

# Peak District Local Access Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024  
in the Board Room at Aldern House, Bakewell**

## **Forum Members Present:**

Louise Hawson (Chair)
Craig Best
Martin Bennett
Joe Dalton
Nick Doran
Richard Entwistle
Charlotte Gilbert
Clare Griffin
Alastair Harvey
Cllr Ian Huddleston
Jez Kenyon
Charlotte Leech
Geoff Nickolds
Paul Richardson
Ben Seal
John Towe

## **Officers present:**

Mike Rhodes, Andy Farmer, Sue Smith (PDNPA)  
Gill Millward (DCC)  
Karen Hathaway (minutes)

## **Observer:**

Phil Mulligan (Chief Executive PDNPA)

## **Minutes:**

Item ID	1
Item Title	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>
Summary	Apologies were received from Dave Savage, Austin Knott and Cllr Susan Hobson. PDNPA Chief Executive Phil Mulligan was observing the meeting.
Item ID	2
Item Title	<b>Minutes of the meeting on 1st November 2023</b>
Summary	The minutes of the last meeting held on the 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2023 were approved as a correct record.
Item ID	3

Item Title	<b>Matters Arising from last meeting not covered by agenda</b>
Summary	<p>The Rambler's presentation has been published on the website, so that it can be viewed there rather than circulating round the LAF members. Martin was thanked for his presentation as Footpaths Secretary at the November meeting. Andy Famer's presentation on the National Park Authority's approach to Rights of Way and the contribution from Suzanne Fletcher was appreciated.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The LAF need to be kept up to date on the progress with the forming of Recreation Hubs.</p>

Item ID	4
Item Title	<b>Theme - Landowners' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of public access</b>
Summary	<p>Three members of the Local Access Forum presented their landowner perspectives on public access.</p> <p>1. Charlotte Leech, Deputy Estates Manager for Chatsworth Settlement Trustees, is primarily involved in the management of the property portfolio of the Estate, gave a presentation on the benefits and challenges of public access.</p> <p>The core estate is made up of Chatsworth House, the gardens and estate villages. Further to that there are sites such as Thor's cave, parts of the Manifold Valley, Park Hill and Monsal Dale, plus the Scarcliffe and Staveley estates to the East. This also includes 42 miles of Rights of Way and concessionary routes, including moorland, woodland and riverbanks. There are approximately a million visitors to Chatsworth each year, with a long history of public access. For the last 2 years the team has been developing a whole core estate plan for the next 20 years. This will measure environmental, economic and cultural impacts, and how the estate plan will contribute to the special qualities of the National Park.</p> <p>Managing the Estate is complex – including developing projects, removing barriers to access, route improvement, as well as maintaining relationships with remote managers, tenants and partners. There are conflicting interests of user groups and sensitive areas to protect from visitors. Maintenance costs are high and there has been a huge increase in visitor numbers with associated problems of parking, littering and conflict during, and continuing after, Covid. Health and safety considerations are a big part of managing the estate.</p> <p>Improving and maintaining access is seen as an opportunity to support the hospitality and retail industry and welcome a range of visitors. New partnerships have been formed to support the management of sites and visitors, such as with the National Park Authority, National Trust, Emergency Services and local communities. They are also looking at Citizen sites where the public can report back on species and any issues, as well as providing more and better facilities to a wider audience.</p>

Ben Seal pointed out that although there is a lot to be applauded from the work outlined in Charlotte's presentation for cyclists, horse riders and walkers regarding access to the countryside, water isn't generally accessible and is preserved for those wanting to fish, which then puts barriers in place for those who want to swim, paddle and canoe. What are the challenges to Chatsworth in enabling this access?

Charlotte stated that in relation to Chatsworth, where a river runs through the estate, this is complex to resolve and needs to be explored with landowners along the full stretch of the river.

Nick Doran asked if concessionary routes for walkers and cyclists are publicised. Charlotte responded that these weren't yet advertised as they are still being developed in line with some of the other work on the estate, such as in forestry areas.

Martin wanted to check whether there will be cycle storage at Chatsworth as part of the plan to extend the cycle route from Rowsley into Chatsworth, and whether the route will carry on into Baslow. Were there any plans to look at cycle hire in Rowsley. Charlotte advised that they hadn't progressed that far with the planned cycle route.

2. Charlotte Gilbert continued the theme of benefits and challenges of public access from the perspective of a farmer and land manager.

Charlotte explained the set up of her farm, where there are lots of public access opportunities. Farming is a business producing food, but farms need to diversify into farm stays, B&B's, livery services and campsites as well, in order to be viable. Charlotte is generally positive about all the opportunities to engage with the public – it's a chance to educate, be socially interactive, to share a passion, to help the business and to facilitate health and physical benefits.

There are challenges such as anti-social behaviour, livestock on public access areas, wild camping, dogs not being kept under control, impact on wildlife, litter and maintaining signage. There are measures that can help reduce some of the problems, such as ensuring that paths are well sign posted, and that stiles and gates are easy to use, as well as being non-confrontational when approaching members of the public who may have gone off the pathway or blocked a gate with their vehicle.

Charlotte detailed some of her own experience and pointed out that where people want to visit and enjoy rural areas, they will want to park their cars, walk their dogs, camp overnight and have BBQs. Charlotte emphasised that most people want to do the right thing, it's just a few that cause problems. Those problems are significant, and sheep worrying and dog attacks are not uncommon. Better publicity of the Countryside Code would be useful and having the right signage in the right place is helpful.

Jez Kenyon felt that the wider population has a lack of knowledge of the Countryside Code. People won't follow rules if they don't know why they are there, so there needs to be a better public understanding of the issues.

Nick said there was a particular problem with dog owners and people accessing the countryside in a responsible way, and queried how that situation could be improved. Charlotte Gilbert, as a long-standing dog owner herself, said that there should be a good reason for dogs to be off lead. Her dogs are working dogs, but are on the lead at all other times.

Charlotte Leech mentioned that designated walking areas can be established for people to exercise their dogs. Louise said that there is a big issue with contract dog owners that she's heard from elsewhere.

There were general comments and observations from LAF members about signage that is left in place longer than is necessary and queried who puts up way markers. People were possibly more respectful and had a better understanding of the countryside previously, and what is the role of volunteers in educating people on access to the countryside.

Ben welcomed the discussion and felt it was good not to be adversarial. The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) wanted to reduce the liability of landowners for incidents on their land and wondered if the cost was preventing promotion of access. Charlotte Leech said that for a large organisation it's absorbed as a management cost, but might have more impact on smaller scale landowners.

Charlotte Gilbert advised that it depends on the type of Right of Way accessed on your land, but much of the liability lies with the local authority. As a farmer the insurance liability costs were fairly low.

Joe Dalton said there was a conflict between people and nature. People wanting to access the countryside 24 hours a day meant that nature doesn't get time away from that pressure. There were various issues associated with straying livestock causing a bio security risk, damage to moorland from wildfires, along with camping and litter. Louise added that although nature protection prevails in the National Park, the Authority still wanted to encourage people to visit, which is a challenge.

Alastair Harvey, in his role with Yorkshire Water, mentioned that they have an obligation to enable access to their sites. Inappropriate behaviour was particularly bad during Covid, but things had slightly improved recently. More onus has been put on landowners to resolve these issues that were previously enforced by the relevant authorities, who are themselves now limited because of resourcing issues. Off-roading by motorbikes was an increasing problem. Most people have a good, enjoyable visit and left no trace of their activity. He agreed with an earlier point about contract dog walkers causing problems. Better understanding by the general public was important and educating and informing people had been attempted with varying levels of success.

Louise suggested there are different solutions for different areas, with varying levels of resources available.

3. Craig Best, who works for the National Trust (NT) gave a presentation from the NT perspective on public access to their sites.

Craig agreed that dogs are a problem and the NT is looking at setting aside dog run areas.

The National Trust operates as a business that gets its income from visitors, members, car parks and tenant farmers. Visitors are a valuable part of the running of the NT. Some sites don't need promoting. Dovedale is a very busy site and Mam Tor has half a million visitors every year. It's estimated there are easily over a million visitors to National Trust sites in the Peak District. Better monitoring of those numbers could lead to more resources being put into those sites, but it's not easy to count visitor numbers to wider countryside areas.

Litter isn't something the NT can influence too much, but having a presence, engaging with people and clear signage helps.

Dovedale attracts a diverse audience that is not typical of NT visitors. People are travelling up to a couple of hours to get there. It can't be staffed fully until late in the day – there may be scope for adding facilities there, such as designated BBQ areas. A pragmatic approach is needed.

At Mam Tor, where there is a hill fort, there is erosion. As there are high visitor numbers, there is a need to invest to protect the site. A bid has gone in for Heritage Lottery funding to support that work.

Ben Seal was glad to hear that the NT is being open minded on measures such as BBQ areas, which acknowledged that people are using the countryside differently – they want to swim, canoe and BBQ.

Craig stated that the river at Dovedale is part of a large national nature reserve, but the people impact is small.

Charlotte Gilbert recognised that the money is important. The National Trust has funds to support visitors. Chatsworth is supporting both visitors and farming. Funding for access should be adequately reflected in any payment schemes. Individual farmers need support. Craig responded that the NT works closely with tenants and supports them to tap into funding, and to develop whole farm plans. Income purely from farming is small, whereas payments from environmental outcomes and diversification, including woodlands, can be worthwhile.

Clare Griffin left the meeting at 12pm.

	<p>Martin Bennett queried why people are still buying bottles of water when reusable containers are widely available. It could be that there is limited opportunity to refill them and people need support to do the right thing.</p> <p>Louise felt that when looking at what landowners are rewarded for, access is the poor cousin. Money is needed to trial things and encourage innovative thinking.</p>
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Item ID	5
Item Title	Update on the FiPL Scheme
Summary	<p>Rebekah Newman, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Lead Engagement Officer, gave a presentation to update Forum members on the FiPL scheme.</p> <p>The scheme runs across all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. The delivery grant funding is from DEFRA and the bids are assessed against a set of 30 outcomes based on four themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place. The scheme is due to end in March 2025, so monies need to be spent by then, and as far as possible, capital works are to be completed by the end of December 2024. Rebekah ran through the structure of the team and how the funds have been allocated. The scheme is monitoring intensive. Further resource has been given through PDNPA by way of staff time. Most access projects have come in under £10k, with just 7 over that amount.</p> <p>Clare Griffin said that this was a great project, especially to keep in budget with the governance required and the standard of work achieved. She asked if the FiPL team goes out to every scheme. Rebekah advised that they will aim to go out to every project to assess that all criteria are met to secure the funding for each scheme and will also gather photo and documented evidence of the work.</p> <p>Craig Best felt that there should be communication to celebrate the work achieved. Rebekah responded that there are press releases. Some of the projects may have access implications. Some thought is needed on the publicity of the work carried out under the scheme, but it is good to celebrate the bigger projects.</p> <p>Craig asked if there will be funding continued for further schemes once the FiPL scheme is ended. Rebekah advised that FiPL had been part of a transition phase to set up schemes and ways to access further funding through Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMS) in the future. There shouldn't be the same need for the localised FiPL funding, although funding at a local level is valuable. There will be ongoing funding which will be distributed through national schemes.</p> <p>Martin Bennett queried the new permissive footpaths and bridleways with regard to timing and promotion. Rebekah advised that although landowners may choose to remove this access, hopefully many of them will continue.</p>

	<p>Although they aren't mapped, there will be publicity through signage, website information and local meetings.</p> <p>Charlotte Leech noted that only one large access project had been undertaken by a private farmer and wondered if this is because there are additional costs to supporting a piece of work which can't be fully covered by the FiPL grant. Larger landowners such as Chatsworth and the National Trust can more easily cover those extra costs. Archaeological advice may be needed, planning permission may be required for some work, and the National Park Authority can support an applicant through the process, but can't fund the planning application itself.</p> <p>Louise suggested that the success of the FiPL scheme so far was because of good relationships with local farmers.</p> <p>Rebekah mentioned that although there may be funding through ELMS and other national schemes, it was uncertain if PDNPA would be able to continue its support in the same way. However, there is a trial that PDNPA is part of to act as a local convenor for national schemes funded by DEFRA.</p>
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Item ID	6
Item Title	<b>Formal review of CRoW Access Restrictions</b>
Summary	<p>It is 20 years since the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act, when long term directions were applied for to balance landowner needs and access requirements. There is a statutory responsibility for the National Park Authority as the Relevant Authority to review these long-term directions. Consultation has started, with a deadline of 5 April 2024, relating to the rifle ranges at Deer Hill and Diggle and at West Nab. . Any views or comments made by LAF members will be considered with the landowners/applicants as part of the consultation process.</p> <p>John Towe queried if there is a requirement for red flags to be flown when shooting is taking place. Sue advised that there is a requirement. However due to the topography of the site, red flags aren't always visible across the full fall of shot area</p> <p>Martin Bennett asked in relation to Deer Hill, if it is okay to use footpaths around the site, why restrict the access when people can shoot over footpaths. Sue responded that shooting stops if people are on a right of way, but on access land, sight lines are not as clear.</p> <p>Jez Kenyon questioned whether the site needs this level of restriction as the incidence of shooters and walkers being in the area at the same time is rare. Sue responded that shooting can be ad hoc. The fall of shot area is based on a plan which doesn't have regard to topography. This is a requirement for insurance purposes where misfires are part of the risk assessment. . The PDNPA can enquire about the risk assessment process, but public safety is paramount. Access around the site and guided walks could still take place.</p>

	<p><b>Action:</b>  <b>Details of long term directions to be circulated to collect comments from LAF members.</b></p> <p>Sue briefly went on to highlight this year's thank you certificate for the Access Fund, which is coming up to its tenth year.</p> <p>There will be a lunchtime event after the LAF meeting with Cultural Heritage volunteers speaking to Forum members about digital imaging work at Thor's Cave regarding changing patterns of access and which links into the access work taking place through FiPL.</p>
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Item ID	7
Item Title	<b>Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) Update</b>
Summary	<p>Gill Millward presented the Derbyshire RoWIP update. Highlights included:</p> <p><b>Aim 1: Existing Rights of Way Network</b>  As road repair has been a priority in recent months, progress on rights of way repairs has been limited.</p> <p>Louise mentioned the Sub-Group meeting between the LAF and Derbyshire County Council in 2023 where priority routes were discussed. There will be a further meeting in May 2024 for Forum members who want to join the discussion, ahead of the next full LAF meeting in June.</p> <p><b>Aim 2: Definitive Map and Statement</b>  Work is still ongoing and a further meeting with the Joint LAF Sub-Group will be arranged to continue the conversation about how the processing of applications for Unrecorded Ways can be made easier and how they might be prioritised in the light of an increasing backlog.</p> <p><b>Aim 3: An Improved Network</b>  Pennine Bridleway National Trail – the County Council is actively progressing the alternatives to avoid Dinting Viaduct, as well as the section between New Road and Woolley Bridge Road in Hadfield.</p> <p>White Peak Loop – DCC will speak to the FiPL team as they are preparing to submit a planning application for Woo Dale, near Buxton.</p> <p>Buxton Walk and Ride Network – improvements to a section of the network across Temple Fields are due to start. This will help provide a more direct route to local primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Active Travel Masterplans – this is a new area of work being developed using recent Active Travel England Capability and Ambition funding. Plans are being prepared initially for the three market towns of Belper, Glossop and Ilkeston. They will typically include a range of measures to make active travel safer, more convenient and more appealing to a wider range of people.</p>



Preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Derbyshire – this will involve engagement with the public and interested stakeholder organisations, including the PDNPA and Local Access Forums.

Aim 4: Improve promotion, understanding and use of the network  
Walk Derbyshire - In response to feedback, there are several changes to the website to make it easier to navigate and provide the information that everyone needs to get out walking more.

Aim 5: Greater Community Involvement

The work of volunteers on DCC countryside sites, paths and trails continues to be supported under a service level agreement with Groundwork Five Counties.

Martin stated that the LNRS deadline is tight for producing a strategy. Derbyshire will be divided up into characteristic landscape areas. Also the Green Towns Initiative in Buxton to pilot the introduction of 20mph speed limits was a backward step as speed limits are not effective. With regard to roadside signposting it was felt that the LAF should send a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member to support this work continuing and commending DCC for being able to undertake the work with such limited resources.

Gill advised that the letter could go to both Councillor Cupit and Councillor Renwick to show the appreciation of the work being done in this area.

**Action:**

**Louise asked Martin to draft a letter as discussed.**

Nick Doran thanked DCC for looking at the routes for the Pennine Bridleway and the positive survey north of the railway, as well as a good outcome for an active travel route from Glossop onto New Road, Tintwistle.

Item ID	8
Item Title	<b>Members' Reports</b>
Summary	<p><u>a) Ughill Farm Site Meeting</u> Martin Bennett updated the Forum on a new venture where Sheffield City Council and Rotherham Wildlife Trust have bought Ughill Farm. The focus of the work will be as a working farm rather than as a reserve, where they are hoping to demonstrate nature and climate friendly working practices. This is a new type of venture for the Wildlife Trust. The farm was initially bought by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and then secured by the Wildlife Trust through donations. They are aiming to improve Access Land on the farm and are considering improving access points.</p> <p>The Peak District LAF made a site visit to the farm alongside Sheffield LAF. Louise pointed out that Richard Entwistle is now also part of the Sheffield LAF membership.</p> <p><u>b) Packhorse Routes</u></p>

	<p>Charlotte Gilbert advised that a bid had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), but due to an error in the process of making their submission, the bid hadn't been successful. The British Horse Society is now working back with HLF to support them to submit a successful bid. Charlotte will keep the LAF members updated.</p> <p>c) <u>Moscar Cross Road</u>  Louise updated the LAF members on the responses to the Sheffield City Council consultation regarding the Moscar Cross Road Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).</p> <p>The responses to the consultation on Swan and Limer Rakes have been sent to Staffordshire County Council. Forum members were happy with both those responses <b>which were formally ratified by the Local Access Forum at the meeting.</b></p> <p>Point to note from Louise, as updated by Mike Rhodes, that there has been approval for the seasonal TRO at Moscar Cross Road. This relates to 4x4s, but not motorbikes. However, activity will be monitored and if needed, the TRO may be further extended.</p>
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Item ID	9
Item Title	<b>Any Other Business - Election of Chair and Vice Chairs</b>
Summary	The Chair and Vice-Chair roles are up for renewal in March 2024. The appointments will be decided at the June LAF meeting. Louise offered to continue as Chair for that meeting to handover ready for the autumn and encouraged anyone interested in taking on the role to put themselves forward.

Item ID	10
Item Title	<b>Date and venue of next meetings</b>
Summary	The next dates for the Local Access Forum meetings are 12 June 2024 and 16 October 2024 at Aldern House, Bakewell.