



North York Moors

Local Access Forum

North York Moors National Park Authority, The Old Vicarage, Bondgate,
Helmsley, York, YO62 5BP

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on Tuesday 2 December 2014.

Present: Val Arnold, Catriona Cook, George Dawson, Bryn Griffiths, Peter Hay, Jan King, Elizabeth Kirk, Muriel Mitchell, John Richardson, George Winn-Darley.

Apologies: Catherine Cussons, Peter Hutchinson, Bill Suthers, Brian Walker

Officers in Attendance: Iain Burgess (Senior Ranger NYCC), Vanessa Burgess, Chris France, Richard Gunton, Malcolm Hodgson.

Copies of All Documents Considered are in the Minute Book

Before the meeting started, Richard Gunton (Director of Park Services) informed Members about inclusion of an additional item for the agenda – LAF Sub Group: Response to York Potash Planning Consultation. Item included after item 6 on the agenda.

12/14 Election of Chairman

Catriona Cook was elected Chair having been proposed by Bryn Griffiths and seconded by John Richardson.

13/14 Election of Deputy Chairman

George Winn-Darley was elected Deputy Chair having been proposed by Catriona Cook and seconded by Val Arnold

14/14 Minutes

The public minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 10 June 2014** were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15/14 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

16/14 England Coastal Path – verbal report by Malcolm Hodgson

Malcolm Hodgson (National Trails Officer) advised Members that the Coastal Access report from Natural England was due to be issued very soon and the LAF would be notified when available. The consultation period would be eight weeks from the date of publication.

Members proposed that a sub group be established to consider the proposals from the report once published. The following Members agreed to form a sub group: **Elizabeth Kirk, George Dawson, Jan King and Muriel Mitchell**. Their written response will be circulated to all LAF members for comment/amends prior to submission to Natural England. Malcolm Hodgson offered to assist the sub group if required.

During the following item George Winn-Darley declared a personal non-prejudicial interest.

17/14 LAF Sub Group – Response to York Potash Planning Consultation

Richard Gunton firstly apologised to Members for the late inclusion of the additional item relating to the LAF response to the York Potash Planning consultation. Richard reminded Members of the content of the LAF Standing Orders Item 13 - Interests in Matters Considered by the Forum and asked them to be mindful of this information when making recommendations to the Authority.

Chris France (Director of Planning) advised Members that the York Potash application was of national significance and that the process of determining the application could well be subject to intense scrutiny and potential legal challenge. It was therefore important that matters such as declarations of interest were duly stated and recorded to guard against the risk of any future challenge. In relation to the LAF response, he stated that as one of the Members taking part in the discussion had declared a prejudicial pecuniary interest, the weight that Members of the Planning Committee would give to a response would need to take this into account and could potentially be given less weight in recognition of the prejudicial interest and the potential influence this may have had on the group's response. However, in terms of the actual response submitted, this was more of a technical nature pointing out the likely impacts of the proposal on interests which the LAF has a legitimate role in, rather than a response which was either in support or objection to the proposal. In addition, the LAF is clearly not the 'decision maker' in relation to the York Potash planning application so any comments made by it will be considered alongside all other third party submissions. In this instance therefore, the response was helpful and its consideration was unlikely to be affected by the declaration of interests.

George Winn-Darley asked if the Authority felt he or other LAF Members had been involved inappropriately in the response process.

Officers advised Members that they weren't being specifically targeted, just being advised on the generality of the importance of declaration of any interests.

The LAF Chair thanked all Members of the sub group for their work.

Members agreed the sub group's response to the Authority and noted that George Winn-Darley also declared a personal though non-prejudicial interest...

18/14 URMAG

Bryn Griffiths updated Members on the recent work of URMAG. Excellent initial desk work had been completed by Sarah Blakemore (NYMNP Access Officer). 200 routes were initially identified, with 9 of the worst being earmarked for further investigation. URMAG Members managed to walk/discuss 7 out of the 9 routes prior to the loss of the Access Officer's post to redundancy. Recommendations to go to the Authority. Richard Gunton advised Members that, as described in detail in item 8, it is proposed that the Authority would be ceasing any work relating to management of the unsurfaced unclassified roads network due to reductions in staffing and the fact that it was the statutory duty of the Highways Authority. URMAG advice would be passed onto NYCC together with all monitoring results. The National Park Authority would be seeking confirmation from the Highways Authority that in carrying out their future management of unsurfaced unclassified roads, they would give some priority to those routes which were having a significant negative impact on conservation and public enjoyment in the National Park. LAF members supported this. Proposals for continuing ROW work to go to Dec NPA.

19/14 Changes in NPA Finances and Staffing and Impact on Access Management

Richard Gunton updated Members on the implications for access management work due to financial and staffing cuts. He said that ROW work in future would target routes which most benefit the public's enjoyment of the NP. Richard Gunton asked Members to note the staffing structure changes (Item 8, appendix 1) and commented that new ways of working would be employed, similar to the successful model of management

currently used on the Cleveland Way and in the Community Access Project. He was clear though that in the face of such significant reductions, existing standards would not be able to be maintained across the whole network

Members asked the following:

- Staffing breakdowns, numbers of staff reporting to Senior Rangers and Maintenance Rangers
- Budget available in future for contract work
- Whether NFU/CLA had been contacted for advice
- Tree work, who does responsibility for this work sit with
- Use of Apprentices to help with workload
- Access Officer, who will take this work forward in the future
- Top 15% ROW network list

Richard Gunton informed members:

- Each Senior Ranger had approx. 50 volunteer rangers reporting to them and each Maintenance Ranger would have approx. 12 dedicated volunteers assigned to them together with existing volunteer groups.
- Capital works/revenue budget now approx. £125K, half the previous budget.
- Initial consultations with landowners had been carried out via PLUG and now via LAF. Further consultations would be carried out following NPA on 15 December
- NP will continue to maintain top 15% of network to the same high standard. The remaining 85% will receive work to an optimum basic standard level (Item 8, appendix 2)
- Tree work – Responsibility depends upon the location. Where it is landowners responsibility, NP has the right to do tree work and re-charge the landowner
- DMMO work had now gone and ease of use survey would in future be carried out every other year and by volunteers.
- Need for NP to continue to press NYCC to invest in their statutory duty to maintain public ROW work within the NP.
- Much of the Access Officer work will cease as outlined in item 7 other work will be picked up by Head of Recreation and Park Management and by Senior Rangers as appropriate.

Iain Burgess (Senior Ranger, NYCC) advised Officers/Members of his understanding regarding tree issue: Highways clear if falls across a road. Can re-claim costs from land owner if tree defective and landowner knew. Could also sell tree to recoup costs.

Action: Richard Gunton to circulate to Members top 12% ROW network list, additional Community routes to be added over the next 3 months.

Muriel Mitchell asked about budget cuts and the effect on visitor numbers to the NP.

Richard Gunton advised that promoting the profile of the NP was still a top priority for the NPA, targets for tourism hadn't reduced and the Authority was in fact investing a little more in this area of work.

Muriel Mitchell commented that a lot of footpaths would no longer be maintained and asked if the LAF should write to the relevant Government Minister regarding the cuts. Several Members supported this suggestion.

Action: Muriel Mitchell to draft letter and circulate to Members for comment prior to posting.

Members made further comments on:

- Sums of money spent per kilometre on ROW work and how the NYMNPA compared to other NP's.
- Supplying waymark discs to landowners
- Fallen trees and other obstructions such as rubbish
- Need for good working relationships with landowners to help with work

- Need for volunteers to have third party insurance
- Need to use CLA/NFU to drip feed ROW information

Iain Burgess (Senior Ranger, NYCC), informed Members that the Institute of Public ROW Officers conduct a survey every year at Highway Authority Level. North Yorkshire doesn't fair very well in the figures. NYCC currently spend £125K on 6000 kilometres of ROW network, while the NP spends £125K on 2000 Kilometres.

Action: Richard Gunton advised Members that the NP will continue to carry out way-marking, but would be happy to supply landowners with discs. Richard also assured Members that volunteers were included in NP insurance, the Authority operated a 'one team approach'.

Members made additional comments on:

- Landowners/occupiers replacing gates, fences etc
- Need for Definitive Map information to be available in hard copy format at NYMNPA offices
- Working level of volunteers, what is expected
- Engaging other types of volunteers such as prison service, community service, Army

Iain Burgess (Senior Ranger, NYCC) informed Members that lawful structures have to be replaced like for like, if landowners chose a lesser replacement then legally that can be seen as an obstruction. The Definitive map was produced electronically. Producing hard copy would be expensive and quickly become out of date.

Richard Gunton advised Members that volunteers aren't limited technically by what they can do, only limited by health and safety. Work is undertaken correctly. The Authority was continuing to seek engagement with Army volunteers but, to date, success had been limited.

Action: Richard Gunton to further investigate prison service/community service volunteering.

20/14 **Report back from the NPA**

Richard Gunton updated Members on the following:

- Authority investigating the establishment of a Trust, though still at a very early stage
- TEL project progressing well
- Still awaiting news re: new LEADER programme and Coastal Communities Fund

21/14 **LAF Response to Draft Cycling Delivery Plan**

Members noted the response. Iain Burgess (NYCC Senior Ranger) advised Members that NYCC had tentatively signed up. The Chair informed Members that she had spoken to Robert Goodwill, MP for Scarborough and Whitby and had been advised by Mr Goodwill that the cycling plan would be mainly urban based. Richard Gunton informed Members that of 8 NP's that had bid to DfT, 3 had received money though New Forest had been unable to spend £2m of their funding due to local opposition to their intended scheme. DfT were considering re-allocation, but funds would need to be invested immediately. Richard Gunton advised Members of the Authority's recent bid to Life+ - Green Infrastructure project. In partnership with Norfolk CC, our part of the bid was for a shovel ready scheme for the Cinder track.

22/14 **Items for Future Meetings**

Members made the following comments:

- Multi User Routes, including the best ways of using them and night cycling.
- Discussion about Scottish access.
- Use of Public Highways in between PROW.
- Confirmation of a cycling rep on LAF.

- Feedback from NP on URMAG Prog report.
- Update on changes in ROW management.

23/14 **Any Other Business**

The Chair asked NYCC Member, Val Arnold and NYCC Senior Ranger, Iain Burgess if the County Council would be increasing staff numbers to cope with increased DMMO work. Val Arnold advised Members that the County Council was facing 40% cuts, so staff numbers wouldn't be increased to cope with the additional work.

Vanessa Burgess offered to arrange Coastal Sub group meeting date/venue when required

Action: Vanessa Burgess to action once consultation period announced.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2015, 10am - NYMNPA Committee Room.

..... (Chair)
9 June 2015