

**Unapproved Minutes**  
**Meeting of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum**  
**Held on Tuesday 21 June 2011**  
**Yoredale, Bainbridge**

Present: Philip Woodyer (PW) – Chair, Pat Wheelan (PWH), Alistair Thompson (AT), Mike Stephenson (MS), Malcolm Petyt (MP), Jerry Pearlman (JP), Ken Miller (KM), Stuart Monk (SM), Neil Heseltine (NH), Colin Ginger (CG), David Gibson (DG), Andrew Colley (AC), Jon Beavan (JB).

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Officers present: Kathryn Beardmore (KB), Mark Allum (MA), Julie Barker (JMB), Meghann Hull (MH) – YDAF Secretary.

The meeting commenced at 1.15pm.

**1. Welcome**

PW welcomed all members of the YDAF and YDNPA Officers to the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from David Bartlett (DB), David Seaman (DS), and Sara Spillett (SS).

**3. Approval of minutes**

JB asked for Item 15 in the minutes of the previous meeting to be amended to reflect that Dalesbridge Centre do not own the tramper, and that it is only based there. It is owned by Bowland Experience.

**MH to amend the minutes to reflect that the tramper is based at Dalesbridge Centre, and was purchased by Bowland Experience.**

**The minutes of the previous meeting were approved, as amended, as a true record of the meeting.**

**Matters arising from the minutes**

There were several matters raised:

(a) PW told members that the issue of fencing on common land, and the need for LAFs to be included in any future consultations, was not raised at the last Yorkshire and Humber Regional Access Forum as intended. This will be raised at the next regional meeting on the 21 September.

(b) MP asked for an update on the people counter at Victoria Cave, Langcliffe. Mark Allum (MA), Recreation Manager, confirmed that a people counter had been in place since the Easter holidays and would be downloaded after the first three months of installation.

(c) MA informed members that The Big Five, Ground Nesting Birds leaflet had been re-designed and re-printed, as this was one of the actions members had agreed with as part of the open access information and publications review from the previous meeting.

#### **4. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

#### **5. Future Forum Meetings**

##### Future Agenda Items

Suggested future agenda items put forward for the next meeting are:

- On-site signage in the Yorkshire Dales National Park relating to access and recreation.
- The YDNPA's policy on the removal of stiles and replacements with gates.

DG informed members of the consultation for North Yorkshire County Council's report on Unclassified Unsurfaced Roads. Members agreed that if the consultation is relevant to the YDNPA it needs to be discussed. If the time-scales for the consultation period are appropriate to the next meeting in October, this will be an agenda item as a matter of priority. KB said this would also be considered by the Green Lanes Advisory Group and SM felt it would be appropriate for the Green Lanes Advisory Group to be brought forward in order to discuss the consultation, if necessary. JP said it would be useful for a copy of the consultation to be sent round to members as soon as it is available, so the LAF have time to act appropriately.

**MH to circulate details of the NYCC UUR consultation to members as soon as it is available.**

MA informed members of the draft ROWIP from NYCC, which will also be coming to the LAF in the near future.

Members agreed that in light of these possible future items it might be necessary to put on hold the original suggested future agenda items. This was to ensure meeting agenda's were manageable.

#### **6. Authority budget-cuts and restructure**

KB presented the paper to members on the Authority's situation in relation to the budget-cuts and restructure. Just under 400 people had responded to the budget consultation.

Headlines in terms of the changes were that there has been a reduction in a number of work programme areas, and 36 members of staff were due to leave before October 2011. Compulsory redundancies had been kept to a minimum, but the Authority had had to re-structure around those that had left.

Copies of the Park Services structure were handed to members. KB introduced Julie Barker (JMB) as the Head of Recreation Tourism and Outreach, and MA as Recreation and Tourism Manager, within the new structure, to take effect from the 1 July. As a result of the changes the Authority would be a third smaller, and would be doing 'less with less'. KB informed members that MA will still be involved with work relating to Green Lanes, the Go Dales! project would finish in July 2011, the Definitive Map work would be handed back to the County in 2013 and the work on the Pennine Bridleway was expected to be completed by March 2012. The remaining members of staff from the Access and Recreation team were now part of Recreation and Tourism.

KB informed members that the Authority had also reviewed its Committees. Another key change for the YDAF to note was the end of Access Committee and the YDAF minutes would now go to Authority meetings. KB felt it was a positive change for YDAF, as 22 Authority members would now be up to speed with access issues, rather than just the eight Access Committee members, as previously the case.

JP asked for clarification on what was meant by 'the minimum requirements for Open Access', as stated on pg 2 of the report. KB replied that this meant the Authority will continue to maintain open access infrastructure and provide information on restrictions and exclusions only. KB reassured members that this included outline fire directions, and issuing press releases in relation to fire warnings.

AT was concerned that a reduction in finances would mean that the 90% for ROW ease of use could not be maintained at this high standard. KB said that since 2003 the Authority has put in a lot of resources to increase the figure from 62%, so now the ROW network is in a position where it just needs maintaining. As long as there aren't any catastrophic events, such as floods, it should require less resources in the future to maintain the current standard.

MP asked for clarification regarding the division of the Upper Wensleydale area between three Access Rangers, on pg3. KB said that the three Access Rangers in the North were each taking responsibility for a third of Upper Wensleydale. This was believed to be the least disruptive way to sort out the loss of one Access Ranger, and land owners would not be disrupted by this in terms of communication. AC felt the Authority should aim to involve more partners and parish councils to help with the ROW maintenance and the on-the-ground jobs.

JB felt concerned that the responsibility of passing on YDAF messages to the Authority now lay very heavily with the member champion. MP said that the number and 'division' of member champions would need to be examined in light of the new structure. AC felt that, from his experience as Member Champion for Conservation and Policy, the YDAF will now have a stronger voice and the Authority would take more notice.

DG said he will be sorry to see the Definitive Map Team go and wanted to know where the Authority would draw this experience and advice from in the future. KB explained that at

the end of March 2013, one Officer will remain in the Ranger Service to help on legal rights of way work.

Members discussed how the YDAF minutes would be presented at Authority meetings. A concern was raised about the minutes being considered at the end of the meeting. KB reminded members that whilst the YDAF minutes would be read by Authority members, the key issue was the YDAF being clear about any formal 'advice' it was giving. The YDAF minutes were usually a record of discussions with little in the way of formal advice. JP informed members that they could provide formal advice by way of a Section 94 Notice, which is a template for allowing a certain issue to be brought to the attention of the Authority. MS felt it would not be helpful to send the YDAF minutes to the Authority and recommended sending one or two isolated issues only as a more effective way of drawing matters to the Authority's attention. PW and DG felt that the full minutes should be read by the Authority, and any important issues which needed addressing should be put in writing and sent as a separate issue. JB felt that the LAF should also look into giving advice to county councils, and that they have not had a template in place as yet for this formal mechanism. The YDAF did not come to any decision on the best way forward.

DG wanted to congratulate KB for her new role as Director of Park Services, and said that the post was well deserved.

**Members congratulated KB on her new role as Director of Park Services and wished her all the best.**

## **7. Boundary Review Consultation**

KB presented the report on the Lakes to Dales Designation Project and informed YDAF members about the consultation regarding the Orton Fells area, and asked the YDAF if they wished to formally respond to the consultation questions. Members agreed on the following response for the five key questions being asked:

### Question B1 Orton Fells

**Members agreed that the Orton Fells should be included in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.**

### Question B2 Lake District National Park

**Members did not wish to comment on the proposed boundary changes to the Lake District National Park.**

### Question B3 Yorkshire Dales National Park

**Members agreed with the proposed boundary changes to the Yorkshire Dales National Park.**

### Question C1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

**Members agreed that the proposed boundary changes to the Yorkshire Dales National Park should go ahead on the basis of the Strategic Environmental Assessment.**

Question Equality Impact Assessment

**Members agreed that the proposed boundary changes to the Yorkshire Dales National Park should go ahead on the basis of the Equality Impact Assessment.**

The YDAF also support the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's view that changes to the boundary should be subject to the increase in resources for the Authority, proportional to the increase in area, population and administrative complexity.

**MH and PW to respond to the consultation, based on members views, on behalf of the YDAF.**

MG asked if the project was at risk due to the present cuts. KB confirmed that Natural England were completing their work, but the final decision as to whether it would be taken forward beyond this rests with Defra. JB asked if there had been any decisions over the name of the National Park if the extension went ahead, as he felt this was going to be the biggest stumbling block. KB said this has not been resolved and she also reminded members that this would ultimately be Defra's decision.

**8. Sharing of information between LAFs, Natural England and DEFRA**

PW updated members on on-going contacts between the Yorkshire and Humber Regional LAF and Natural England, and the 'Huddle Technology', which Natural England are hoping to use as a way for LAFs to communicate and share information. NH wondered if Natural England's intentions were for 'Huddle Technology' to replace the England Access Forum. JP felt frustrated that Natural England had only been able to give a vague idea for the future use of 'Huddle Technology' at the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Access Forum meeting. JP compared the idea to Ramblers.net, which he said is extremely useful, and wondered if it would be worth forming one for the YDAF. Members decided this was a separate issue.

**MH to contact Natural England to find out more information about the Huddle Technology.**

PW thought it was important that the YDAF formulated a response to Richard Benyon's letter, which had been circulated with the agenda. MS thought that the EAF and Regional LAF had become caught up in a bureaucratic cycle, losing sight of tapping into the experience and wisdom of LAFs. He felt that this was becoming a waste of LAFs time and energy, and that they should be able to go straight to the right people to discuss issues. JP said it was more important to make links. DG felt the last minutes of the EAF were useful and suggested writing to other regions to see how to set up an EAF. It is obvious that LAFs are not getting any information from Defra.

KM thought LAFs need to be added to a list of official consultees and that this was a point to make to Richard Benyon. AT thought it was also important to feedback the two following points:

- a desire to understand and share knowledge
- the need for better sharing of information and inclusion of consultations.

Members agreed that the response to go to Richard Benyon needed to cover these points.

**MH and PW to write a letter to Richard Benyon on behalf of the YDAF, stating the need for direct contact with Natural England and Defra.**

## **9. Report back from the Yorkshire Dales Advisory Groups**

PW began by passing on his congratulations to Alan Hulme for the ROW Annual Report.

### Access for All Advisory Group

There had not been an Access for All Advisory Group meeting since the last YDAF meeting.

DG asked PW to clarify if the route he had been on at Bolton Abbey was appropriate for Trampers, as this was unclear from the minutes of the last meeting. PW confirmed that the route is only accessible to trampers up to a certain distance, and not for the whole route.

JB wanted to know if trampers were legally allowed on footpaths and Open Access land. KB confirmed that they were.

### Access on Foot Advisory Group

DG presented the minutes of the Access on Foot Advisory Group meeting.

MP asked MA to feedback any information about the Coast to Coast route since the last meeting. MA replied that the next coast to coast meeting would confirm if they want the route way-marking and including on OS maps before any work can be done by the Authorities. MA also confirmed that this was unlikely to become a national trail following Natural England's review.

### Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group

KM presented the minutes of the Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group meeting.

MP had spoken to a group of mountain bikers on the Pennine Bridleway who were currently involved with writing the guide book for it, and who wanted to pass on their enthusiasm for the work undertaken.

**MH to forward the equestrian Open Spaces email to Ken Miller.**

## **10. Secretary's Report**

MH presented a report of items for member's consideration and information. These were:

- Authority and Committee meetings
- Yorkshire Dales Access Forum membership
- Cumbria Countryside Access Partnership
- Yorkshire Dales Access Forum Annual Report 2010/11
- Rights of Way Annual Report 2010/11
- England Access Forum
- Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Access Forum
- The Disability and Discrimination Act and the Equality Act

**MH to send out the reply to Carl Lis's letter, regarding the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund, to all members.**

**MH to follow up the current situation regarding Lost Ways and inform members.**

**MH to take the Equality Act to the next Access for All group for discussion.**

JB raised the point that the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum Annual Report used to go to the Access Committee. KB explained that the Authority was now only meeting 4 times a year, and would only be discussing matters for decision.

**The Yorkshire Dales Access Forum Annual Report 2010/11 was agreed by the YDAF and would be circulated via the Authority's Members' Information Bulletin.**

## **11. Update on Member's activities**

MS wished to know the Authority's position towards fly-tipping in shake holes on Open Access land, in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. KB said that ultimately this would be the district council's responsibility, but if such an incident was reported, the Ranger Service would work with the land owner as part of its positive community engagement role. JP mentioned the museum in Hawes, which collects old farm machinery, and suggested these could come from fly-tipping locations. JB said that with the help of Natural England, cavers have already been working to remove rubbish from sink holes.

AT enquired after Rachel Briggs, and the forum asked to pass on their best wishes.

**MH to pass on best wishes to Rachel Briggs on behalf of the YDAF.**

JMB was introduced to members and she explained her new role as Head of Recreation Tourism and Outreach in the new Authority structure. Her background is mainly tourism and visitor related and is unfamiliar with the issues covered by the YDAF, but she has been covering the Head of Department for External Affairs over the last year, so is up to speed with relevant policies. JMB said she was looking forward to working with the YDAF in the future.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm

Date of next meeting: 18 October, at Yoredale, Bainbridge