallon (NNPA Authority Member), Fiona Gough (NNPA Authority Member), Jeff Wild, Rob Aubrook (observer member), Neil Dawson (NCC), Harry Firth (NCC), Helen Lamb (NCC) and Duncan Wise (NNPA).

**1. Welcome**

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

**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.*

**(a) NWT Membership**

It was noted that Liz Bray, Philip Cotton, Diane Holmes, and Ted Liddle were all NWT members.

**4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

The draft Minutes of the JLAF Meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023, as circulated, were signed as a true and correct record.

**5. Matters Arising and updates from previous meetings**

**(a) Item 7: Doddington North Moor**

Sue Rogers considered that it may be reasonable to arrange a site meeting to Doddington North Moor. It was **AGREED** that JLAF would write to Phil Bradley to check in on this item.

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**(b) Agenda Item 9(d): FiPL**

Sue Rogers noted her ideas of projects, having submitted two potential routes. Jen Shaw explained that suggestions for funding would need to come directly from landowners, she



added that the Farming Team had recently expanded to deal with high volumes of work (although noted that miscommunication had arisen and apologised for this).

**(c) Agenda Item 12(a): Hepple Whitefield**

Sue Rogers said that a proposed DMMO was the incorrect wording used in the previous JLAF minutes. It was **AGREED** that this wording would be updated to be that of 'proposed diversion.'

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**6. Northumberland County Council update including Forest Trails Project and RoWIP progress**

NCC's report had been previously circulated.

Tim Fish, NCC Area Countryside Officer for the Tyne Valley, spoke to the meeting; key points of his presentation included the following:-

- There was a processing backlog within the infrastructure records team at NCC due to high volumes of work.
- In response to Violet Rook's question, Tim said that AI was not being used in the processes now being adopted.
- Diane Holmes asked about the new 'Fix My Street' app and the automatic monthly email updates received, querying how this worked. Sue Rogers said she had written a page of how to use this app to report issues and this would be going on the BHS website. Tim Fish **AGREED** to prepare an update to JLAF in due course (based on the new system, issues, integration and assimilation with the current system etc).
- Tim noted that, in-line with the change of name for the King Charles III England Coastal Path, NCC would need to re-badge all the coastal path signs.

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Diane Holmes left the meeting at 2.37pm.

- Forest Trails Project; Storm Arwen brought an opportunity to employ a Forest Trails Project Officer, Harry Firth, who had started in post in May 2023, initially on a 12 month fixed-term basis. Harry had covered hundreds of miles within Forestry England (FE) land since starting in post. The Chair noted that conversations regarding the extension of this post had already begun (with evidence of added value being required to fund this). It was **AGREED** that Harry Firth be invited to prepare a paper for the October 2023 JLAF meeting and attend the January 2024 meeting.
- Sue Rogers asked whether there was scope within the project to look at the current claims for change of status within the forest estate (notably to restricted byway).
- If members had any priorities for Harry's work, they should contact Tim Fish with

JL



regards to this.

- ROWIP; the timeline to have this document published and out for consultation would now realistically be Autumn 2024.
- Dedicated NCC ROW Committee; Tim noted this committee would be put in place in Autumn 2023. Cllr Morphet said that it may be the other Green Party member (Cllr Martin Swinbank - who was also very engaged with access issues) who would sit on this committee, with Cllr Ian Hutchinson as Chair. Violet Rook suggested that the JLAF Chair should attend these meetings; Tim said that all members of the public would be welcome to attend.

#### **(a) Community Action and Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Liz Bray noted the bean counter exercise conducted at Northumberland County Show and asked if NCC had found it useful. Tim Fish replied that it certainly gave a flavour of the representations that people had with regards to RoW and provided a valuable interactive piece of work. It was noted that the same exercise would be carried out at Bellingham Show.

Liz was thanked for her work with relation to producing the Northumberland County Show Report, and all volunteers who helped on the day were also praised.

#### **(b) ROWIP**

Cllr Nick Morphet commented on the need to make sure that the ROWIP was of maximum value to landowners/managers when negotiating the new ELMS and preparing Land Management Plans.

It was noted that some ROWIPs could be a live document; Rachel Thompson OBE was working with the government on the access element of ELMS, with potential options for Northumberland to present a test case for this. Tim Fish said he was very interested to discuss this further, and Cllr Nick Morphet said he put Tim Fish in touch with Rachel Thompson.

Sarah Radcliffe said that the government were developing an access element into ELMS. Jen Shaw confirmed ELMS money could not be used for something permanent.

Sue Rogers considered that, for permissive access issues, it was not acceptable to use public money on temporary access. She queried if JLAF had a lobbying role; Lorna Lazzari replied that JLAF were there to provide advice, give a view and could ask questions.

The Chair thanked Tim Fish for attending the meeting.



## **7. 2023 Shows**

### **(a) Bellingham Show: 26<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

It was noted that arrangements were all in place for Bellingham Show. The following members had offered to help man the JLAF stand at this event; Helen Hindson, Alex MacLennan, Ian Glendinning, Nick Morphet and Philip Cotton. Others who may be able to assist but would confirm nearer to the time included; Sue Rogers, Ted Liddle and Moray Allan.

### **(b) Glendale (Wooler) Show: 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

The following members offered to help man the JLAF stand at Glendale Show; Ian Glendinning and Liz Bray. Others who may be able to assist but would confirm nearer to the time included; Moray Allan, Sue Rogers and Sarah Radcliffe.

### **(c) Alwinton Show: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

The Chair noted the date for Alwinton Show and asked members if there was an appetite to hold a JLAF stand at this event. The Chair, Vic Brown, Liz Bray, Ted Liddle and Ian Glendinning all said they would all be willing to attend and help with the JLAF stand at this Show.

## **8. JLAF Task and Finish Groups**

### **(a) Access to Water**

Vic Brown reported on the updated draft position statement for access to water, which had been circulated together with the papers for the meeting. It was **AGREED** that the Access to Water Position Statement be approved and uploaded to the website (with the group to be disbanded as this task had now been completed).

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### **(b) Communications**

The Chair said that attending shows and work on ROWIP were the main communication items for JLAF at the present time.

### **(c) Climate Change**

Ian Glendinning noted severe weather events such as flash flooding in Bellingham which caused damage at Hareshaw Linn; Jen Shaw said it was hoped that this site would be opened in time for the School Holidays.



Ian said that contingencies, such as a flooding resilience plan, were required, with position statements to be produced in-line with sustainable development goals.

Tim Fish said that climate change references would be included within the ROWIP; members noted this subject area would require more resources for the ROW Team at NCC.

Sue Rogers queried whether we should liaise with other LAFs (NB: there was no longer a National LAF in place). Ian Glendinning said could we do a predictive report on flooding issues and risk to the ROW network; it was **AGREED** to have a meeting of the Climate Change T&FG led by Ian Glendinning to discuss this matter further.

IG

## **9. Report from NNPA's Net Zero Officer, Alice Whitfield**

Alice Whitfield, NNPA Net Zero Officer, had previously attended a JLAF Meeting in January 2022 to outline her role and highlight Park aims. The report circulated with the July 2023 agenda gave an update on her work up to the end of the 2022/23 financial year. Jen Shaw noted that NNPA had legal obligations to provide the information contained within this report.

Jen said that alternatives to providing a tarmac pavement (such as the one installed at Walltown) had been considered, although NNPA were keen to provide access for all; she appreciated that this sometimes presented conflicting carbon figures.

Violet Rook noted that she had carried out air pollution monitoring twice via Newcastle University.

## **10. St Oswalds Way Management Group**

Tony Derbyshire's email, regarding opportunities for JLAF members to sit on the St Oswald's Way Management Group, had been forwarded to the group on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. It was noted that both Vic Brown and Philip Cotton were interested in helping with this group.

Ted Little talked about succession planning and noted the importance of this.

Sue Rogers had an issue which she would relay directly to Tony Derbyshire. She asked what the Ramblers were doing and noted that Neil Allender was a key contact.

David Pott was the Pilgrimage Consultant for the Diocese of Durham, and a contact for the Northern Saints Trails. It was **AGREED** that the Chair would talk to David Pott (with Tim Fish to provide his contact details).



## **11. JLAF Updates from Appointing Authorities and Others**

### **(a) Forestry England**

The Chair's FE report had been previously circulated; he said that Defra access funding had been received to help develop Wooler Common.

### **(b) Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA)**

Lorna Lazzari's NNPA report had been previously circulated.

Lorna said that, on week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> August, a site visit to Walltown to look at accessibility improvements utilising Flexipave would be arranged, and she would update the group with this information.

Lorna informed the group that a NNPA Policy Conference had been held at Greenhead and Walltown earlier in the month. This had been a positive day looking at access opportunities and Moray Allan had represented the JLAF that day.

### **(c) Northumberland Coast AONB**

Vic Brown reported that new footpaths in the Longhoughton area were being looked at, although Storm Arwen had held this work up. Progress was being made at Acklington Station.

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

Ted Little said that the North Pennines were progressing with development of a long orbital route around the AONB (which would take approx. one week to walk); to be promoted the following year.

Ted reported he was progressing the diversion of a bridleway through some woodland at Hepple Whitefield.

## **12. Access Rights to Ray Wind Farmland**

Cllr Nick Morphet raised this item; about whether to upgrade the access land at the Ray Wind Farm to include cyclists and horse riders.

Ted Little noted he had been tasked by Tony Derbyshire to contact Viscount Devonport regarding a local access issue.



It was **AGREED** that contact with Viscount Devonport be made jointly by both Ted Liddle and Cllr Nick Morphet (Ian Glendinning suggested that this correspondence should not include any reference to JLAF within it).

TL/NM

### 13. Items for Next Meeting

Members asked for agenda items for the next meeting and the following items were suggested:-

- (a) Car Parking in the Countryside
- (b) Gravel Trails Project
- (c) NCWB Update
- (d) Access to various locations via public transport
- (e) Queens Cave, Dipton Burn
- (f) Borderline Project at Alnwick (this was moving along positively although there was stipulation that it not be widened, or anything removed, and they also wanted unlimited liability); Ted suggested this be part of the October 2023 meeting and this was **AGREED**.
- (g) Active Travel Strategy; Violet Rook would send a paper for the next meeting.

TL/JL

### 14. Date, Time, and Venue of Next Meeting

#### (a) Tuesday 17 October 2023: Borderline Project at Alnwick

Further details to be confirmed in due course.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 4.35pm.

Signed: ..... Date: .....





## Appendix 1: Members' thoughts following the West Chevington Visit

- Rationalise access to prioritise nature recovery; diversions, closures, new links (avoiding sensitive habitats).
- Multi-user routes, no stiles, dogs on leads – but have a dog exercise field where they can run free.
- Wider strategic access strategy working with local landowners and community.
- Try to bring the disused railway into use for non-motorised users.
- Parking is essential.
- Good signage in and out of and around the site.
- RoW entry and exit points should connect with existing RoW on adjacent land.
- Retain some common woodland element to help fund access/conservation work.
- Allow pine to grow to maturity.
- Identify all relevant landowners and farmers, organise a round-table meeting, provide monetary gain which will result from creating linked cross-site shared use, ask for all to agree to close some RoW, create a new useful network.
- Managing evening use of car park/closing times.
- All ability access to connect to nature important.
- No sign of stiles or gates having been reinstated at any point in time.
- Temporary closure orders required, apply to NCC.
- Good co-operation with NCC RoW team to maximise benefits.
- JLAF support for 'practical' diversions of Public Rights of Way.
- Support for permissive routes.
- Permissive routes to be for all (non-motor) users; walking, cycling, horse riding.
- More public use leads to more public 'supervision' of possible bad behaviours.
- People wanting to see beavers could be a problem!
- Establish where access lies on the table of priorities, then work to create a balanced approach.
- Any access provided in the future should be multi-user – walkers, mobility aids, bicycles, horse riders, ponies and traps (restricted byways).
- Use temporary closures/diversions, engage fully with NCC, parishes and owners, use JLAF to help, look at future car parking, all paths to be multi-user, if possible, future – interpretation boards.
- Vandalism and motorbikes could be an issue.
- Temporary closure order, send like a plan.