



Minutes of the JLAF Meeting

Monday 16th October 2023, 10.12am to 2.30pm at Eastburn, South Park, Hexham NE46 1BS

Present:

Alex MacLennan (Chair)	Diane Holmes
Ian Glendinning (Vice Chair)	Ted Liddle
Liz Bray	Sarah Radcliffe
Vic Brown	Sue Rogers
Philip Cotton	Jeff Wild
Helen Hindson	Rob Aubrook (observer member)

In Attendance

Neil Dawson (NCC)	Jayne Longlands (NNPA)
Harry Firth (NCC)	Tim Fish (NCC)
Lorna Lazzari (NNPA)	Katherine Williams

Apologies for Absence:

Received from; Moray Allan (Vice Chair), Marie Fallon, Fiona Gough, Cllr Nick Morphet, Violet Rook, Duncan Wise, Helen Lamb, and Jen Shaw.

1. Welcome

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

Harry Firth was welcomed to the meeting and all present introduced themselves.

Katherine Williams was also introduced to the meeting and noted that she was assisting with the preparation of NCC's ROWIP.

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 received.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair noted that, following a few recent incidents (such as the one at West Chevington) and the fact that there are some things happening in the countryside which were not part of JLAFs remit; members' roles and responsibilities and the parameters of what we discuss at our visits and meetings had been considered.

Lorna Lazzari outlined the fact that any specific rights of way queries should be raised with Officers separately before each meeting. We needed to be mindful of how we dealt with external issues and two-way communication was important.

Ian Glendinning added his thoughts to the discussion and clarified JLAF's remit.

A flowchart had been produced to help provide steerage for members (as JLAF has a duty of care and could get a Freedom of Information request put on us).

To assist with the organisation of future visits, we had also produced a JLAF Visits Proforma; the plan being that members completed this form if they wanted to suggest future summer visits, with proposals then being discussed at the JLAF Washup Meeting. This would then help us to develop the letter that we send to the host organisation.

It was **AGREED** that the relevant documents would be circulated to members and the proposed process would be implemented in future by all.

JL/ALL

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 20th July 2023

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

6. Matters Arising and updates from previous meetings

(a) Meetings Action Database

Outstanding items on the Meetings Action Database were noted; those responsible gave their respective updates, with comments being duly added to this document.

It was **AGREED** that the steps on the bridge at Beal created an issue for horse riders; Neil Dawson said he would investigate this matter.

ND



Rob Aubrook queried whether different management techniques were required to address matters such as excess water on a ROW. Ted Liddle said that minor and major water courses would change ROW in time.

Sue Rogers said that diversion issues needed more attention and there may be situations when this was for the betterment. Tim Fish said he would have guidelines for implications of the deregulation bill in time.

It was **AGREED** that Rob Aubrook would draft a letter to send to the government to see if RoW rollback was feasible taking into account the consequences of severe weather events.

RA

7. Forest Trails Project Update

Harry Firth spoke to the meeting, updating them on his previously circulated report.

Fiona Gough had noted (by email) that it was good to see the work on restoring the Forest Trails; she considered that the focused survey work to inform action and planning was a great initiative. She said it mentioned some potential upgrades to BW status and incorporating some historic routes, and just wondered if there was an opportunity to capture and action other points from the draft ROWIP as an exemplar, e.g., any opportunities to create circular routes and also the provision of roadside laybys for parking etc.

Diane Holmes noted the substantial amount of work which Harry was covering; she asked if this was being costed and queried whether there were sufficient resources to do this. The Chair said there were many long-standing issues, he said support was offered by NNPA Rangers to assist although some other programme issues were more challenging. Harry's report provided a picture of the issues we were facing. Neil Dawson confirmed there may be funding from other sources to assist with this work, which may be incorporated within other NCC bids.

It was **AGREED** that Jeff Wild would send feedback from his walks leader role experiences through to Harry Firth.

JW

It was noted that, within his remit, Harry considered route prioritisation, as well as the wider public understanding of access routes.

Sue Rogers noted that, within the ROW network, many things had changed over the years.



Rob Aubrook said he would like to see coherence of the network and improvements on this, as well as discovering lost ways which will add value. He added that consultation was important. It was **AGREED** that the Chair would consider this issue further.

AMcL

Harry was thanked for his excellent work.

8. JLAF Updates from Appointing Authorities and Others

(a) Northumberland County Council and RoWIP and

(b) JLAF Task and Finish Group Update: Community Action and RoWIP

Neil Dawson updated on her report.

Fiona Gough said (via email) that the ROWIP was looking great and capturing many good ideas. Both that document and the consultation responses paper asked for examples in many places and felt this was something JLAF could help with. Many members had great knowledge and ideas on where improvements and enhancements, e.g., upgrades, circular routes, linking sections, getting people off busy roads, car parking etc were required. She queried whether an attempt be made to capture some of this somewhere, i.e. workshops/individual ground checking etc.

Fiona also noted the GIS capacity and work being undertaken by NCC and queried whether this could be linked to the above, i.e., a GIS layer of potential enhancements, available to those working on ROW including those working on ELMS.

Fiona agreed that permissive access was not ideal but said it could be a way of getting land managers on board with testing-out access on their land. If permissive access was on GIS maps it would be more useful - as often people did not know it was there and did not understand how it fitted with the ROW network unless they were local.

Sue Rogers suggested that DMMO should be in date order; it was **AGREED** that Neil Dawson would pass this comment on to Helen Lamb.

ND

Katherine Williams outlined the ROWIP work she was doing. She explained that the draft programme, structure and visions were not set in stone and were open for comment. A delivery plan would be set up to run alongside this. It was noted that this item would be discussed further at the January 2024 JLAF Meeting, with a consultation update provided at the April 2024 Meeting.



Katherine said she would like to use new images of a range of users within the ROWIP. It was **AGREED** that Lorna Lazzari would speak to the NNPA Comms Team to obtain relevant images.

LL

It was **AGREED** that the ROWIP Working Group would lead on this area of work and assist Katherine with her task.

LB

It was noted that Forest Trails would be included within ROWIP. Tim Fish said that all Partner strategic plans needed to be aligned. It was noted that Ian Glendinning would be the point of contact for climate change items.

Sue Rogers was pleased to see policy number five “put communities at the heart of the PROW network; local routes for local people”; she welcomed the reduction to eight policies with all points being very important. Getting a Ramblers representative at national level involved would be welcomed.

Ted Liddle noted that interconnectivity of the network across the whole country was important as we currently had a fractured network.

The Chair queried how Gear Change worked and said it would be valuable for everything to work together, rather than as separate entities.

Rob Aubrook queried how ROWIP linked into the Active Travel agenda.

It was noted that Ian Hutchinson was the Chair of the new NCC ROW group. It was **AGREED** that Tim Fish would check to see whether our comments could be fed back to this group as an information item (to consider how JLAF influences the ROW, i.e., stakeholder engagement, how does it join up, we wanted a strong involvement in ROWIP). The ROWIP would be signed off by the JLAF, as noted by Katherine Williams.

TF

Ted Liddle was the voluntary rep for the North of England Cycling UK off-road division. He said there should be a standard format for ROWIP’s across the Country, they could then be evaluated and scored, and advice given much more easily.

(c) Forestry England

The Chair updated the meeting on his report. He spoke about the NPARC work and illustrated the new signage and stickers which had been produced to help support their work, which would be circulated throughout the County. Tim Fish noted that careful placement of some signs would be required, and Ian Glendinning noted that enforcement examples should be included (as the signs were of little use without this). It was **AGREED** that the appropriate guidance wording would be included together with the distribution of these items

AMcL



Tim Fish said that community protection notices were encouraged to tackle antisocial behaviour and should be targeted specifically at individuals.

(d) Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA)

Lorna Lazzari's updated the meeting on her report. NNPA were looking to do some further accessibility work; using flexi-pave to surface the pathways at Walltown in the following year.

(e) Northumberland Coast AONB

Vic Brown noted the next Northumberland Coast AONB Meeting would be held in November 2023. The AONB Forum would take place on 8th December.

It was **AGREED** that JLAF Minutes would be issued to Iain Brown from the Northumberland Coast AONB in future.

JL

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

Ted Liddle suggested that members take the time to read these minutes as there was a lot of interesting information included.

(g) Community Involvement – opportunities, achievements and how to progress

Sue Rogers noted a new circular route (which was part definitive and part permissive) within her Parish; it was **AGREED** that a case study for this would be welcomed, to be included on the JLAF webpage and within the ROWIP.

SR

It was **AGREED** any other relevant case studies could also be included within the ROWIP.

ALL

9. Task and Finish Groups

(a) Communications

The Chair updated on communication items; he encouraged members to send photographs through to Katherine Williams for the ROWIP.

Items for Katherine to consider would include; Forestry Training Day, Sue Rogers' case study of the gate on the bridge at Rothbury, Helen Hindson's wheelchair example, diverse backgrounds/situations.



The Communications Task and Finish Group would meet again in January 2024.

(b) Climate Change

Ian Glendinning noted political policy changes and major climate issues continuing to escalate on an exponential scale which were a major concern, although unfortunately out of JLAF's control.

10. Outdoor Recreation Network: Designing and Developing Outdoor Spaces for Women and Girls

Liz Bray updated on the online event she had attended.

Jeff Wild said that NNPA were working with external organisations and taking minority groups out into the countryside, he added that low levels of funding were required to achieve this. He noted that travel opportunities were limited for some groups. It was **AGREED** that Jeff Wild would share relevant images with Katherine Williams.

JW

Ian Glendinning suggested that the demographics of walk leaders and participants needed to be more diverse; we needed to both attract them and retain their levels of interest.

11. Transport North East Stakeholder Consultation Event

Violet Rook had attended an online Transport North East Stakeholder Consultation Event on 11th September 2023; her comments would be fed through to the group.

12. St Oswalds Way

The Chair reported that he has spoken to David Pott from St Oswalds Way (as well as Craig Wilson from Durham Tourism). He added that he would pick this up in due course and report back to the meeting.

Sue Rogers noted the section of the A696 coming from Whitehill near Kirkwhelpington, which was on a sharp corner and very dangerous for cyclists and horse riders; it was **AGREED** that Neil Dawson would investigate this further.

ND

13. Sandstone Way

Ted Liddle said he continued to review way-markers on the Sandstone Way.



14. 2024 Recruitment

It was noted that JLAF recruitment would take place in early 2024; a recruitment pack for new members would be prepared, to include the following documents:-

1. JLAF Recruitment Stages: Early 2024 – outlining the proposed process.
2. 2024 Application Information – includes information for the candidate, as well as a Person Specification.
3. 2024 Application Form – an application form for candidates to complete.

A Press Release for 2024 Member Recruitment would also be prepared, with this document to be distributed to stakeholder organisations and added to the JLAF webpage.

It was considered that the recruitment of observer members may be an option for those not wishing to become full members.

It was **AGREED** that: -

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|---|-----|
| (a) Current members should complete an application form and send this back to the JLAF Administrator via email by end Feb 2024. | ALL |
| (b) The press release be approved and issued to all newspapers in Northumberland; Hexham Courant, Morpeth Herald, Northumberland Gazette, and Berwick Advertiser, it would also be added to the JLAF webpage. | JL |
| (c) Members should forward the press release to any contacts which would help with recruitment advertising (to note the closing date of end Feb 2024). | ALL |
| (d) We pursue receipt of an application from at least one Farmer/Land Agent as well as from ethnic minorities. | ALL |

15. Annual Report 2023

The 2023 Annual Report (which was due to be published in April 2024) would provide a focus on; the 2023 Shows, access issues happening in the National Park, the Alnwick Borderline Project, items within Harry Firth’s report, an update on the King Charles III Trail, DRT’s, and a highlight on old Wagonways in Newcastle.

16. Urgent Business

It was **AGREED** that future agendas would include the item; “Items for Future Meetings”. JL

Sue Rogers noted the issue of local access and changes to boundaries, with this item forming a working group exercise once the ROWIP had been developed.

Ian Glendinning thanked Vic Brown; she had manned the JLAF stand all day at Alwinton on her own, which was much appreciated.



Ted Liddle noted that the term of ‘Responsible Access’ was preferable to that of ‘Right to Roam’.

The Chair suggest that a pro-access walking/cycling/horse riding celebration event be held, to encourage landowners and others to join JLAF. It was **AGREED** that members should think further about this.

ALL

17. Dates, Times and Venues for Future Meetings

(a) Site visits

It was **AGREED** that members complete the relevant form(s) with their requests for April and July 2024 visits; it was noted that urban visits were to be encouraged.

ALL

Tuesday 23rd January 2024: Virtual
Tuesday 16th April 2024: venue to be confirmed

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 2.30pm.

Signed: Date: