

Peak District Local Access Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 15 March 2023
at Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell.**

Members Present:

Cllr Susan Hobson
Austin Knott
Richard Entwistle
Clare Griffin
Jez Kenyon
Geoff Nickolds
John Towe

Martin Bennett
Ben Seal
Charlotte Gilbert
Louise Hawson
Councillor Andrew McCloy
Paul Richardson

Others Present:

Nick Doran, Local Access Forum
Mike Rhodes, (PDNPA) (Secretary)
Dave Savage, Local Access Forum

Gill Millward, (DCC)
Sue Smith, (PDNPA)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Leech, Craig Best, Joe Dalton, Jo Holliday and Alastair Harvey.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Craig Best, Jo Holliday, Joe Dalton, Charlotte Leech and Alistair Harvey.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING 1ST DECEMBER 2022

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 1st December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

PDNPA TRANSPORT SYMPOSIUM

Took place on the 1st February 2023. It was a smaller and more high-level strategic event than originally envisaged, which looked at how the key local authorities and transport bodies could work together. It was hoped that more specific actions and consultations may come back to the Forum at some point.

ENVIRONMENT LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEMES (ELMS) UPDATE

Charlotte Gilbert gave an update to Members.

The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is being phased out and will finish in 2027. The Government has a manifesto commitment to maintain the farming budget so all reductions in the current BPS will be reinvested in farming. Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) aims to be more streamline, efficient and fairer. SFI is available to all farmers currently in receipt of BPS; it offers nine standards with two levels (Introductory and Intermediate) for each standard. The Government intends to implement similar improvements across Countryside

Stewardship (CS) next year. CS provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters and land managers with grants for multi-year management agreements. On January 26th the Government published an update to the Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) with the aim of bringing clarity and certainty for business planning. The enhanced CS higher tier schemes will be aimed at places needing complex management such as creating or restoring habitats and improving woodlands; the mid-tier and wildlife offers are aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural environment through multi-year management grants to improve wildlife, water quality, air quality and natural flood management. Landscape Recovery Scheme supports ambitious large -scale nature recovery projects, focusing on net zero, protected sites and habitat creation. Whether this delivers on all the desired outcomes will depend on the uptake by farmers. So far there is a very mixed view from farmers. Some farmers will be put off before they start and will abandon the system and increase livestock numbers which will be the opposite of what the Government intends. There is little in the detail to increase access but this is the base layer and more options may come as the higher tiers are rolled out.

Ben Seal reported that since the Agriculture Act received royal assent, British Canoeing, the British Mountaineering Council, Ramblers, British Horse Society and Open Spaces Society have been trying to influence the development of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) to ensure that the access element is as strong as it can be and rewards farmers for making improvements to access, but to date no assurance has been received that the ELMS will deliver on access.

Ben informed the LAF that he had met Ministers back in January 2021 calling for a chance to do a proper consultation with stakeholders, and that a year later that was finally opened up and 2 weeks ago a stakeholder forum was held. DEFRA is looking at exploring what it can pay landowners for permissive access (not permanent access), but the emphasis still seems to be on farm/educational visits. Ben was not expecting a huge change, but would continue to lobby Ministers.

LAF members asked where the public could find out where the permissive access will be and when it would be taken away? Ben reported that currently there wasn't a place where they could find this information. Sue Smith reminded the meeting that information on new permissive rights of way developed as a result of Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding in the Peak District National Park can be found on the PDNPA website. The meeting agreed that this was a good model.

Louise asked if it would be useful for the LAF to make a representation to the Minister to encourage funding of permanent access and underline the wider issues associated with permissive access.

Agreed that Louise Hawson and Mike Rhodes would draft a letter to the Minister on behalf of the LAF.

ACCESS TO WATER

Ben reported that following the last LAF meeting he had met with the Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment and Access Colleagues and that there would be further round table discussions to follow.

CYCLE ACCESS TO THE PEAK DISTRICT

Following the presentation at the last Forum by Simon Geller from Sustrans, it was reported that there had been some correspondence relating to one of the routes that was talked about from Hathersage ?? to Grindleford Café/Railway Station, and that there were some ongoing discussions taking place, including with the local residents association, who will be a key partner in making this work

NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Cllr McCloy confirmed that the National Park Management Plan was ratified at the Authority Meeting on the 2nd December 2022.

CAR PARKING CHARGES

Members were informed that the proposal to increase the current car parking charges and the introduction of new ticket machines at other Authority car parks was agreed by the Authority Members at the Authority Meeting on 3rd February 2023.

4. THEMED TOPIC - NATURE RECOVERY AND ACCESS

Dave Savage, Landscape Recovery Manager for the Dark & White Peak at the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) gave a presentation to the LAF Members on the work that the DWT was doing on nature recovery and access.

Dave reminded LAF members of the biodiversity crisis and provided data on the loss of key species and the national and international importance of key habitats in the Peak District. He gave examples of the kinds of species that could be reintroduced as part of creating a wilder landscape, including beaver and even golden eagle. He emphasised the importance of nature to people, including how it had inspired him as he was growing up.

Dave reported that back in 2018, the DWT's Wild Peak Programme (WPP) was set up to improve wildlife in the Peak District National Park, working with landowners to identify and introduce measures on their land. So far 49 landowners had signed up to the scheme. The DWT has been given funding to make the WPP happen. Examples of measures included putting Shetland Cows to graze on the Thornhill Trail, which has already helped to improve habitats and increase the crane fly and insect numbers etc. and that they were also looking at doing a beaver feasibility study in the Park with a view to reintroducing them.

The presentation prompted discussion about the importance of nature recovery, and also of understanding the potential conflicts with access, and with farming and other land management activities. It was agreed that this was a key theme that the LAF would continue to return to.

The LAF thanked Dave for his presentation

5. ACCESS UPDATE

ACCESS FOR ALL

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

Sue reported that following her presentation to the LAF in December, funding had been received from DEFRA, to cover infrastructure improvements to make protected landscapes more accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Further funding was anticipated for 2024/25.

All-terrain wheelchairs (trampers) have now been delivered and would be available to hire by members of the public from the Authority's Cycle Hire and Visitor Centres free of charge through an online booking system. There will also be an in-house tramper video for the public to watch, which will hopefully give them more confidence on how to use them.

Sue reported that surfacing works had taken place on 4 routes, 3 of which were in the proximity of Sheffield, with thanks to the Countryside Maintenance & Projects Team. More updates will follow.

Sue was thanked for her report.

CONSULTATION ON DIRECTION ON ACCESS LAND

Sue reminded the LAF Members that back in 2018 the Authority had made a direction on public safety grounds to restrict access to land at Silence and Old Grove Mines due to instability, whilst further investigations and works were carried out. The direction only refers to access land and not to the public rights of way, although they could be impacted as well.

Since then, the direction has been extended following evidence of further instability and now the Authority is proposing to extend the direction for a further 2 years until 30th April 2025, or until the completion of remediation in connection with geotechnical investigations have been carried out to the satisfaction of the Authority, although reservations were expressed on the likelihood that the access land would be opened up after this period if there was more instability identified.

LAF Members asked what could have caused the instability in the first place to which Sue responded that there was no conclusion as yet.

The LAF agreed to formally respond to the public consultation as a statutory consultee supportive of the proposal to restrict public access for a further 2 years.

6. 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 delivery of the Derbyshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

As far as the existing Rights of Way network was concerned, work was continuing to complete the package of schemes funded through the County Council's Highways Capital Programme, which included 12 major surfacing and drainage projects with a further 9 schemes designed and issued to contractors. Works of a more minor nature have been completed on 38 paths across the county, and signposting has taken place at 896 locations across the network in 2022/23 with another 155 to be completed by the end of March 2023.

Gill reported that the number of Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) applications continues to increase. As of the 1st March 2023, the Authority was dealing with 320 applications of which 272 were currently undetermined. She then invited Charlotte Gilbert to update the LAF Members on the issues surrounding the prioritisation of DMMO's following meetings of the Joint LAF Unrecorded Ways Sub-Group held in November 2022 and January 2023.

Members were updated on the progress of the White Peak Loop which is 71% complete and more updates will be provided at the next LAF in June, including the feasibility studies which are currently underway for the missing sections of the route. Feasibility work for the missing sections of the Pennine Bridleway around Glossop is also ongoing.

Gill reported that works on the Shallcross Incline at Whaley Bridge had been delayed until the 27th March due to the weather. It was expected that resurfacing work on the Peak Forest Tramway between Buxworth and Chinley would start just after Easter.

A report would be going to the next County Council Cabinet Meeting on 16 March to consider and approve the proposed forward plan of activities for the Sustainable Travel Programme, including continued delivery of Derbyshire's Key Cycle Network. Gill will forward a link to the report to LAF Members after the meeting has taken place.

LAF Members were asked to send in any comments regarding the Safer Roads Fund Project for the Via Gellia between Cromford and Newhaven by the 26th March deadline.

Gill reported that the public engagement process for the D2N2 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure (LCWIP) had now closed and that she would report on the feedback at the next LAF meeting.

Gill was thanked for her report.

It was agreed that a sub-group would be set up to meet with DCC Rights of Way to review progress on the maintenance programme, looking at the routes that the LAF was consulted on in 2022/23, and the planned works for 2023/24. Louise asked for interest in attending this meeting: expressions of interest came from Nick Doran, Paul Richardson, Charlotte Gilbert, Martin Bennett and Louise Hawson.

Louise and Gill will contact those members and the DCC team to agree a date for the meeting. All LAF members will be informed of the date and will be welcome to join.

7. MEMBERS' REPORTS

Louise Hawson informed the LAF of the proposal by Severn Trent Water as part of its Water Resources Management Plan to extend the reservoirs at Upper Derwent Valley (UDV) ie Ladybower, Howden and Derwent, as it has been identified as a need by Severn Trent to increase the water storage capacity. This is being considered as part of a national programme of major capital improvement works looking at strategic water infrastructure and among the options being considered for UDV are:-

1. raising the height of one or more of the dam walls, which will mean the flooding of more land.
2. the addition of a new reservoir behind Howden
3. ending transfer of water to Yorkshire Water

The British Mountaineering Council has written to DEFRA and Severn Trent Water in response to the draft Water Resources Management Plan querying the rationale behind the proposal, emphasising the special character of the Upper Derwent Valley and raising concerns regarding the consultation process. Louise reported that a representative from Severn Trent was willing to come and talk to a meeting of the LAF later this year as more information should be available by then on the options to be taken forward.

It was reported that Severn Trent Water was also looking at improvements to both Carsington Water and Tittesworth Reservoir with a 2m increase in the height of the dam wall.

Louise reported that there was more information available on the Severn Trent Water website and that she would send the links to the LAF Members.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Rhodes had circulated the draft Local Access Forum Annual Report for 2022 and asked if any Member had any comments, could they please feed them back to him.

Ben Seal informed Members that there would be a debate in the House of Commons on the 21st April regarding Right to Roam.

Austin Knott informed Members that the Staffordshire Walking Festival will be taking place from the 21st April until the 1st May and that further details could be found on the web if interested.

Nick Doran reported on the issues he had been having in sorting interconnective bus links across the county as well as obtaining timetables, and asked if any other Member had found similar issues?

9. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The date for the next meeting of the LAF will be on Wednesday 14th June 2023 at Aldern House, Bakewell.

Meeting ended - Time Not Specified

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