

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held in Meeting Room 3, County Hall, Northallerton on 24 November 2011, commencing at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:-

John Taylor in the Chair.

Rachel Connolly, Edward Dennison, David Gibson, Tom Halstead, Tony Martin, Catherine Wardroper and Pat Whelan.

Officers:- Aidan Rayner, and Richard Walker (Countryside Service), Doug Huzzard (Highways), Andrew Bainbridge and Barrie Mason (Business & Environmental Services and Jane Wilkinson (Legal and Democratic Services).

Also present County Councillor John Batt.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors John Fort, Robert Heseltine and David Jeffels and Martin Wiles.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

120. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2011, be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

121. MATTERS ARISING

Min No 113 – Deadmans Hill

Aidan Rayner agreed to circulate to Members data on user numbers of Deadmans Hill, Harrogate. User numbers were thought to be low, with local landowners being responsible for the majority of use as opposed to it being used for recreational purposes.

The Forum was advised that a contractor had been instructed to give advice on the cost and works needed to return the route to a usable state. It was anticipated that the cost of the repairs needed would be in the region of several hundred thousand pounds. Due to the high costs of the works needed there were no available monies in the current year's budget and he would have to make a formal bid for funding from next years' budget.

122. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

There were no statements or questions from members of the public.

123. MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The Forum received for information the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2011.

It was reported that funding for the post of regional coordinator was due to end in April 2012. Post April 2012 the funding position was uncertain.

The Chairman said that both of the joint chairs of the Regional Local Access Forum had tendered their resignations and that nominations were currently being sought for their successors.

Defra Forestry Commission – it was noted that members of the panel were due to have a site visit to North Yorkshire in the near future. Forum Members repeated concerns expressed at previous meetings about the membership/representation on the panel. As the visit was not open to the public, Tom Halstead agreed to write to the Forestry Commission to express the disappointment of the Forum about the visit and representation on the panel.

LAF Conference and Training – it was agreed that the Chairman and Tony Martin would attend the conference/training event in Newcastle that was thought to be taking place on 6 March 2012. .

RESOLVED –

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Regional Local Access Forum held on 21 September 2011 be noted.

That John Taylor and Tony Martin attend the LAF Regional Training/Conference event in Newcastle on 6 March 2012 on behalf of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum.

124. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

The Chairman welcomed Barrie Mason, NYCC Assistant Director, Highways & Transportation to the meeting.

The Chairman said Members had primarily invited him to attend as they had an underlying concern that the County Council did not routinely consult with the Forum on highway matters. By way of example he quoted the Bedale Bypass Scheme. The Chairman said that if the County Council were to engage with the Forum he was confident that the specialist knowledge of the Members could result in solutions being found to access problems at an early stage thereby saving the County Council money.

The second thing Members wanted to raise with him was the unauthorised use of motor vehicles on unsurfaced, unclassified roads in North Yorkshire. The Forum asked Barrie Mason if during his regular meetings with the North Yorkshire Police he could emphasise the Forum's concerns and the importance of enforcement.

Barrie Mason said he would be happy to attend future meetings of the Forum if required. He said that the content of the Local Transport Plan (the subject of extensive public consultation) determined the County Council's activities on highways and the prioritisation it awarded to its schemes and consultations. He saw the Forum as having a key role to play and gave assurances that improvements would be made to ensure better management of this in the future. He had no objection to officers from his directorate attending on policy or project matters and agreed to share with the Forum the list of consultative bodies used by the directorate. With regard to improvement schemes he was keen not to overload the Forum. He said that the

County Council conducted numerous improvement schemes some of which were very small and had only a local impact. He did not think it would be a good use of resources to consult the Forum on each of these individual schemes but agreed to consult on all major schemes. If Members were agreeable he suggested that consultation parameters be drawn up and agreed between the County Council and the Forum. He concluded by saying that the County Council's Forward Plan (public document) gave advance notice of all major decisions about to be taken. In respect of planning applications, where the County Council was a statutory consultee he said it was not appropriate for the County Council to canvass opinion from other organisations.

With regard to the illegal use of motor vehicles on unsurfaced, unclassified roads Barrie Mason said that he would be happy to raise in his quarterly meetings with North Yorkshire Police any particular concerns the Forum had provided such requests were mindful of the available resources. If the Forum had a particular concern he asked that the matter be referred to him via Aidan Rayner.

In response, Members confirmed that they did not wish to be consulted on individual routine highway works schemes. Members noted the significant reductions made to the highways maintenance budget and that as a result any interface between public rights of way and highways, priority would be given to schemes that benefited highway users.

In response to questions from Members, Barrie Mason confirmed that the Forum's principles were familiar to Area Highway Engineers however this did not mean that they governed County Council's activities as these were dictated by the Local Transport Plan.

Members acknowledged that the current funding environment meant that resources were stretched and that the focus was on maintenance as opposed to capital schemes.

Members thanked Barrie Mason for his attendance and the information he had provided. Members agreed that it had been useful to hear from a highways perspective the approach adopted by the County Council and looked forward to an ongoing dialogue with the County Council on highway matters.

RESOLVED –

That the list/s of consultative bodies used by Business & Environmental Service Directorate be circulated to Forum Members.

That a report on consultation parameters between the Local Access Forum and NYCC Business & Environmental Services Directorate on highway schemes be referred to the next meeting.

125. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3

The Forum received an oral report from Andrew Bainbridge, NYCC Team Leader Local Transport Team on the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

It was reported that the LTP now in its third version was adopted by the County Council in December 2010 and covered the period April 2011/2016. A copy of the plan was available on the County Council's web-site and a limited number of hard copies were available upon request. The objectives in LTP3 did not differ greatly from those in LTP2 as the priorities had not changed. The major difference between the two documents was the amount of funding which had reduced significantly. This

meant that there was little money available for improvements the emphasis being on maintenance as opposed to capital works.

In response to questions from Members the Forum was advised that there would be a mid-term review of the document. The review would adopt a light touch approach similar to that used on LTP1&2. Namely stakeholders would receive a progress report and any changes to priority would be reported.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

126. UNSURFACED, UNCLASSIFIED ROADS

The NYCC Highway Asset Manager, Doug Huzzard updated the Forum on progress following his attendance at the last meeting on production of the consultation draft document.

The policy document had been redrafted and reduced to ten pages but remained based on the underlying premise that future management of unsurfaced, unclassified routes would be based on usage/sustainability as opposed to historic rights. The document had the previous week been approved by Executive Members County Councillors Gareth Dadd and Chris Metcalfe and would be the subject of a three month public consultation starting in January 2012. Doug Huzzard anticipated that the actual policy itself would not generate a big public response but that implementation of the policy on individual routes could prove to be controversial.

The Forum was advised that copies of the draft policy would not be available until January 2012 and that the Forum was a named consultee. With regard to implementation of the policy Doug Huzzard aimed to establish a working group that would make recommendations on individual routes. It had been suggested that initially the policy be piloted at a specific location yet to be agreed.

In response to questions the Forum was advised that the temporary traffic prohibition order on Deadmans Hill would continue. In the meantime Aidan Rayner agreed to find out what was happening with prioritising determination of the definitive map modification order on an adjoining route.

Forum Members were very keen to participate in the public consultation and agreed that this would be best arranged by arranging a meeting of the sub-group to prepare an initial response to be then referred to the February meeting.

RESOLVED –

That a meeting of the sub-group take place on 25 January 2012 at 10.00 am at County Hall.

That the response of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum to the consultation on Unsurfaced, Unclassified Road be agreed at the February meeting.

127. HUDDLE UPDATE

The Chairman, John Taylor, updated the Forum on the development of a Huddle. The Huddle initiated by Natural England was designed to provide all local access members with a national forum in which they could exchange views. Development of the Huddle was still in the initial stages. The Regional LAF Coordinator

Meghann Hull was in the process of organising training and the Chairman said that anyone interested in attending the training should contact Meghann Hull

NOTED

128. ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

CONSIDERED –

The Forum was invited to approve the 2010/11 draft annual report.

Other than suggesting that the report titles listed under the heading 'Business of the Forum' be extended so as to make them more meaningful Member approved the draft annual report

Aidan Rayner confirmed that a copy of the report would be forwarded to Meghann Hull Regional Local Access Forum Coordinator and be available on the County Council's web-site.

RESOLVED –

That the draft 2010/11 North Yorkshire Local Access Forum Annual Report be approved subject to the comments made at the meeting.

129. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY PRIORITISATION

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Team Leader introducing a proposal to prioritise outstanding maintenance issues on the network.

Members expressed their full support for the new approach and asked if it had been tested. The Forum was advised that the new system had been trialled and that reported issues appeared to be coming out at the right level. Members noted that the majority of issues reported fell into the 'medium' priority category. Less than 10% of the backlog fell into the 'high' priority category. Whilst the matrix covered only maintenance issues in some instances repairs could also be seen as a form of improvement for example replacing a stile with a gate. Members suggested contacting parish councils and asking them to conduct a survey of the rights of way network in their area as way of saving officer resource.

It was agreed that a report on maintenance undertaken on the network over the winter months be reported to the May meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the approach outlined in the report for prioritising maintenance issues be approved.

That a report on maintenance be added to the Forward Plan for the May meeting.

130. RESTRUCTURING THE NORTH YORKSHIRE ACCESS CONSULTATIVE GROUPS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Countryside Service inviting Members to comment on a proposal to expand the membership of the Local Access Forum.

Forum Members supported the approach outlined in the report. It was reported that the recruitment process for the appointment of new members would take time and that it was unlikely new members would be appointed before the May meeting. In response to a suggestion from Forum Members, Aidan Rayner agreed to organise a training event for new members.

RESOLVED –

That the expansion of the membership of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum to a maximum of 22 people and for the normal recruitment process take place to fill the 9 vacancies that would as a result exist be approved.

131. FORWARD PLAN

CONSIDERED –

A paper setting out possible future agenda items.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the Forward Plan together with the suggestions made during the meeting be approved and noted.

132. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

That the following dates for meetings of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum commencing at 10.00 at County Hall, Northallerton are agreed:-

- 29 February 2012
- 23 May 2012
- 19 September 2012
- 21 November 2012

That a meeting of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum Sub Group take place on 25 January 2012 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

The meeting concluded at 1.20 pm.

JW/ALJ