

Peak District Local Access Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 16 October 2024
at Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell.**

Members Present:

Charlotte Leech
Craig Best
Ben Seal
Richard Entwistle
Alastair Harvey
Geoff Nickolds
John Towe

Charlotte Gilbert (Chair)

Martin Beer
Martin Bennett
Dave Savage
Clare Griffin
Louise Hawson
Paul Richardson

Others Present:

Gill Millward, (DCC)
Rich Pett, (PDNPA)

Sue Smith, (PDNPA)
Mike Rhodes, (PDNPA) (Secretary)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Doran, Cllr Susan Hobson, Austin Knott, Jez Kenyon and Ian Ord.

39. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES (MR)

Martin Beer, Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) member appointed to the Local Access Forum (LAF), was welcomed to the meeting. Martin sits on Planning Committee, is a parish representative, and has a particular interest in parish issues, and assessments on the legal status of Rights of Way.

Charlotte Gilbert was thanked for Chairing today's meeting. Clare Griffin will Chair the next meeting on 19 February 2025.

Apologies are received from Nick Doran, new member Ian Ord, Austin Knott, Jez Kenyon and Cllr Susan Hobson. Charlotte Leech had advised she was running around 10 minutes late for the meeting.

Bromley Sibson, from the Trails for Good company, was welcomed as an observer of the meeting. Trails for Good aim to address issues in the trail and ultra running sector such as the impact on the environment, local communities, infrastructure and waste.

40. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING ON 12 JUNE 2024 (MR)

The minutes from the last meeting on 12 June 2024 were approved as a correct record.

41. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING NOT COVERED BY AGENDA (CG)

Gill Millward advised that there was a response on the way from Derbyshire County Council to the letter drafted by Martin Bennett on behalf of the LAF regarding the good work that had been carried out on signposting and waymarking of rights of way by DCC.

42. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PRESENTATION (CG)

Clare Griffin made a health and well-being presentation to the Local Access Forum (LAF). Clare is a general outdoor enthusiast and is a member of several related interest groups. Through her role working for the NHS at The Christie Hospital, Clare has become increasingly aware of the benefits of patients accessing blue and green space, including encouraging physical activity, and overall improvements to mental health and well-being. Clare shared some useful resources and research with LAF members, particularly supporting the link between better outcomes for cancer patients and accessing nature. The presentation also included information about barriers to accessing nature, and the negative impact this has on the public's health.

Charlotte Leech joined the meeting at 10:10 am.

Summary of Discussion

The benefits to mental and physical health of access to nature is backed up by scientific research. Everyone is affected by health issues either personally or through someone they know. The LAF have a role in access for all to nature and more access in the long term can be shown to reduce costs in the health care system. The role of government is key.

Locally, the Miles without Stiles project is a good resource. Improving access enables people to easily get out and benefit from nature. The network for linking people to sites in green spaces could be improved. There are various ways access to nature can be communicated, and wider green prescribing would be good. Patients often get given information about accessing health care and treatment, and access to nature advice could be part of that.

The National Trust is preparing a business case to DEFRA for a landscape recovery project in the High Peak. Improved health and wellbeing benefits the rural economy and is a cost saving overall.

There are inequalities in access to nature. In areas of deprivation the infrastructure is poor and access routes in urban areas are poorly maintained and impacted by litter.

Rachael Lyon, Young People & Communities Team Leader, from the Peak District National Park Authority's (PDNPA) Engagement Team, was present to update the LAF on the work of her team. They are a small team, making links with professionals and other organisations. Communication is a key element to reaching out to a diverse audience with different needs. The team support link workers and organisations, especially in relation to those with mental health conditions. This is done through information sharing and sign posting to resources and other organisations. The team works with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) on Nature Prescriptions. Other National Parks are carrying out similar work with people in their own space. The Peaks of Health project operates in the south of the PDNP, an area where it has previously been difficult to connect with people. The team is also working with the PDNPA's cycle hire team to promote the accessible equipment that is available. They are creating a health and wellbeing network to connect organisations and bring in resources to complement and communicate the work. A health and wellbeing network has been established. The LAF was interested to hear about this work and offered to help the team where possible.

As part of Gill Millward's RoWIP Update for June's LAF meeting, it was mentioned that an interactive map has been developed to promote emotional health and wellbeing across Derby and Derbyshire to help connect people with local outdoor activity groups and opportunities to stay active and connect with nature which includes parks, trails, places of beauty, outdoor gyms, community gardens and

more. The link to the webpage which was launched in May 2024 to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week is here:

<https://bit.ly/Movemorenature> along with a link to the map itself:

<https://bit.ly/MHPAMap>

Action: It was suggested that someone leading on this work could be invited to a future Forum meeting to provide and update.

43. ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SUB-GROUP (SS)

Sue Smith gave an Active Travel update. Work has focused on consultations and obtaining data over the last few months. Two workshops have taken place with constituent and neighbouring Highway Authorities and a workshop has also taken place with major land owners. The first Local Access Forum stakeholder meeting is taking place after today's LAF meeting.

Summary of discussion

The guidance from the LAF at the workshops was valued. Charlotte Gilbert reported that the Active Travel England panel had been impressed with the work that the Peak District National Park had undertaken. The LAF will monitor the development of active travel programmes and consider reports brought to the Forum in order to progress the equivalent of the National Park's Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plan by March 2025.

Action: The report was noted, and the terms of reference for the sub-group were approved.

44. DERBYSHIRE RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE INCLUDING REPORT ON UNRECORDED WAYS SUB-GROUP MEETING (GM)

Gill Millward, Countryside Access Improvement Officer with Derbyshire County Council gave an update on Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).

Aim1: Existing Rights of Way Network

The report details the revised list of rights of way schemes to be delivered in the LAF's area in 2024/25, with other works deferred to future years due to a need to target funds for carriageway pothole repairs. £120k was available in 2024/25 for the replacement of 400 missing or damaged roadside signposts on public rights of way across the county, with 2,000 waymark discs already purchased to improve waymarking along those routes reported to be difficult to follow.

Summary of Discussion

There is a contrast between the amount of funding spent on rights of way compared with carriageways. Trying to improve access to the countryside is difficult when money is diverted into roads, meaning important work isn't done elsewhere on the network. DCC do a lot with limited resources. Long term funding around projects such as the Active Travel Masterplans and Pennine Bridleway National Trail will support work on the rights of way network. Surfacing is expensive. It is unclear, at the moment, what further funding might be available from the recent formation of the East Midlands Combined County Authority.

Aim 2: Definitive Map and Statement

The work to deal with the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) applications continues. Volunteers working on Project 2026 Derbyshire have now created research records for 404 paths and submitted 221 DMMO applications. Progress is slow because of the volume of DMMO's being submitted, and the amount of work involved in processing them. A Joint LAF Unrecorded Ways Sub-Group has met to discuss how the process could

be made easier and how to prioritise the applications.

Aim 3: An Improved Network

- a) The LAF was updated on progress to deliver various sections of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail, White Peak Loop and the Derwent Valley Trail as part of Derbyshire's Key Cycle Network, catering for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding wherever possible.

Summary of Discussion

The Derwent Valley Trail will run from Shardlow in South Derbyshire, through Chatsworth, and on to Hathersage, following the course of the River Derwent. The vision is that this will create a route that can be used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and canoeists.

- b) Consultations for the Active Travel Masterplans (ATMs) being developed for the market towns of Belper, Glossop and Ilkeston have been completed, with a positive response overall. The Hope Valley ATM project, which is an area wide plan, is now underway.

Summary of Discussion

The Hope Valley has a population of 9,000 with 7 million car visits per year. The links between towns, villages and communities is important as highlighted by the recent long term road closure at Bradwell. Charlotte Gilbert and Martin Bennett attended an on-line stakeholder engagement event for the Hope Valley ATM in September. The Plan will enhance the opportunities for cyclists, but the bridleway network is fragmented. Local parishes have attended an in-person event, and it is expected that there will be a wider public consultation in November, which will fall between the two Local Access Forum meetings.

Action: A joint response from the LAF on the Hope Valley Active Travel Plan to be submitted as part of the public consultation.

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) is working with The Young Foundation and University of Derby to develop Derbyshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This involves bringing together diverse perspectives from across Derbyshire and Derby. A series of stakeholder engagement events and workshops have taken place, with public consultation on the draft strategy planned for early 2025, with the aim of publishing the document by Summer 2025.

Aim 4: Improve the promotion, understanding and use of the network

- a) There are events taking place during 2024/25 to promote the Countryside Code, along with a series guides about responsible use of the countryside.
- b) The Walk Derbyshire App was launched on 1 July 2024, followed by several autumn events and free guided walks.
- c) Each year 13,000 copies of the Cycle Derbyshire leaflet/map are distributed to various venues across Derbyshire, as well as being available on the County Council's website.

Aim 5: Greater community involvement

The Service Level Agreement with Groundwork Five Counties is continuing in 2024/25. Dedicated groups of volunteers have worked on the rights of way and trails network, with 154 volunteer days delivered in the first six months of the year, estimated to be worth around £30,723.

Action: The progress report for delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement

Plan was noted

45. ACCESS UPDATE - UPDATE ON ACCESS FOR ALL AND ANNIVERSARY GATES (SS)

Sue Smith gave an update on Access projects in the Peak District National Park.

The Miller's Dale Changing Place on the Monsal Trail opened on 19 September 2024. A further Changing Place is due to be installed at Parsley Hay on the High Peak Trail.

70 Anniversary Gates providing access to the wilder parts of the National Park have been installed, funded by donations to the Access Fund. Wider gates and information panels to improve accessibility are being funded by the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme at the Authority's minor properties at Green Lane Pits, Hard Rake, Taddington Dale and Dirlow Rake.

Summary of Discussion

The MP for the High Peak has said that the Changing Place at Miller's Dale will change lives through enabling access. The facility is well designed and has been funded from various sources. The improvements to access at Dirlow Rake are appreciated. FiPL has funded footbridges at the River Wye near Topley Pike and at Cressbrook, along with a boardwalk, steps and railings in Warslow.

Action: The report was noted

46. ACCESS UPDATE APPENDIX - PROJECTS

The appendix to the Access Project update shows pictures of the work carried out and the people involved.

47. REVIEW OF DIRECTIONS - CONSULTATION AT HOLLINS HILL (SS)

Sue Smith set out the report to update the Forum on the consultations for the review of open access land exclusions.

The first three reviews have been completed, with the variation made as proposed on the direction at West Nab. The consultation at Hollins Hill relates to an exclusion of dogs whilst cattle are calving. Further discussions with the landowner have taken place to assess if this is still appropriate, with a conditional requirement to retain the permissive path.

Summary of discussion

The works at Swan and Limer Rakes are completed, with the route now open and a Traffic Regulation Order in place to prohibit vehicular access. There is no access to the south of Hollins Farm. The direction at Hollins Hill has provided a link route to the access land. Gates have been upgraded as the route is well used.

Action: The Peak District LAF approved the consultation response set out in Appendix 1 – Review of Statutory Direction Restricting Access at West Nab.

Action: The Peak District LAF agreed to make a response to the consultation set out in Appendix 2 – Review of Statutory Direction at Hollins Hill.

48. MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) Charlotte Gilbert - Update on the Trails Management Plan – Structure survey work is underway on the tunnels and bridges. A schedule of inspections, including vegetation clearing, is planned. The annual risk assessments for the walls above the cuttings have been completed. The capacity in some of the car parks that serve the trails has been increased, and charges introduced in others. The Management Plan is proceeding to keep the trails open to all users.

Action: The LAF to invite Helen Carrington, PDNPA Property Manager, to make a presentation at the next meeting about the management of the National Park's trails and properties.

- b) Ben Seal - Access to the Outdoors -The new government has pledged to create 3 new forests and 9 new national river walks, but there are no details about delivery of those. The Outdoors For All network, which is made up of 51 different organisations has signed up to a manifesto calling on the government to expand the right to access the outdoors. Although there have been no further announcements, there is optimism to see what emerges. There is still a commitment to 15 minutes to nature, with the Environmental Improvement plan to make better, quicker progress, which DEFRA is currently reviewing.

The quality of the place being visited is as important as the access to it. Water quality is an issue that needs tackling. The LAF should be ready to comment on any consultations on future legislation and introduce the Forum to local MPs and new mayors, who have a remit for transport. Possibly a LAF sub group could be formed to look at government policy changes and feedback details of relevant Green Papers, and to establish the LAF priorities in order to respond. The issue of Right to Roam has been raised again with the recent case in Dartmoor National Park. There should be safeguards on any restrictions on Access Land.

Action: Ben Seal was asked to put a report together for the next LAF meeting and to introduce the recently elected area MPs to the work of the LAF.

- c) Derbyshire on-line mapping and reporting system for Rights of Way- Martin Bennett demonstrated Derbyshire's on-line mapping for public rights of way. The formal definitive map is still a paper record kept in the County Council's Archive department. The on-line map is a version of the definitive map for the public to refer to, showing boundary details, scheduled work locations, as well as the rights of way network.

Reporting issues via the on-line system is a large part of Martin's work as Footpath Secretary for the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales Group. Each Council has their own reporting system, with the Fix My Street App, being widely used for reporting problems.

Summary of Discussion

There are approximately twenty steps to reporting a rights of way issue with the Derbyshire County Council on-line system. This takes the user through many screens, and various maps, some of which aren't very user friendly. Once a report is submitted, the acknowledgement email does not include a summary of the report, which can be problematic when reporting multiple issues. Other

authorities use the Fix My Street (FMS) App, which is easier to use. DCC has previously used this App, but has now stopped using it. If Fix My Street is used to report an issue within Derbyshire but the DCC system isn't integrated with the App, those reports might not be picked up.

In other areas reporting is easier, and definitive maps are more comprehensive with recording of connective routes in urban areas. Systems which are more difficult to navigate could lead to fewer reports to some councils. Reporting needs to be encouraged in order to collect data, which indicates where extra resources are needed. It also helps authorities prioritise their work. The demonstration has highlighted the issues with reporting problems on the rights of way network with some local authorities, although out of the 250 reports submitted by the Ramblers Association to DCC at year end, most reports have been dealt with. This is not the case everywhere in the country.

Action: Martin Bennett to draft a letter to Derbyshire County Council on behalf of the LAF regarding the difficulties using its online reporting system for problems on the Rights of Way network.

49. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Rhodes gave an update on the work of the Peak District National Park Foundation, as prepared by Jenny Seaman, Fundraising Manager at the Foundation.

Access donations are now to be via the Foundation's Paths and Trails Appeal. A dedicated webpage for the appeal was set up on the Foundation website in September 2024, with £5,333 already raised. This includes a £2,000 corporate donation from HolidayCottages.com, and a £2,000 memorial donation. Following a positive conversation with the British Mountaineering Council's Access and Conservation Trust, the Foundation has submitted an application seeking £5k from the Trust. Over the next month National Park Visitor Centres will promote the appeal, introducing a point of sale donation from their customers. The Foundation will promote the appeal via social media inviting donations from corporate partners, event organisers and individuals. Meetings will be held quarterly with the Access and Trails Team to decide how the money can be most usefully spent.

50. DATE OF NEXT MEETING (MR)

The date of the 2025 meetings are Wednesday 19th February, Wednesday 11th June and Wednesday 15th October.

51. CHAIR FOR NEXT MEETING

Clare Griffin will be the Chair for the period up to and including the next meeting on 19th February 2025 and has been involved in the planning of the current meeting. Martin Bennett and Charlotte Gilbert will continue as Vice Chairs. It is hoped that at some point someone on the Forum will take up the position of Chair on a longer term basis.

There was no interest expressed at this point from the LAF members to be Chair for the June and October 2025 meetings.

Action: Aim to publish the minutes earlier than previous in order that matters get actioned.

Decision: To continue with an agenda item to determine which LAF member will act as Chair on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

52. THEME OF NEXT MEETING

The theme of the next meeting is the management of public access.

Helen Carrington, PDNPA Property Manager, will be asked to make a presentation at the next meeting. Also, Dan Tavener, from Severn Trent Water, will make a presentation about access to water at Ladybower and wild swimming at Carsington Water.

Sue Smith introduced Forum members to Fiona Groves, who will be leading this afternoon's stakeholder workshop. Over lunch LAF members will also be joined by representatives from the British Mountaineering Council, British Horse Society, Disabled Ramblers and the National Trust, who will all be contributing to the workshop.

Meeting ended - Time Not Specified

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