

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 Lecture Theatre, The Moors Centre, Danby on 7 September 2010.

Present: J Bateman, P Cody, Mrs C Cook, G Dawson, P Hay, Mrs J King, Lady E Kirk, Mrs M Mitchell, Ms A Peacock, S Scoffin, Mrs N Taylor

Apologies: Mrs C Cussons, Mr D Leyshon

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

Copies of all documents considered are in the minute book.

32/10 Minutes**Resolved:**

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2010 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33/10 Matters Arising

The Chair informed members that North Yorkshire County Councillor Jon Batt had contacted her to discuss the item in the June Minutes regarding his appointment to the Forum. The Chair assured Jon that this was brought up at the meeting purely with regard to him living in Knaresborough and for no other reason. Councillor Batt said that he knew the National Park well and visited regularly and hoped to attend the next Forum meeting.

Members also discussed the issue of the draft minutes becoming a public document before the forum had approved them. The Director informed the forum that this was common practice.

34/10 Natural England briefing on Government agenda and structural reform

The Director invited comments from the forum. The following comments were made:

- Access to the countryside is not mentioned at all in the document.
- A modern network is required for all.
- Benefits to public health and the low cost of access to the countryside.

35/10 England Access Forum and minutes from 27 May 2010

The Authority Member presented this item.

The forum made the following comments:

- Pleased that Natural England are using user friendly language.
- No higher right users are mentioned, must cater for all user groups.

In answer to a question from a forum Member the Authority Member noted that due to the impending cut backs the internal guidance and training programme had not yet been rolled out.

36/10 National Park Management Plan

The Director informed the forum that at present the Management Plan was in the middle of the consultation process. National Park staff had attended a number of agricultural shows over the summer. A stakeholder consultation meeting will take place on the 14 September with two forum Members attending – Norma Taylor and Muriel Mitchell. All the information will then be gathered together and topic papers written. A draft plan will go out to consultation in late October/early November and that this will be an item on the agenda for the next forum Meeting.

The Chair thanked forum Members for responding to the landscape questions that had been circulated to a number of Members.

37/10 National Park Authority Performance Assessment

A powerpoint presentation was shown a copy of which appears in the minute book.

The Director outlined the Performance Assessment process which includes a team coming to the Authority and speaking to staff and stakeholders and assessing the performance of the Authority against a range of criteria. The team consists of a consultant from SOLACE, a Chief Executive and a Senior Officer from another National Park and a Chief Executive from another Authority. A self assessment document is prepared in advance of the visit and this is being undertaken at present.

Members commented on some potential areas for improvement as follows:

- Improve access notice boards to overcome language barriers
- Encourage hard to reach groups through Community Champions to access the countryside.
- Could a Community Champion come onto the Forum.
- Signs need to encourage people to use the countryside not just show where cannot go.

The forum thought that the Authority was performing 'well' overall but did exceed 'well' in some areas.

38/10 Community Access LEADER Bid

The Head of Park Management thanked all forum Members who had responded to a recent email and confirmed that a bid had been submitted to LEADER to work with communities and appoint an officer to work 3 days a week.

39/10 North East Regional LAF minutes 8 July and Terms of Reference for Chairs Group

The Authority Member updated forum Members - due to the present financial situation Natural England are unable to provide much support to the LAF's. Therefore there will be a greater need for the regional forums to keep in contact with each other. Due to the impending closure of the Rural Development Agency and Government Office it will become more crucial to get access onto the agenda of Natural England. Tele-conferencing amongst the chairs is due to take place later this month to discuss the terms of reference and it is hoped that more tele-conferencing will take place in the future.

The Chair noted that all the other forums within the North East Region were in close proximity to each other apart from this forum which was 'out on a limb'.

The Deputy Chair informed the forum that they attend the Yorkshire and Humber Regional meetings, with the next meeting being held in Wakefield next week.

40/10 Financial Situation

The Director updated forum Members on the current financial situation, that Defra had indicated to the Authority that savings needed to be found which would include reduced budgets for the Authority over the next 4 years and that a 5% in year cut had already taken place. On top of this, funding from other external bodies was also expected to be cut. It is anticipated that by November more details would be known. The Authority has already taken several steps including not renewing fixed term contracts unless an overriding need, a scheme of voluntary measures had been introduced and the process was being undertaken at the present time. A review of income generation was also taking place including car park charges and the possibility of all year round charging and installation of meters.

Forum Members made the following comments:

- Car parking charges should not be set too high, as this encourages the public to park on other areas of land not designated to car parking.
- Will thefts from cars increase if no attendants are on site?
- Many blue badge holders are willing to pay a parking charge, as long as the metres can be reached.

41/10 Access Newsletter – Issue 46

Resolved:
That the document be noted.

42/10 South East LAF Newsletter

Resolved:
That the document be noted.

43/10 DEFRA Waterways for Everyone

Resolved:
That the document be noted.

44/10 North West Region LAF Newsletter

Resolved:

That the document be noted.

45/10 Yorkshire and Humber Regional Co-ordinator

Resolved:

That the document be noted.

46/10 Disability Access

A powerpoint presentation was shown a copy of which appears in the minute book.

The Head of Park Management asked Forum Members to consider the presentation when undertaking the site visits in the afternoon.

47/10 Any Other Business

The Chair informed the Forum that:

- Catriona Cook had volunteered to investigate unrecorded rights of way.
- Andy Wilson was unable to attend the site visits in the afternoon.

The Chair noted that the term of office for Paul Cody, George Dawson, Jan King, Lady Kirk, David Leyshon and George Winn-Darley ends on the 4 November and therefore thanked them for their efforts over previous years. The Director noted that the above mentioned would be invited by letter to continue on the Forum, any vacancies would be advertised.

In answer to a question from a forum Member the director noted that any vacancy would be advertised in the Moors Messenger and through the Parish Councils. A forum Member commented that if there was a landowner vacancy perhaps the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association could be contacted.