

Peak District Local Access Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 1 December 2022
at Aldern House, Board room.**

Members Present:

Charlotte Gilbert (Acting Chair)
Craig Best
Martin Bennett
Richard Entwistle
Clare Griffin
Paul Richardson
Jo Holliday
Nick Doran

Cllr Susan Hobson
Councillor Andrew McCloy
Austin Knott
Dave Savage
Geoff Nickolds
John Towe
Ben Seal
Alistair Harvey

Others Present:

Mike Rhodes, (PDNPA) (Secretary)
Gill Millward, (DCC)
Sarah Wilks (PDNPA)

Sue Smith, (PDNPA)
Richard Pett (PDNPA)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Louise Hawson, Jez Kenyon, Joe Dalton and Charlotte Leech. In Louise Hawson's absence, Charlotte Gilbert was standing in as Chair of the meeting.

The Access and Rights of Way Manager welcomed Nick Doran (SPEED) and Dave Savage (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust) who had recently joined the Peak District Local Access Forum, and asked them to say a few words by way of introduction.

2. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING, 15/09/2022

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15th September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

The Chair reported that there had been no update to the Natural England Access Team with regard to appointing an advisor to work with Local Access Forums across the country.

A Peak District Transport Symposium is now planned for 1st February 2023.

4. CYCLE ACCESS TO THE PEAK DISTRICT

Simon Geller, Sustrans Volunteer Co-Ordinator Sheffield, was invited to the meeting to give a presentation regarding cycling access into the Peak District.

Simon reported that there were three main issues currently concerning Sustrans:

- 1) The lack of a safe route between Hathersage and Grindleford. Currently cyclists have to use a dangerous stretch of main road. The National Trust (NT) had opened

- up some tracks between Hathersage Booths and Padley and Sustrans were keen to get this section open for cyclists and other non-vehicular users. Craig Brown from the NT confirmed that he would be happy to talk about further access through NT land.
- 2) The National Cycle Network (NCN) route from London to Keswick gets stuck around Sheffield. There are currently no Sustran signed cycle routes through the Hope Valley, which is one of the busiest areas for bikes. An alternative proposal being considered would be to put up some temporary signage explaining that the NCN stopped here and suggest getting the train through the Hope Valley. Simon confirmed that Sustrans had been working with Northern Rail to look at how they could recondition carriages to get more cycles onto the trains as more people are using the trains for leisure now rather than for commuting. Andrew McCloy suggested that it would be worth Sustrans speaking to the Hope Valley Climate Action Group. There was a general consensus that there were lots of good ideas out there about increasing rail use but that plans needed to be harmonised to make real progress and to avoid duplication.
 - 3) Chatsworth – ought to be a major opening for cyclists in the Peak District but is currently a barrier. Sustrans are very keen to open up more routes through Chatsworth and wondered if anyone on the Forum had any contacts at Chatsworth they could tap into. Councillor Susan Hobson confirmed that she was the elected local councillor for the area covering Chatsworth and would be happy to assist so suggested that Simon Geller emailed her.

Gill Millward reported that the County Council had an approved prioritisation list for developing the strategic Key Cycle Network (KCN) for Derbyshire, which included the White Peak Loop, Pennine Way Bridleway and the Derwent Valley Cycle Way. It was crucial to be able to secure funding from various sources and to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders and organisations to deliver the KCN.

A map showing the location of the completed and proposed KCN routes was included in Gill's RoWIP update. These routes could be viewed in more detail on the Derbyshire Mapping Portal, along with the Local Cycle Network:
<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/partnerships/derbyshire-mapping-portal/derbyshire-mapping-portal.aspx>

Charlotte Gilbert thanked the contributors from Sustrans and commented that all of the issues they raised fitted in well with efforts to get more people into the Park in a sustainable way. She reminded everyone that when discussing barriers to access, all vulnerable road users must be considered, not just cyclists.

5. ACCESS TO WATER PRESENTATION

Ben Seal, Head of Access & Environment at British Canoeing gave a presentation to the LAF on Access to Water.

Ben explained that there had been a huge surge in participation in paddlesports since the Covid lockdowns had lifted. There were now 7.5m people regularly paddling each year in the UK and whilst this was a growing area, they often felt overlooked. Of the 70,671km of inland waterways, only 6.4% of them have any statutory right of navigation. Within the Peak District National Park, there are currently no waterways where paddle sport enthusiasts can participate in their sport.

The barriers to wider access to waterways range from opposition from landowners, liability concerns and potential for pollution and environmental harm. However, the benefits of access to blue space to mind and wellbeing were huge. Ben campaigns for "fair, shared and sustainable open access to water" and shared with the LAF a promotional video put together by British Canoeing which sets out the newly established Paddlers Code.

Several members of the LAF thanked Ben Seal for sharing such an impassioned presentation and an inspiring video. Charlotte Gilbert, as Acting Chair of the LAF, reminded Ben that as a statutory advisory body, the LAF would not be able to support or recommend anything that falls outside current legislation. She did however assure Ben that the LAF would certainly bear in mind access to open water in future discussions.

Andrew McCloy spoke from an authority perspective as Chair of the PDNPA. He confirmed that the Authority was committed to opening up opportunities for access to water but stressed that it had very limited power to compel landowners to allow access or capacity to broker deals. Unfortunately, the only way to effect permanent change was via legislation. Ben Seal stated that it would be good to have the support of the Authority in their lobbying efforts. Andrew suggested that he set up a meeting with Phil Mulligan, the Authority's new CEO, who had previously worked at the Canals and Rivers Trust.

Ben concluded by saying that whilst political will was fickle, there did currently appear to be some appetite for change which needed capitalising upon. Building trust with landowners would be key whilst also continuing to educate paddlesports members so that any damage to the environment was minimised. It was hoped that the launch of the Paddlers Code would help to improve awareness and challenge perceptions of water sports users.

Environment Land Management Schemes (ELMS) Update

Charlotte Gilbert, Acting Chair, asked Ben to give a brief update on ELMS to the LAF Members. Ben reported that he had met DEFRA ministers this year to try and ensure that public access was embedded within ELMS as landowners can get paid for supporting public access to the countryside, but following the meeting DEFRA has confirmed that they would be supporting activities with a particular emphasis on access to farm visits, so Ben was concerned that ELMS had been watered down to just educational visits.

6. ACCESS UPDATE

Sue Smith, PDNPA's Access and Rights of Way Officer presented her report which was to provide an update on issues related to access in the Peak District.

Sue reported that the donations to the Access Fund had so far helped to provide access improvements that included new and upgraded access points, restored paths on access land, implement new areas of access, enhanced the accessibility of paths and helped to provide signage, mapping and leaflets.

In 2022 donations were received via the Peak District Foundation which included repeat donations from Sheffield CHA walking group, Peak Sky Race and John Thompson. Income was also received from sales of the Miles without Stiles handbooks and Sue reported that Yorkshire Water had agreed to sponsor a reprint of the Miles without Stiles handbooks as the first run of 1500 had almost sold out.

Sue reported that work on the review of the CRoW mapping had begun and was hoped that it would be implemented from 2024/25.

The LAF thanked Sue for her report and presentation which showed the diversity of the routes and facilities that there were available in the Peak District, and asked how long the section of the Tissington Trail between Mapleton and Alsop-en-le-Dale would be closed due to tree felling works that were taking place. Mike Rhodes informed the LAF that the Trail would be closed for approx. 2 months, but not closed at weekends, school holidays or during the nesting season. Details of the closure were available on the PDNPA Website.

7. DERBYSHIRE CC ROWIP UPDATE

Gill Millward the Countryside Access Improvement Officer from Derbyshire County Council presented her report which was to update on the progress towards the delivery of the Derbyshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

As far as the existing Rights of Way network is concerned, work is continuing to deliver a package of maintenance schemes across the county which includes roadside signposting, surfacing and drainage. Rob Greatorex who now heads up DCC's Rights of Way team is happy to come and talk to a future LAF meeting about the work which is being carried out.

A joint DDLAF/Peak District LAF Unrecorded Ways Sub Group meeting took place at the end of November to discuss the issues relating to the Definitive Map Modification Orders, including the prioritisation of the 237 applications that were in at the moment.

In terms of providing an improved network, around 400km of the 770km of Derbyshire's Key Cycle Network were complete and open for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, wherever possible. Gill's report provided details of the routes which were currently being developed or improved, including the Peak Forest Tramway between Buxworth and Chinley, as well as missing sections of the White Peak Loop through Haddon Estate and Buxton. Investigation work for the missing sections of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail around Glossop is continuing with site visits taking place with the British Horse Society and local horse riding representatives. It was pointed out that there are currently around 768 horses in this area with large livery yards and equestrian centres so it would be good to get horses off the roads as they can be very busy as it was within the commuter belt from Manchester.

Forum members were also made aware of the 12 week public consultation which was due to get underway for the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which has been prepared for the D2N2 (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire) area. Gill would circulate the link to the consultation once it became live.

Gill was thanked for her report.

8. MEMBERS' REPORTS

a) National Park Management Plan

Cllr McCloy informed the LAF that the National Park Management Plan was to be brought before the Authority Members at the Authority Meeting on the 2nd December to be formally adopted, and would then become live as of spring next year.

b) Car Parking Charges

Mike Rhodes asked that Members send their responses to him, so a coordinated response could be sent from LAF.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sarah Wilks, Head of Engagement at the PDNPA, attended the meeting and gave an update on the changes that will take place in relation to the restructure of her team from the 1st January 2023. The Access and Rights of Way Team would be joining the Area Rangers and Engagement which will be headed up by Andy Farmer as Engagement Manager. Mike Rhodes would be reducing his working hours from the end of February, but would continue as Secretary to the LAF, which was why the Forum meetings would be moving to

Wednesdays. Other staff members were being slotted into posts, which would hopefully be sorted out by Christmas.

Paul Richardson expressed his thanks to Craig Best and the National Trust Team for making Longshaw available to use for an event recently.

Craig informed the LAF that the National Trust's Plan to tackle the Climate and Nature Crisis was now available to download online and that he would be sending links to webinars that will be happening in the New Year if anyone was interested.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Mike Rhodes explained that due to planned changes in his work pattern in the New Year, it would be necessary to change the day of future Local Access Forum meetings to Wednesdays.

The dates for the LAF meetings in 2023 were therefore agreed as follows:

15th March
14th June
13th September
6th December

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