

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

Minutes of the meeting held in the Conference Room, Springboard Business Centre, Stokesley, on 15 May 2008.

### **PRESENT:-**

North Yorkshire County Council:- County Councillor Michael Knaggs.

Other Members:- Alan Aspden, Rachel Connolly, Paul Chapman, Leo Crone, Edward Dennison, David Gibson, Stephen Ramsden, Ian Jakulis, Tony Martin, Stephen Ramsden, David Shaftoe, David Swabey, John Taylor and Paul Tibbatts.

Officers:- Iain Burgess, Aidan Rayner and Jane Wilkinson.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of County Councillors John Fort BEM, and Eric Broadbent.

One member of the public.

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### **COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK**

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#### **114. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

##### **RESOLVED –**

That Tony Turner be re-appointed as Chairman of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum to hold office for a minimum of three years.

#### **115. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

##### **RESOLVED -**

That Stephen Ramsden is re-appointed as Vice Chairman of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum for a minimum of three years.

#### **116. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

The Chairman introduced and welcomed the three new Members of the Forum to their first meeting and said that he looked forward to working with them in the future.

The Chairman also reported the resignation of John Goss on health grounds. He said that John Goss had asked that it be recorded that he was disappointed at the lack of progress made with regard to improving access to the countryside for people with disabilities. He had written a letter to the North Yorkshire Times on this subject and had received no response. The Chairman said that he had written to John Goss thanking him for his contribution and asking if he would be willing to provide specialist support to the work of the sub-groups in the future on an ad hoc basis. The Chairman was pleased to confirm that he had agreed to do so.

A copy of a booklet published by Cumbria County Council promoting routes in the Lakes District that were suitable for use by people with disabilities that had been forwarded to the Chairman by John Goss was circulated for information.

The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager reported that John Goss had now received a response to his letter addressed to the North Yorkshire Times.

The Chairman announced that Richard Flinton Corporate Director Business & Environmental Services had agreed to attend the November meeting of the Forum. He suggested that Members use the intervening period to prepare a presentation focusing on the role and effectiveness of the Forum.

**117. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2008, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**118. MATTERS ARISING**

Min No 94 – Open Access Links To Isolated Access Areas.

Due to pressure of work the Access and Rights of Way Manager said he had been unable to complete a report on this matter. It was agreed that the matter be deferred to the next meeting.

Min No 97 Wharfedale Trail

It was reported that the results of the consultation were still awaited and would be reported if available to the next meeting. The Forum noted that the breakdown in the relationship between the relevant parties meant that the project was unlikely to progress in the foreseeable future. The Access and Rights of Manager agreed to write to the Chairman of the Wharfedale Trail Forum to seek clarification of the current position.

Forum Members asked whether it was possible to proceed with the part of the Trail that was in North Yorkshire. The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager said that he would contact Sustrans and report back to the next meeting.

Minute No 98 – LAF Website

Forum Members were informed that the County Council had decided to appoint a new full-time permanent member of staff to the Countryside Services section. The new postholder would have responsibility for the development of the new web-site and the production of press material. The new post had been created as existing staff lacked both the capacity and appropriate skills to carry out this work. Members noted that the appointment process was well advanced and a report on the development of a web-site was to be referred to the next meeting.

**119. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS**

The Forum was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

**120. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08**

CONSIDERED

The draft report of the Access and Public Rights of Way Manager on the work of the Forum during the period 2007/08.

The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager introduced the report and said that the format was the same as had been used in previous years. He sought Members comments and/or suggestions on its content.

Members pointed out various typographical errors and agreed to send amended/updated versions of their individual profiles to either the Secretary or the Access and Public Rights of Way Manager over the course of the next two weeks. The three new Members also agreed to forward their profiles in anticipation of being included in the Annual Report for the following year. The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager made a note of the alterations needed which he agreed to incorporate into the final report.

Members expressed their overall satisfaction with the general format and content of the report but commented that they were disappointed at the low number of applications that had been received in response to the recent recruitment drive. Members discussed the possible reasons for this and suggested that articles in the local press would be more effective than an advert in the North Yorkshire Times. It was pointed out that the Forum did not have a dedicated budget and that this might be something to discuss with Richard Flinton (Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services) at the November meeting. There was general agreement that the Forum in order to be successful needed to raise its profile. Members agreed that the cost of press adverts were prohibitive but that actual news articles had no direct costs attached. Members suggested that the Forum utilise the services of the County Council's communications unit to promote recruitment and the work of the Forum but were informed that the Communications Unit had a strict operating protocol that in practice would mean this would be very difficult to achieve. Members repeated earlier claims that if the Forum had a higher profile in the local press it would result in positive results. The Chairman then offered to draft an article based on the work of the sub-groups and the content of the annual report for submission to the local press. His suggestion was readily accepted.

Members other suggestions for how to improve responses to future recruitment campaigns included:-

- Placing an advert in the County Council's Personnel Bulletin.
- Contacting user groups.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That subject to the inclusion of the amendments suggested at the meeting the draft Annual Report 2007/08 be approved.

#### **121. FEEDBACK REPORTS FROM SUB GROUPS**

##### Access for All

The Chairman introduced the notes of the meeting of the sub-group held on 17 April 2008. Forum Members debated the merits of sponsorship being used as a means of funding signage. Contrasting views were expressed and Leo Crone agreed to speak to the Access & Rights of Way Manager outside of the meeting about the offer from a motorised user group to supply and replace gates on some routes. Members agreed that a protocol for the use of sponsorship on signage

would need to be agreed and suggested that that this was an area that needed further research by the subgroup.

Forum Members thanked David Swabey for his list of accessible routes for those with limited mobility which he said needed to be properly surveyed. Forum Members were keen to produce a booklet for North Yorkshire that was similar to the one for the Lake District circulated earlier in the meeting. David Shaftoe whilst supportive of the concept urged caution and said that it was important that the routes complied to a national standard and were situated at sites of popular interest. The pleasure gained by users of the routes was an important factor. David Shaftoe agreed to have further discussions with the Chairman and the Access and Public Rights of Way Manager outside of the meeting about the publication of a promotional leaflet of routes in North Yorkshire suitable for use by people with limited mobility. It was noted that as the Forum did not have a dedicated budget production of such a leaflet would not be straightforward.

The Chairman said that he was keen to organise a joint North Yorkshire LAF event that would focus on perhaps three or four items of special interest.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the notes of the meeting of the Access For All sub-group held on 17 April 2008 be noted.
- (ii) That the sub-group be invited to explore in more detail the concept of sponsorship of signage.
- (iii) That the sub-group continues to investigate the production of a promotional leaflet for North Yorkshire of routes suitable for use by people with disabilities.

#### Improving Rights of Way

Considered the notes of the meeting of the sub-group held on 17 April 2008.

Forum Members noted the comments made about rights of way following termination of the Countryside Stewardship scheme and suggested that this would be a suitable topic for discussion at the joint LAF event.

Forum Members requested that further developments surrounding the Discovering Lost Ways project be reported to the Forum in due course.

The Chairman referred to appendix 1 “A Primary School Resource Pack” which he had drafted and sought feedback on its content. Once finalised he hoped that the Resource Pack would be used by primary schools to encourage children to become interested in the rights of way in their local area. He suggested that the pack was piloted first before being made available for general distribution. He said that he planned to contact his colleagues in education and seek their suggestions about how best to distribute the pack.

Members suggested that the County Council’s outdoor education centres be invited to join the project. A Member suggested that a resource pack could be given to every child visiting one of the outdoor education centres.

The Chairman then sought the Forum’s views on appendix 2 of the report “Opportunities for Parish Councils”. Members supported the initiative and said that ideally they would prefer to have in their possession a copy of the definitive map for the local area when approaching a parish council as this would make it much easier

to identify improvement projects. Members were informed that copies of the digital map were supplied to parish councils upon request but that as there were over seven hundred parish councils in North Yorkshire to supply each of them with copy of the local definitive map would be a massive and costly job that could not be justified especially as not all parish councils are active. Members noted that parish councils are able to increase their precept in order to fund improvement projects and discussed the potential benefits of a scheme that delivered rights of way improvements including access to water that was funded on a joint basis by the County Council and a parish council. Members agreed that the development of such a scheme would be beneficial and should be discussed in detail with Richard Flinton Corporate Director.

The Chairman agreed to incorporate the comments made at the meeting into the appendices to be discussed further at the next sub-group meetings.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the notes of the meeting of the sub-group held on 17 April 2008 be noted.
- (ii) That the Primary School Resource Pack and Opportunities for Parish Councils be discussed further at the next meeting of the sub-group.

Definitive Rights of Way Sub-Group

Revised copies of the Forum's Principles were tabled (copy placed in the Minute Book) and discussed at length. The revised Principles included new numbers twelve and thirteen. After much debate Forum Members agreed to revise the wording of Principle Number two and delete new Principle Number 12. The Chairman made a note of the new further revisions outlined at the meeting and said that he would incorporate them and circulate a copy of the amended Principles at the next meeting of the sub-groups.

**RESOLVED –**

That a copy of the Forum's revised Principles incorporating the comments made at the meeting be considered the next meeting of the sub-groups on 24 July 2008.

**122. UNSURFACED, UNCLASSIFIED ROADS LIAISON GROUP**

Rachel Connolly gave an oral report. She said that little progress had been achieved since the last meeting of the Forum. Meetings of the Liaison Group were not well attended. The prioritised routes that had been identified were in the process of being condition surveyed. Another meeting of the Liaison Group was planned for the end of June 2008. At that meeting the Liaison Group would be asked to comment and assess the usability of the surveyed routes. The aim of the County Council was to prioritise repair works on the surveyed routes as the limited resources that were available meant that it would not be possible to repair/maintain all of the surveyed routes. The overall number of routes would inevitably be reduced and she sought feedback from Forum Members on their response to this. The Access and Rights of Way Manager added that the priority awarded would also take into account the level of usage for each individual route.

So as to inform her comments at the next Liaison Group meeting Rachel Connolly also sought advice from Forum Members about the types of things that what would cause them to not use a particular route. Possible examples included a broken footbridge, flooding or the route being deeply rutted.

Leo Crone said that he had written to North Yorkshire Highways two years ago offering the support of volunteers and the supply of materials to help maintain routes but had received no response to his letter. He did not support the illegal use of routes but said that motorised users got a raw deal. Only a very small percentage of the overall network was available to motorised users who were effectively being denied the opportunity to carry out maintenance/repair works.

Forum Members agreed that unless proper consultation was carried out with all user groups then it was likely that applications to the Magistrates Court to stop up routes would be contested which wasn't in the interests of anyone.

Forum Members agreed to give the matter some thought and contact Rachel Connolly direct with their comments.

**RESOLVED –**

That the content of the oral report be noted.

That Forum Members forward direct to Rachel Connolly their comments on the principals to prioritise the usability of unsurfaced, unclassified routes in North Yorkshire.

**123. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

The Minutes of the meeting of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park Local Access Forum held on 4 March 2008 were presented for information.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the North York Moors National Park Local Access Forum held on 4 March 2008 be noted.

**124. DRAFT MARINE BILL**

CONSIDERED -

Report of the Access and Rights of Way Manager seeking the response of the Forum to the Draft Marine Bill introduced by Government in April 2008. The report also set out the background to the Bill and described how it aimed to secure access to the English coast.

The Access and Rights of Way Manager introduced the report and said that the main points of concern were:-

- The lack of compensation available to landowners.
- Who would be responsible in the long term for the provision of coastal access.
- That it would create another type of "access" that would be confusing for the public.

David Gibson raised a number of points in respect of consultation with user groups, the incorporation of higher rights and the introduction of standardised signage.

Forum Members supported his suggestions which he agreed to forward direct to the Secretary and Chairman who would draft a response on behalf of the Forum to the consultation.

**RESOLVED –**

That the content of the report be noted

That the Chairman be authorised to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Forum.

That a copy of the response to the consultation be circulated to all Members of the Forum.

**125. BUILDINGS AND OBSTRUCTIONS ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY A WAY FORWARD**

The Access and Rights of Way Manager started to give an oral report on the number and type of buildings that were currently obstructing rights of way in North Yorkshire. He said that approximately 300 hundred buildings had already been identified. The majority of these were farm buildings that had been erected before 1994 when it was not necessary for landowners to obtain planning permission. It was only after that date that it became a statutory requirement. There were he said two options available to the County Council namely:-

- The County Council to take responsibility for funding the removal of the 300 obstructions;
- The County Council to create a self funding post with the postholder's salary being paid by way of costs received from landowners submitting diversion order applications.

The Access and Public Rights of Way Officer sought Members comments and feedback on the two options he had outlined.

Forum Members said that this was a very sensitive and complex area and that they felt uncomfortable making recommendations about such an important matter on the basis of a brief oral report. Forum Members therefore requested that they be supplied with more detailed information before being able to make a decision. The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager agreed to draft a written report for Forum Members to consider at their next meeting. The report would include a detailed appraisal evaluation of both of the options outlined at the meeting..

**RESOLVED –**

That a report on Buildings and Obstructions On Public Rights of Way be added to the Forum's Work Programmed and be referred to the next meeting for consideration.

**126. FORWARD PLAN**

**CONSIDERED –**

The report of the Access and Rights of Way Manager requesting members to agree future agenda items, with a view to establishing a forward work programme for each meeting to cover the year ahead.

Paul Chapman requested that an item on Access To/On Water be added to the Forward Work Programme for discussion at the November meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the information contained in the Forward Plan is noted and approved and that the following matters referred to during discussion of earlier agenda items be incorporated:-
- Access To/On Water.
  - LAF Website.
  - Wharfedale Trail.
  - Buildings and Obstructions on Public Rights of Way.
  - Joint North Yorkshire LAF event.

**127. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the following future meeting dates are agreed:-
- Thursday 21 August 2008 at 10.00 am followed by afternoon site visit – Venue Craven area.
  - Thursday 20 November 2008 at 1.00 pm at County Hall, Northallerton.
- (2) That the sub-groups next meet on 24 July 2008 at a venue to be agreed commencing at 9.45 am and 11.30am respectively.

JW/JD/ALJ