

North York Moors National Park

c/o Local Access Forum Secretary,
North York Moors National Park
The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, Helmsley, YORK
YO62 5BP

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on 4 December 2007.

PRESENT:

Mrs C Cussons, Mr G Dawson, Mr D Hanson, Mr P Hay, Mr B James, Mrs J King, Lady E Kirk, Dr D Leyshon, Mrs M Mitchell, Mrs N Taylor, Mr M Wedgwood, Mr G Winn Darley

Apologies: Brian Briggs, Mr J Cavana, Catriona Cook and Michael Knaggs.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

45/07 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That George Winn-Darley be elected Chair of the Local Access Forum, to take office until the next Annual General Meeting of the Local Access Forum.

GEORGE WINN-DARLEY IN THE CHAIR

46/07 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Derek Hanson be elected Deputy Chair of the Local Access Forum, to take office until the next Annual General Meeting of the Local Access Forum.

47/07 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 11 September, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to minute 40/07 being amended to read ..."anomalies from the definitive **map** due to".

48/07 MATTERS ARISING

- a) The response to the Fire Prevention Restrictions – a letter had been sent in response to the consultation; it had been circulated with the agenda.

- b) Green Lanes – the Director of Recreation and Park Management reported that a group of National Park and County Council officers were currently developing an “asset management” plan. Members of the Forum were keen to see that any routes with public access were not lost when the plan was prepared.

A Member was aware of nineteenth Century legislation which enables a highways authority to use a Cessor Order to remove its obligation to maintain a public highway.

- c) Access Land Closures Schedule and Mountaineering Events – The Access Officer reported that the dates of previous closures in 2007 had been passed on to the BMC for reference.

- d) Pockley Moor – the Director of Recreation and Park Management reported that progress was being made and the consultation process was due to end in January, the necessary action to prevent use of the route would be taken as soon as the TRO was in place.

49/07

MOTORISED USE OF THE NATIONAL PARK

CONSIDERED:

The Director of Recreation and Park Management gave a short Power Point presentation; this appears in the Minute Book.

Tim Stevens from the Land Access and Recreation Association (LARA) gave a presentation about the work of his organisation. His presentation included the following points:

- The Traffic Regulation Order – there were other alternatives, this wasn't always the best solution to a problem.
- Highway Authorities were often not structured to deal with “green lanes”, as they fell in between the responsibilities of departments dedicated to metalled highways and footpaths and bridleways.
- The lack of information about green lanes led to concentration of use where the status of routes was clear.
- There was a lack of definitive official records about roads generally.
- There was a lack of funding for green lanes, particularly due to the lack of clarity about the status of many routes.
- Maintenance could often be done more cheaply than councils estimated by using volunteers; LARA members could often help resolve these difficulties.
- Illegal use – sometimes due to a lack of clarity of status and information about which routes were legal. Ignoring users needs sometimes created illegal use and alienated them – this was particularly true for young motorcyclists who were often targeted.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act – this had added a further layer of problems to resolve following changes to the original drafted version.
- He urged authorities to contact LARA and other user organisations to help solve problems before they become a huge issue, rather than automatically banning use; other alternatives could be just as effective. Voluntary Restraint notices were displayed at the meeting; these could reduce use on sensitive routes. A system of “permits” had been introduced in the Lake District to ensure that there was some control over use.

- He identified three types of user:
 - a) Those who just want to get from A to B
 - b) Those who enjoy the journey
 - c) Those who take part in sport
 - d) The “hooligan”
- If users were not provided with opportunities to pursue their interest then enforcement would probably prove impossible. In other areas of the country it had been shown that enforcement was more effective if alternative routes and areas were identified where users could be directed to.
- Many users enjoyed the history and tradition associated with green lanes.
- He considered it appropriate to include green lanes in the National Park’s list of “special qualities” given their historic value. They provided some of the most ancient traces of man in the landscape. They should be cherished, rather than being thought of in a negative way as a problem to manage.
- Some difficulties arose with commercial use of the routes as businesses tended to stick to a particular route, which could cause overuse and use in poor weather.
- There needed to be acceptance that some people enjoy mud winching and this needed to be catered for in some way.
- The local economy could benefit from provision of specialist facilities as this attracted users to the area, which in turn benefited other tourist facilities such as accommodation or refreshment providers.

Members raised the following points in discussion following the presentation:

- The effectiveness of the voluntary restraint signs was questioned. Mr Stevens explained that there was usually very limited baseline data to use as a measure so it was difficult to assess the impact absolutely. The system was obviously more effective to the more conscientious users.
- Some Members considered that this type of use in the National Park was incompatible with its purposes; however, others considered that there should be access for all types of user whatever their interest.
- Positive messages identifying locations where users could go, rather than trying to ban them outright were seen as the way forward. The Director of Recreation and Park Management said that a balanced approach was favoured by the National Park; subject to the interests of wildlife and landscape being taken into account and the location of the routes being suitable.
- Provision of specific locations where users could pursue their interest was favoured; but these needed to be in accessible places; old quarries were particularly useful in this respect as they absorbed noise and could provide challenging experiences without damaging the routes which other users also used.

Action: That Officers be requested to investigate the experiences of the Lake District with their system of licensing motorised users and report back to a future meeting.

50/07 **PROPOSED NEW ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC ON DOGS ON RIGHTS OF WAY AND OPEN ACCESS LAND**

CONSIDERED:

George Winn-Darley stood down as Chairman for this item as he had a strong interest in this subject.

The Access Officer gave a Power Point presentation which summarised the consultation responses of the Forestry Commission, Moorland Association and Kennel Club.

DEREK HANSON IN THE CHAIR

Members commented as follows:

- A Memo was circulated to all LAF Members from George Winn-Darley setting out his concerns about the proposals (A copy of this appears in the Minute Book). Mr Winn-Darley requested a deferral of this item in order for Moorland Gamekeepers to be consulted and further discussions to take place with Officers. In particular he felt that the Authority should try to encourage better behaviour than the actual legal minimum required.
- Catriona Cook's comments were read out at the meeting, she was not present. (A copy appears in the Minute Book). In response to a query raised by her about the impact on bird numbers, the Access Officer explained that there had not been a survey of wading birds recently; however, the annual Merlin survey had not shown any demonstrable downturn in numbers attributable to open access.
- There was support for encouraging a high standard of behaviour and using the word "please" was felt to be appropriate.
- Grass crops should be added to the list of "places" on the schedule; perhaps under Arable Fields. The message should include something about dog fouling and the detrimental impact this had on the welfare of livestock.
- Getting the message across was a big problem; many dog owners seemed blind to the problems their own dogs caused.
- A generic message would be preferred to avoid confusion; consistency was important.
- Fenced areas of forestry land, for example, could be used to exercise dogs off leads; this was done in Finland successfully. Several Members supported this idea; they would be particularly useful near residential areas and car parks.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) Officers should consider amendments to the proposed draft advice code in the light of the comments of the Forum and other consultees (and that the Moorland Association should be given the opportunity to resubmit a full response including the concerns of moorland keepers); and
- b) the Forum should be consulted again on the final version of the code of public advice.

GEORGE WINN-DARLEY IN THE CHAIR

51/07 **COAST TO COAST MOUNTAIN BIKE ROUTE STUDY**

CONSIDERED:

The report of the Director of Recreation and Park Management.

The Director of Recreation and Park Management responded to questions as follows:

- The North Yorkshire Outdoor Adventure Working Group included representatives of the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, Yorkshire Tourist Board and North Yorkshire County Council.
- An “intermediate” route meant that there was no need for a great amount of technical skill, it should be achievable for a road sensible adult or young person.
- The actual route was still in the planning stage, however it was hoped it could be linked through the Lake District and connecting with the Yorkshire Dales and then the North York Moors. There were some substantial barriers to this ideal including rivers and the A1 road in the Vale of Mowbray which were challenging to cross.
- 6.2 should refer to the report being produced in April **2008**.

There was considerable support for making the route as multi-user as possible in order for it to provide value for money; however the Director of Recreation and Park Management explained that there were some difficulties with marketing it as such, as the funding was specifically provided for a cycle route, but the benefits would be available for all users.

52/07 **ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007**

CONSIDERED:

A draft Annual Report had been prepared by the Forum Secretary.

Members amended the wording of the “Site Visit” section to refer to a “tour” of the Moors Centre.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the reference to a site visit being removed, the Annual Report was agreed for circulation.

53/07 **NATIONAL LAF**

CONSIDERED:

An e-mail from the West Yorkshire Pennine Local Access Forum was considered.

Forum Members commented as follows:

- The money identified to administer a National Forum would be better used to improve rights of way on the ground; there was concern about what was seen as the “machine” of local access forum administration at Government level.
- They could not immediately identify a useful purpose for a National Forum; particularly given the original remit of the Forums to provide more locally based advice.
- Ad hoc contact with Chairs of Local Access Forums when necessary would be more appropriate.
- Forums could contact Government Ministers and MPs direct if they had an issue which they wished to raise.
- There was more of a case for regional discussions than an England wide National body.

Action: The Chairman to send a letter in response setting out the points raised; there was no support for a national forum.

54/07

APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

RESOLVED:

That the following Members be appointed as representatives of the Forum on other bodies – to be regarded as an approved duty for the purpose of paying Members' allowances:

- a) North Yorkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan –a representative to participate in a possible focus group on delivery of specific outputs – Lady Kirk
- b) North York Moors National Park Recreation and Access Strategy Working Group – Norma Taylor
- c) Green Lanes WG – Catriona Cook

55/07 **REPORT BACK FROM THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

CONSIDERED:

The Director of Recreation and Park Management reported that an announcement on the National Park's grant settlement from DEFRA for the next financial year was expected very soon; there were some concerns that it would be a "flat" settlement which would lead to some budgetary difficulties. Currently the budgets for access related issues were not likely to be particularly affected.

56/07 **DATES OF MEETINGS 2008**

The following dates were agreed:

Tuesday 4 March 2008 at 10.00am

Tuesday 3 June 2008 at 10.00am (followed by site visit)

Tuesday 2 September 2008 at 10.00am

Tuesday 2 December 2008 at 10.00am

57/07 **ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Discovering Lost Ways
- Ways to improve access to disadvantaged people and other members of the community living outside the National Park boundary