

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 16 November 2006.

PRESENT:-

Tony Turner in the Chair.

Other Members – Allan Aspden, Diane Baines, David Currie, Edward Dennison, David Gibson, John Goss, Nigel Graham, Stephen Ramsden, David Swabey, Paul Tibbatts and Tom Wheelwright.

North Yorkshire County Council:- County Councillors Eric Broadbent, John Fort BEM and Michael Knaggs.

Officers: John Edwards, Angela Flowers, Gavin de la Tour, Aidan Rayner and Jane Wilkinson.

Present by Invitation: Robert Shopland-Reed – Defence Estates, Jennifer Aird and Hazel Armstrong – East Riding of Yorkshire Local Access Forum.

Two members of the public.

Apologies for absence were received from Leo Crone, Ted Flexman and Judith Ratcliffe.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

The Chairman welcomed Jennifer Aird (Support Officer) and Hazel Armstrong (Chairman) from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Local Access Forum. He also informed Members that Iain Burgess, the Access and Public Rights of Way Manager had been involved in a motorcycle accident whilst on holiday. Iain was expected to make a full recovery but was likely to be absent from work until the New Year.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

35. MATTERS ARISING

THE USE OF ACCESS LAND FOR TRAINING RACEHORSES AT THIXENDALE

Aidan Rayner reported that as a result of his meeting with Mr and Mrs Brader, they had agreed to a sign being erected on the open access land used for training racehorses. The sign would incorporate a map together with a flip down facility to be operated when racehorses were being trained so as to warn the public of their presence. Aidan Rayner had agreed to draft the wording on the sign which once approved by Mr & Mrs Brader would be erected on site.

A1M DISHFORTH TO BARTON UPDATE

A copy of a letter received from the Highways Agency dated 30 August, together with a copy of their rebuttal response to Objectors Alternative OA20 dated 26 October 2006 were tabled at the meeting. Members were advised that the Public Inquiry had closed on 3 November 2006 and that the decision of the Inspectors was still awaited.

PRIORITISATION OF REPORTED PROBLEMS

John Edwards reported that feedback received on the priority matrix meant that further work was needed before it could be piloted. Because of the absence of Iain Burgess, Members were advised that there could well be slippage in the timetable for implementing the matrix.

GREEN LANES

David Gibson expressed concern that the decision to nominate Members of the North Yorkshire LAF to the Green Lanes Liaison Group had been rushed and that upon reflection considered that membership of the Group would benefit from wider representation of LAF interests. Members commented that membership of the Liaison Group would also benefit from wider representation other than representatives of the three Local Access Forum's in North Yorkshire.

As a member of the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum, David Gibson reported that at their last meeting the subject of Green Lanes was not included on the agenda. To the best of his knowledge, officers at the Yorkshire Dales National Park had not been contacted by Doug Huzzard regarding the re-establishment of the Green Lanes Liaison Group. He was keen for progress in this area to be made.

Members requested that Doug Huzzard be invited to attend the next Forum meeting to report on the constitution of and progress towards establishing the Green Lanes Liaison Group.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

None received.

37. EXPANSION OF CATTERICK GARRISON

The Forum received a presentation from Robert Shopland-Reed, Senior Estates Adviser, Defence Estates. He briefly outlined the history of Catterick Garrison the fastest growing military base in the UK and described the extent of the Garrison's estate. He stressed that development of the Garrison as a super Garrison was still in its infancy and that not all of the reported aspirations for the site would actually come to fruition. The Army was already moving towards greater integration with the local community when developing services. He gave an overview of the complex arrangements currently in place for public access to army training areas. The arrangements were contained in a formal document and administered by the Commander of the Garrison. There was an overall presumption in favour of public access provided it did not compromise the public's health or safety. The Garrison Commander held regular meetings with various local groups and forums to discuss access issues. A copy of the Public Access Land Management Plan was available upon request. The Ministry of Defence took seriously its public access responsibilities and went to great lengths to ensure that it was managed properly the first priority was always public safety. Standard flip signs were used to warn the public when a training area was active.

The Garrison had launched its long-term Development Plan in November 2006 and he stressed that not all of its contents would materialise. The MoD was adopting a partnership approach to the development of the site but currently did not have a formal access management plan.

Members were advised that the Garrison had an extensive network of cycle routes that had been developed in conjunction with the County Council. The MoD was currently working closely with the British Horse Society to open up more equestrian routes across the garrison.

The Chairman then invited members of the Forum and public to comment/ask questions.

Members acknowledged that rights of way routes around the camp were very good but hoped that the new Development Plan would improve public access both to and from the Garrison. Members were advised that no route came to a dead end and that the network was fully linked. The MoD was currently investigating the creation of permitted routes and was in negotiation to improve the bus service between the Garrison and Richmond.

Members were assured that every opportunity was being taken to strengthen public access routes. The private development of housing sites at the Garrison was still in the initial stages and planning permission for all of the sites had not yet been granted. When planning permission was granted, every opportunity would be taken to ensure rights of way routes were comprehensive and practical.

County Councillor John Fort enquired if the MoD had considered making available to the public for recreational purposes four-wheel drive routes. Army training areas had suitable routes available and the County Council was under pressure to meet public demand for this activity. Robert Shopland-Reed advised that over the course of the last few years there had been an overall decrease in the amount of land used for defence training. Capacity was further constrained by environmental pressures and the designation of some areas as sites of special scientific interest. Training grounds were, first and foremost, for Army personnel but he agreed that there were opportunities for third party access schemes. The MoD had experienced enforcement problems in the past with third party access and would be very cautious about entering into a similar scheme at Catterick. Robert Shopland-Reed assured Members that if any opportunities for third party access presented themselves he would contact the County Council.

Members suggested that the Ministry of Defence should consider strengthening its relationship with the County Council's Local Area Committee.

The Chairman thanked Robert Shopland-Reed for his attendance at the meeting and for the information he had provided to the Committee.

Robert Shopland-Reed stated his willingness to attend future meetings if required.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the presentation be noted.

38. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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 (RoWIP) for North Yorkshire.

Forum Members acknowledged that they had all received a hard copy of the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan together with a CD containing supporting technical summaries.

Members were advised that there was still further work to be done on the technical summaries and that a 20-page 'easy read' pamphlet for distribution to the public was currently being drafted.

Members congratulated Angela Flowers on producing such a comprehensive and well thought out document. The Chairman said that it was a remarkable achievement to have reached this stage.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the report be noted.
2. That any Member wanting to respond to the draft RoWIP on an individual basis can do so by either writing or e-mailing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer, or by contacting those members nominated to attend the joint LAF event on 22 November 2006.
3. That Ted Flexman, David Gibson and Judith Ratcliffe are nominated to be the Forum's representatives on the RoWIP Steering Group and to attend the RoWIP Steering Group meeting on 28 November 2006.

**39. PEOPLE PATHS AND PLACES
A RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE – JOINT LAF EVENT**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer informing Members of a forthcoming joint LAF event being held to gain the views of Forum Members on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan for North Yorkshire.

RESOLVED –

That Alan Aspden, Paul Tibbatts and Stephen Ramsden be nominated to attend the joint Local Access Forum event on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan on 22 November 2006.

40. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT IN THE NIDDERDALE AONB

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Access Officer outlining proposals for a comprehensive programme of improvements to the public rights of way network in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Members welcomed the proposed programme of improvements which had already commenced with works in the Birstwith area. Members were informed that David Ranner was currently working on producing a design guide for the network furniture to be installed as part of the programme. Most of the survey work had already been completed by countryside volunteers and it was hoped that this work would be finalised by Christmas. Members were assured that Parish Councils would be closely involved in the roll-out of the improvement programme.

David Currie stated that whilst wooden signs were visually attractive, they deteriorated quicker than other materials. He stressed that the size of the lettering used on the signs, together with their height, was important as he was keen to ensure they were visible by as many users as possible. Aidan Rayner confirmed

that signage design had not yet been finalised and welcomed further input from David Currie on this aspect of the programme.

John Goss suggested that a wheelchair symbol be incorporated onto the signs. At the previous meeting, Forum Members had been given a tour of the Howardian Hills AONB and he had been so impressed with what he had seen on that site visit that he had returned the following week and completed an 11km walk. Prior to the site visit, he had been unaware of the existence of wheelchair routes in this area.

County Councillor John Fort, whilst in support of the programme, was anxious that it did not render the Parish Caretaker scheme unsustainable. Aidan Rayner assured County Councillor John Fort that Parish Caretakers would be utilised as part of the contracting force for the programme and was confident that the work of parish caretakers would not diminish which was mainly seasonal in any event.

County Councillor John Fort suggested that officers contact Dacre School where pupils had recently done an excellent job in constructing the signs for a local walk. He suggested that their work could perhaps be replicated for the programme improvements outlined in the report.

RESOLVED –

That the programme of improvements to the Public Rights of Way network in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is endorsed by the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum.

41. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – PRE-PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer providing members with an overview of the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). Members were given a live demonstration of the CAMS system and were informed how new technology saved officer time and had sped up the process of inputting data. The System was now capable for the first time of producing specialised management performance reports at any level.

Members thanked Gavin de la Tour for his enthusiastic and informative presentation.

In response to a question from David Gibson, Forum Members were advised that within the next two months it would be possible for the system to produce customised reports of all types.

John Edwards confirmed that previously it had been very difficult and time consuming to extract any meaningful management information from the CAMS system. This was no longer the case in North Yorkshire.

David Currie referred to paragraph 2.10 of the report and requested that further consideration be given to recording details of the suitability of a route for people with disabilities.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

42. RIGHTS OF WAY WHICH ARE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer providing members with information on routes which are currently available to people with disabilities and which are maintained by the County Council.

Angela Flowers advised that there was currently no official guidance or best practice available on this subject. Experience had shown that promotional leaflets, if produced, did not always reach the target audience. Angela Flowers agreed to contact Adult and Community Services and Children and Young People Service Directorates with a view to exploring effective methods for the promotion of the availability of rights of way for people with disabilities.

John Goss referred to the Lake District "Miles Without Stiles" project as a practical example of good practice and urged officers not to give up on publishing information. He also asked that when suitable routes were publicised the emphasis should be on families and not just people with disabilities.

Members were keen to progress this work further and agreed to concentrate on the routes identified in the report. It was suggested that voluntary groups be invited to "road test" the identified routes. The improvements to the CAMS system referred to earlier in the meeting could be used to log the demand for routes in different parts of the county. CAMS could also be used to produce a report on the improvements needed on a specific route so as make it suitable for people with disabilities/families. Members were realistic about the timescale for this work and suggested that one/two routes were improved each year. They also suggested that the benefits of a sponsor be investigated.

Members thanked officers for producing the report and requested a further report that explored the suggestions made at the meeting together with details of the costs involved, opportunities for partnership working and the development of a recognised standard across the whole of North Yorkshire.

John Fort reminded officers that when prioritising the routes the importance of a nearby car park and toilets facilities should not be overlooked.

RESOLVED –

That a further report be referred to the next meeting of the Forum exploring the suggestions made at the meeting in respect of Rights of Way Available for Families and People With Disabilities in North Yorkshire.

43. REVIEW OF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM AND UPDATE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of the Countryside Service reviewing the effectiveness of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum. At the invitation of the Chairman, Hazel Armstrong, the Chairman of the Local Access Forum for East Riding of Yorkshire Council suggested that the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum gave consideration to providing Parish Councils with advance notice of meeting dates so as to improve public attendance at future meetings. She reported that if funding could be found, then regional training days for Local Access Forum members would be organised. She also suggested that the LAF give consideration to developing its own website. She referred to the previous Agenda item and said that in East Yorkshire the Council had produced a pack of 12/15 laminated cards. Each card contained details of a walking route suitable for families/people with disabilities. The packs had proved to be very popular and sales proceeds meant that they were self-financing. She suggested that when consulting on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, separate consultation meetings were organised for each of the user groups.

The Chairman thanked her for her comments and her attendance at the meeting, which had provided members with a useful opportunity to exchange ideas.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the report be noted.

44. FORWARD PLAN

Members received the future work programme of the Forum. It was agreed that the recommendations made earlier in the meeting for additional reports be incorporated into the work programme.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum's Forward Plan be noted and approved.
2. That the following reports are incorporated into the Forums' Forward Work Programme:-
 - Green Lanes
 - Development of Rights of Way Which Are Available For People With Disabilities/Families in North Yorkshire.

45. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

A schedule of suggested meeting dates and venues for 2007 was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the dates for meetings in 2007 of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum are as follows:-

<u>Date</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>VENUE</u>
Thursday, 22 February 2007	1.00 p.m.	County Hall
Thursday, 24 May 2007	To be agreed	Scarborough area
Thursday, 16 August 2007	To be agreed	Craven area
Thursday, 22 September 2007	1.00 p.m.	to be agreed

46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – CIRCULAR WALKS PROGRAMME

John Edwards stated that he had agreed with the Editor of the County Council's newspaper the North Yorkshire Times that Countryside Services would publish in each monthly edition details of a circular walk within the county.

John Edwards sought the assistance of Forum members to compile a schedule of walks for publication in future editions of the paper. To qualify, the route had to be circular and be between four and eight miles long and ideally start in a town/village or car park and have a point of interest along the route. All suggestions received would be considered before being prioritised.

RESOLVED –

That Forum members contact John Edwards outside of the meeting with their suggestions for circular walks to be included in future editions of the North Yorkshire Times.

JW/JPI