

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held in Meeting Room 3, County Hall, Northallerton on 24 October 2012, commencing at 10.00 am.

Present:-

John Taylor in the Chair.

Les Atkinson, George Bateman, Rachel Connolly, Leo Crone, John Gibson, Roma Haigh, Tom Halstead, County Councillor Robert Hesletine, Alan Littlewood, Tony Martin and Pat Whelan.

Officers:- Aidan Rayner (Waste & Countryside Services) and Jane Wilkinson (Legal and Democratic Services).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

The Chairman welcomed newly appointed Members to their first meeting of the Forum.

166. Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors John Fort and David Jeffels and David Barraclough, David Gibson, Tom Halstead and Edward Dennison.

167. Minutes

The Forum received for information the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012.

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2012, be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

168. Matters Arising

None

169. Public Questions or Statements

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

170. North Yorkshire National Park Local Access Forums

The Forum received for information the minutes of meetings held in June and July 2012.

Resolved –

That the content of Minutes of the meetings of the North York Moors National Park Local Access Forum held on 12 June 2012 and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Access Forum held on 17 July 2012 be noted.

171. Record of Actions

Considered –

The report of the Chairman listing actions completed by him on behalf of the Forum following the meeting of the Forum held in May 2012..

Members were advised that the response of the Highways Agency to concerns raised in respect of the A1 Upgrade to Motorway Dishforth to Barton, North Yorkshire was still awaited.

Members noted that further updates on the development of a North Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership would be presented to future meetings.

NOTED

172. Review of Existing Non-Motorised User Facilities Meeting or Crossing the A1 Between Leeming and Barton

Considered –

The report of Simon Pope of A1 Plus, seeking the views of the Forum on arrangements for non-motorised users using existing public rights of way that meet or cross the A1 between Leeming Bar and Barton interchanges. Attached to the report was a map of the 16 locations where public rights of way and non-motorised facilities meet or cross the A1.

The report was introduced by Simon Pope who said that the views of key stakeholders were being sought in order to develop a strategy for this section of the A1 that would then be recommended to the Highways Agency for potential future funding. The process had only just started and the final report was not expected to be presented until March 2013. He described the approach being used and welcomed comments from the Forum on any improvements they would like to see at the sixteen identified locations.

Rachel Connolly commented that she was not in favour of current rights being revoked as she feared they would not be reinstated and the connectivity of the network would be compromised.

George Bateman said it was important that the network was a “living thing” that was capable of being used. At present some routes were not being maintained and differences between the situation on the ground and recorded routes needed to be rectified. The lack of a crossing point between Junction 51 and South Catterick a distance of 7/8 miles was also unsatisfactory.

Members agreed that site number 11 Gatherley needed further work because of the large settlements on either side of the motorway.

Members highlighted the existence of an old railway bridge on a caravan site just outside Brompton On Swale that was not referred to in the report and suggested that it be utilised.

A lengthy debate followed after which Aidan Rayner summarised Members views as follows:-

- General consensus that it would not be sensible to cross a busy dual carriageway at grade

- Concern that if routes are stopped up then they are lost forever however Members acknowledged the need to move forward from the status quo to achieve a well maintained and safe network
- Look at connectivity using existing routes

Simon Pope thanked Members for their comments and said it would be better if the Forum could respond by giving actual proposals for each of the sixteen locations as opposed to general principals.

The Chairman suggested and Members agreed to consider in detail each of the 16 locations and submit a written response to A1Plus.

Resolved –

That at the next meeting of the Forum Members review the information provided for each of the 16 locations and provide an indication of their aspirations relating to each facility that can be assessed during the development of an NMU strategy for this section of the A1, before being recommended to the Highways Agency for potential future funding.

173. Unsurfaced, Unclassified Roads and Their Future in the Rights of Way Hierarchy

Considered –

The report of the Vice Chairman presenting evidence and correspondence pertaining to the history, right of use and future use of the UUR network. Appended to the report was a paper by John Sugden from Thorgill Transport Consultancy and advice from DEFRA dated 26 June 2012.

The report was introduced by Leo Crone who in the light of the advice from Defra questioned whether it was reasonable for officers to spend time seeking to reclassify unsurfaced, unclassified roads in North Yorkshire.

Aidan Rayner reported that Doug Huzzard had agreed to attend the next meeting of the Forum where he would present the findings of the public consultation on the proposal to ascribe status to unsurfaced, unclassified roads in North Yorkshire. A report on the response to the public consultation was due to be considered by the Transport, Economy & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2012. It was reported that the outcome of the public consultation was that there was no public appetite to migrate towards a network based on sustainability. As a consequence it was thought that route management would now be determined on an individual basis as opposed to status. The Highways and Transportation and Public Rights of Way Teams will work closely to look at the maintenance and management of both networks in relation to each other.

It was agreed that a copy of the report to be considered by the Transport, Economy & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be circulated to all members when available.

In response to questions about the origin and status of the John Sugden report Members were advised this was unclear but it was thought to have been commissioned by the County Council. Leo Crone agreed to carry out some further research into this.

Resolved –

That an update report on the management of Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads in North Yorkshire be referred to the next meeting

174. Re-Organisation of the Public Rights of Way Maintenance Team

Considered –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Team Leader presenting to the Forum the new staff structure for the Public Rights of Way Maintenance Team. A diagram of the revised structure effective as from 2012 was appended to the report.

Members were advised initially to contact the appropriate Area Ranger with any maintenance concerns they had. If the solution required more than basic maintenance and/or had significant cost/legal implications the Area Ranger would then refer the matter to the relevant Countryside Access Officer.

Noted

175. Public Rights of Way Maintenance Budget

Considered –

The report of the Public Rights of Way Team Leader setting out the 2012/13 budget allocation for maintenance of public rights of way in North Yorkshire.

The report was introduced by Aidan Rayner who highlighted the increase in the base budget compared to the previous year which he said was due to inflation. As in previous years the outturn figures were expected to exceed the base budget as alternative sources of funding were identified and used to supplement core funding.

A Member commented that the budget could be made to stretch even further if Area Rangers spent less time carrying out maintenance work 'in the field'. Aidan Rayner replied that in future it was proposed that this was what should happen. Area Rangers were now expected to supervise (not necessarily in person) groups of Volunteers to carry out maintenance works.

Rachel Connolly repeated her concerns that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan focused on maintenance as opposed to improvement of the network. Aidan Rayner replied that cuts to local government funding meant the reality was that the level of resources the Directorate had received in the past would not be repeated. Opportunities for improvement would not however be lost as the post of PROW Technical Officer had been created specifically to look at development control issues and opportunities for planning gain on any new developments in the County. Renegotiation of the contract between the County Council and the Yorkshire Dales National Park together with closer links with district councils had strengthened communication channels that would hopefully reduce maintenance issues on cross routes.

Noted

176. Forward Plan

Considered –

A report setting out possible future agenda items.

The Chairman reported that there was no longer a restriction on the number of members able to join Huddle (an on line forum for members of local access forums run by DEFRA). Any Member interested in joining was asked to contact him and he would organise training.

Those Members who had attended the meeting of the Regional Local Access held in September 2012 summarised key discussion areas.. The Chairman said he had hoped to include the Minutes with the agenda for the meeting that day but unfortunately they were not available. He agreed to circulate the Minutes upon receipt.

The Forum agreed to hold an additional meeting on 21 November 2012 at 10.00 am in order to consider the following items:

- Non-Motorised User Facilities Meeting or Crossing the A1 Between Lemming & Barton
- MOD Consultations on Section 28 Indefinite Directions
- A684 Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Side Road Orders

Rachel Connolly said that a recent edition of the Darlington and Stockton Times newspaper had contained an advert on behalf of Richmondshire District Council that listed several open space land sites that included four playing fields it intended to dispose of. Rachel Connolly was concerned at the potential loss of community assets and following discussion by the Forum agreed to research the matter further.

Resolved –

That the content of the Forward Plan be noted and approved.

That an additional meeting of the Forum be held on 21 November 2012 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

177. Future Meeting Dates

Resolved:-

That the meeting dates for 2013 are agreed as follows:-

- 12 February 2013
- 5 June 2013
- 21 August 2013
- 20 November 2013

all meetings to commence at 10.00 am and be held at County Hall, Northallerton unless otherwise agreed.

The meeting concluded at 12.45 pm.

JW/ALJ