

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 Tuesday 1 December 2009.

Present: J Bateman, J Cavana, P Cody, Mrs C Cussons, G Dawson, P Hay, Mrs J King, Lady E Kirk, M Knaggs, D Leyshon, Mrs M Mitchell, Ms A Peacock, S Scoffin, Mrs N Taylor, G Winn Darley

Apologies: Mrs C Cook

Officers in attendance: Richard Gunton (Director of Recreation and Park Management), Bernie McLinden (Head of Park Management), Fiona Farnell (Committees Officer)

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

50/09 Election of Chairman

Resolved:

That Mrs N Taylor be elected Chair of the Local Access Forum, to take office until the next Annual General Meeting of the Local Access Forum.

Mrs N Taylor in the Chair

Mrs Taylor thanked the Forum for electing her to be Chair.

51/09 Election of Deputy Chair

Resolved:

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

52/09 Minutes

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2009, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

53/09 Matters Arising

a. Section 15 Land

Members requested that this item be carried forward to the next meeting.

b. NYCC Road Signs Policy

A Forum Member noted that the signs seen were to indicate a slippery surface at a junction.

A Forum Member commented that information on 'Walks with Dogs', in particular that relating to 'dog welcome areas' was not yet available on the Authority web site and asked when this would be available. The Director of Recreation and Park Management confirmed that this work was moving forward but that he hoped that there would be more areas to publicise, to date only one area had been put forward by estate owners.

54/09 **Defra Consultation – The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Structures (Gate, Gaps and Stiles) on Rights of Way**

Lady Kirk declared an interest in this item as a Member of the Byways and Bridleways Trust.

Forum Members made the following comments:

- A coding or grading system would be helpful at the start of a walk to indicate the difficulty attached to the walk.
- Is priority given to removal of ladder stiles?
- A national coding system called 'break free' exists which looks at grading of routes.
- Disability buggies are generally getting larger and this needs to be bore in mind when upgrading and assessing routes.
- A grading system had previously been used by the Forestry Commission but was considered not to be entirely successful.
- A set of routes needs to be publicised so that the public can make an informed decision in advance of the walk, rather than arriving at a walk and finding that they are unable to commence due to the difficulty attached to the route.
- An aspiration for the Park should be to provide a circular walk for every village community which is family friendly.
- Paragraph 3.1.b – clearly specify and documents structures?
- Young disabled people often prefer an element of challenge and therefore this should not be totally taken away.
- Challenging routes are also needed for able walkers.

The Director of Recreation and Park Management and the Head of Park Management answered above as follows:

- Priority is given to the removal of ladder stiles where appropriate when looking at a specific route, ladder stiles in the Park have not been looked at as a whole. The process when updating a route is to see if a gap/gate/stile (in that order) is acceptable or can be accommodated.
- Paragraph 3.1.b refers to the BS specification required for structures. A documented list is held by the Authority for all structures within the Park showing when they were last maintained.
- A letter is to be sent to every community to ask if they would like a circular route as LEADER funding is available.
- He asked the Forum whether priority should be given to developing more 'easy access routes' or to a broader grading schemes such as 'Break free'.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The LAF welcomes the draft guidance and supports the main recommendations

on page 6.

2. If Defra is to recommend that BS 5709 2006 be the published quality standard for rights of way furniture in Rights of Way Orders, then the LAF advises Defra to make the standard freely available to download from its website.

Resolved:

That:

1. The LAF welcomed the draft guidance and supports the main recommendations on page 6.
2. If Defra is to recommend that BS 5709 2006 be the published quality standard for rights of way furniture in Rights of Way Orders, then the AF advises Defra to make the standard freely available to download from its website.
3. The 'break free system' be looked into.
4. The LAF recommends that with regard to accessibility priority should be given to a broad grading system rather than improvement of more selected routes

55/09 **Consultation on Natural England's Coastal Access Scheme**

The Forum discussed the consultation document and confirmed that the following points should be included in the response from the Authority:

- The importance of circular routes.
- Refer to Best Practice
- Public transport links should be used and maintained
- Trigger points for roll back of the route following erosion.

Resolved:

That the points above should be incorporated into the response from the Authority.

56/09 **Dates of Meetings for 2010**

It was raised that a Forum Member found it difficult to make Tuesdays in March and December.

Lady Kirk wished for it to be noted that Mrs C Cook would not be happy with the dates for March and December remaining unchanged.

Resolved:

That the dates for the meetings in 2010 were agreed.

57/09 **NFU and Ramblers send sign to walkers on cows**

David Leyshon declared an interest in this item as a Member of the Ramblers Association

A Forum Member showed the Forum a sign produced by the NFU for its Members which is available on the NFU website and was available at agricultural shows during the summer.

Forum Members made the following comments:

- That the NFU should contact the Kennel Club to convey the message to dog owners.
- The sign shown would not help partially sighted or blind people.

- As a whole all walkers need to be well informed.
- The key is educating children from a young age.

Resolved:

That the Forum would continue to monitor the situation.

58/09 **Gating Orders**

Forum Members were informed that the documentation supplied by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council was for information only.

Resolved:

That the information was noted.

59/09 **Defining Moorland Rights of Way**

G Winn-Darley declared a personal interest in this item as a Member of the International Bracken Group.

The Head of Park Management gave a powerpoint presentation a copy of which appears in the minute book.

A Forum Member noted that at least two other National Parks either cut or sprayed bracken which had been very successful. The Head of Park Management confirmed that this National Park used both methods with varying degrees of success but conservation issues also had to be taken into account.

A Forum Member informed the Forum that in their experience bracken did not like to be crushed but that spraying was most effective.

The Forum thanked the Head of Park Management for the presentation and commented that it would be useful for the presentation to be circulated.

In answer to a question from a Forum Member another Forum Member confirmed that the outer 4 metres of a 6 metre agricultural strip could be mown once a year and that a lot of farmers were only mowing a one metre strip within the outer four metres.

In response to a question from a Forum Member the Head of Park Management confirmed that only two farmers within the Park cut bracken and used it as cattle bedding.

60/09 **Highway Records Working Group**

The Director of Recreation and Park Management informed the Forum that the documentation supplied in the agenda was for information only.

Resolved:

That the information was noted.

61/09 **LAF Annual Report**

A Forum Member commented that the photographs shown on the last page were not nice to see.

A Forum Member queried the balance of the Forum, the Director of Recreation and Park Management informed the Forum that at the present time the Forum did have a vacancy which did unbalance the Forum.

Resolved:

That the Annual Report be noted.

62/09 Report Back From the National Park Authority

Mr Scoffin updated the Forum as below:

- Three reviews were taking place, Moorsbus, Management Plan and NPAPA.
- At the last Performance Monitoring and Management Committee the budget for 2010/11 had been discussed and the Authority still expected to receive a slight increase in allocation from Defra in 2010/11.
- Access and bridleway improvements had taken place in several places in the Park.
- The Lime and Ice project had created a circular walk in the southwest area of the Park.
- Anti social behaviour continued to be a problem within the Park but that the Rangers were working with the Police to combat the problem.
- The Authority won the England area Best Training Provider Award and was going forward to the UK Final.

63/09 Defra Access Newsletter No 42.

Resolved:

That that newsletter be noted.

64/09 Items For Future Meetings

- Section 15 Land – Common Land
- Update on disabled access
- Number of meeting of the Forum per year and formation of working groups

65/09 Other Business

The Chairman ruled that the following item could be considered as a matter of urgency, in order;

- a) that Forum Members could be updated on the consultation on proposals to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for coastal land, by Defra in September 2009

Lady Kirk informed the Forum that responses to the consultation closed on the day of the meeting and that within the consultation document customary rights to go on beaches with horses had been removed and that only statutory rights had been protected.

Lady Kirk read out a proposed response letter and asked that Members endorse the letter and agree that it be sent from the Forum.

Resolved:

That Members agreed that the response should be sent from the Forum.
