

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on Thursday, 23 February 2006.

PRESENT:-

Derek Welford in the Chair.

North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillor Michael S Knaggs.

Other Members – Diane Elizabeth Baines, David B Currie, Robert E Dennison, Roland Firby, Edward Flexman, Christopher David Gibson, Nigel Graham, Timothy C Laurie, Stephen Ramsden, Judith Ratcliffe and Anthony Turner.

Officers: John Edwards, Joanne Coote, Chris Jones, Angela Flowers and Jane Wilkinson.

Four members of the public.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Eric Broadbent, and John Fort Leo Crone, John Goss and Thomas Wheelwright.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2005, having been printed and circulated be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:-

- That the names of Anthony Turner and Angela Flowers be added to the list of names as having tendered their apologies to the meeting.

40. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

Brian Taylor a Member of Easingwold Town Council enquired what progress had been made regarding an application that had been lodged with the County Council to divert a public footpath that passed through Easingwold School. Joanne Coote responded that her recollection was that the adjacent land owner had failed to respond to consultation approaches. She agreed to check on the position on her return to the office and to contact the Parish Council direct with her findings.

A Member of Kirkby Fleetham Parish Council enquired about progress on an application submitted to the County Council for a circular walk around the village. Angela Flowers, agreed to speak to her colleague Peter Penny before giving a direct response to the Parish Council.

41. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer updating members on progress made since the last meeting regarding preparation of the Rights of Way

Improvement Plan for North Yorkshire. A copy of a letter outlining the content structure of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan was tabled at the meeting. Members were requested to feedback any comments they had on the proposed structure to Angela Flowers by 17 March 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

42. SKIPTON PILOT PROJECT PHASE 1 REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer summarising the results of the Skipton Pilot Project.

Members were informed that the project had been very labour intensive and that the original project was developed to look at the possibility of taking forward similar projects across the whole of North Yorkshire.

Members were advised that the nature of the improvement project per parish which could be carried out had yet to be identified and would be agreed following consultation with the local community. In view of the cross border issues involved Members suggested that a copy of the report be sent to the National Park.

Stephen Ramsden remarked that as maintenance of the existing rights of way network was fragmented and in view of the limited resources available any monies available should be spent on the existing network rather than on works to extend it even further.

Members were concerned that landowners/occupiers had yet to be consulted and thought that this should have been done at an initial stage of the project. Members debated whether if such a project was to be repeated in the future if it would be better to use Parish Councils as opposed to specific user groups as a point of contact.

David Gibson stated that he hoped recognition would be given to the volunteers involved and hoped that the local steering group that had been formed would continue to operate in the future. He requested that six copies of the plan are made available to the Steering Group who had arranged a meeting with Joanne Coote to take the project forward into the next phase.

Members congratulated officers for all their hard work in what had been a very interesting and worthwhile project.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the key recommendations as set out in paragraph 3.27 of the report together with a further key recommendation that landowners/occupiers be consulted in the initial stages of the project be approved and used to guide the evolution of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan wherever possible.
- (iii) That the aims and objectives of the Skipton Pilot Project be collated and forwarded to the local co-ordinator for implementation.
- (iv) That the project co-ordinator and the volunteers involved in the study be thanked for their efforts and the valuable contribution they have made to the production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

43. OPEN ACCESS UPDATE

CONSIDERED –

That the report of the Open Access Officer on the progress of Open Access in North Yorkshire.

David Currie suggested that a further column be added to the spreadsheet shown at Appendix 1 of the report to provide a further update on the action column. Such a column would give volunteers feedback on the incidents they had reported whilst on patrol.

David Gibson reported that he had been approached by members of the public complaining that there were not enough access points on to open access land in Nidderdale. He had asked for the complaints to be put in writing and asked officers if they were aware of any difficulties. Chris Jones responded that he was aware of one area in Nidderdale where there is some difficulty entering access land and stated that it was his intention to bring a report on this subject to the next meeting of the Forum. Members referred to access signage and whether there is any intention to put up access symbol discs. Chris Jones informed the Forum that he intended to use the volunteers to put up access discs. At the moment there were no guidelines for the volunteers to use on where to locate such signs. He confirmed that all landowners/occupiers would be consulted before access signs were placed on their land and that the guidance when available would differentiate between waymark discs and information boards.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That a further column be added to the spreadsheet shown at Appendix 1 of the report to provide a further update on action taken.
- (iii) That a report on the signing of access points to open access land be referred to the next meeting.

44. USE OF ACCESS LAND FOR TRAINING RACE HORSES

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Access Officer on issues surrounding the training of race horses on open access land. A copy of a map of the access land in question at Thixendale in the Yorkshire Wolds was circulated at the meeting.

County Councillor Mike Knaggs stated that he was familiar with the site and had grave concerns on health and safety grounds if the public continued to exercise their right to the open access land. An alternative route was available to the public that separated them from the galloping horses which he considered offered the ideal solution. The monies the occupier of the land derived from training racehorses represented a significant part of his overall income.

The Forum agreed that the current situation was unacceptable and that it raised various issues around what constituted the definition of a professional race horse trainer. Members noted that the occupier of the land intended to apply to the Countryside Agency for seasonal restrictions and agreed to debate the matter in further detail if the Forum was formerly consulted. Members supported the action taken by the County Council.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum supports the action taken by the County Council.
- (iii) That the wording on the notices referred to in the report be amended to show the reason why access is not permitted namely on health and safety grounds.

45. RANGER SERVICE ON BARDEN FELL

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Open Access Officer explaining a forthcoming extension to the area covered by the Access Volunteer Service in relation to Barden Fell and the options available for future wardening.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the future arrangements for wardening the area of Barden Fell outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park be negotiated on the basis of an integrated NYCC/YDNP Partnership, in line with Option 2 in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

46. INFORMATION ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of the Countryside Service providing information on public rights of way to inform the work of the Local Access Forum.

Members thanked John Edwards for producing the report and confirmed that the information it contained was what they wanted and was what they would like to continue to receive. The data provided helped give them a better understanding of the work of the Countryside Service. Members congratulated officers on achieving the LPSA target and were disappointed to note that the LPSA monies would be allocated corporately and that it was unlikely that the Countryside Service would receive an allocation.

Members noted that the County Council had only recently established a specific budget for bridge maintenance works despite having statutory responsibility for their upkeep and maintenance. It was noted that the cost of bridge maintenance works currently outstanding was well in excess of the budget allocated.

Members commented that in their experience reported obstructions on the rights of way network were not dealt with promptly and that it was not uncommon for their to be a long delay before a problem was resolved. Members acknowledged recent increased activity levels on the rights of way network and suggested that consideration be given to using the media to publicise future works.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum continues to receive regular reports of this type in the future.
- (iii) That future reports contain the following additional:-

- The Countryside Service annual report.
 - Public Rights of Way Budget 2006/2007.
 - Information regarding the progress of Definitive Map Modification Order Applications referred to Legal Services.
- (iv) That the comments of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum regarding the allocation of LPSA monies be referred to the Executive.

47. REVIEW OF THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of the Countryside Service summarising modifications put in place to address recommendations made at the last meeting concerning improvements to the operation of the Local Access Forum.

Members were supportive of the measures taken to make the Local Access Forum more effective and responsive to future needs.

A date of 27 April 2006 had been identified for the training/induction day and any Member of the Forum wishing to attend was asked to contact the Secretary.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the current arrangements are monitored and an update report brought to the November 2006 meeting.
- (ii) That draft agendas be circulated to all Members of the Forum in advance of future meetings.

48. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

Members received the draft future work programme for the Forum and requested that if possible they be given a demonstration of the CAMS system at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum Forward Plan be noted and approved.
- (ii) That a demonstration of the CAMS system be incorporated into the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum Forward Plan.

49. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman advised Members that it was intended to hold the next business meeting of the Forum on 18 May 2006 in the morning at Bewerley Park Centre, Nidderdale which would be followed by lunch and a site visit in the afternoon.

RESOLVED –

That the next meeting of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum be held on Thursday, 18 May 2006 at 10.30 am at the Bewerley Park Centre, Pateley Bridge.