



North York Moors

Local Access Forum

North York Moors National Park Authority, The Old Vicarage, Bondgate,
Helmsley, York, YO62 5BP

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on Tuesday 4 December 2012.

Present: Mr S Borman, Mrs C Cook, Mrs C Cussons, Mrs J King, Lady E Kirk, Mrs M Mitchell, Mr P Hay, Ms A Peacock

Apologies: Mr G Dawson, Mr S Scoffin, Mr B Briggs, Mr G Winn Darley.

Officers in Attendance: R Gunton (Director of Park Services), K Gerhardsen (Head of Recreation and Access), M Hodgson (National Trails Officer), C McLees (Head of Promotion and Tourism), J McLinden (Administration Assistant).

Copies of All Documents Considered are in the Minute Book

34/12 Election of Chairman

Resolved:

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

35/12 Election of Deputy Chairman

Resolved:

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

36/12 Minutes

- Mrs Catriona Cook noted she was not at the last meeting.

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2012 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37/12 Matters Arising

- **Paths for Communities – Dalby Beck.**

Resolved:

Defra is advising that express dedication at common law may be a useful means of securing new public rights of way.

38/12 Topics for Discussion

RHG updated the meeting as follows:

- The format for this meeting is slightly different than usual. The role of the Forum is to provide advice on key issues relating to access. It is hoped that by asking direct questions relating to key issues and having a facilitated discussion on each question would assist the Forum in providing clear and focussed advice. Officers would like feedback as to whether this is a good way of working.
- Several LAF members attended the Authority's new Awareness, Recreation and Business forum meeting. Feedback has been positive with good discussion and points emerging for future work.

39/12 How can we best measure our performance on managing rights of way?

A PowerPoint presentation was given by K Gerhardsen, a copy of which appears in the minute book.

Members made comments or asked questions as follows:

- Acknowledgement that Rights of Way management remains a statutory duty but that surveying in May and November misses vegetation obstructions particularly bracken.
Why not change our inspections to April and August?
- The national method developed for eastern England would not work for this national park as the landscapes are entirely different. Management of people's expectation is important – we need to direct users to the right path for them and educate people in map reading and navigation skills.
- Most people walk on green lines, (not dots) so if it's not a green line on an OS map it's irrelevant. Reports which highlight problems are important. Trip Advisor or something similar could be used to capture online recommendations where people have had a good experience using paths.
- Monitoring of public rights of way important, but open access land less so.
- Why not offer the quarterly report to not just to the Cleveland Ramblers but also to cyclists, horse-riders and southern area Ramblers.
- How about advertising in the Press and encouraging those groups who use the national park to report back on state of paths twice a year? Feedback would be both negative and positive. It would be good to gain feedback from a wide range of people including regular visitors and residents. Norfolk CC is developing a mobile app which helps with this. Survey monkeys could also be used for returns for Moors Messenger, instead of five year face to face public perception survey.

- When recording data, we should place more emphasis on public perception of the quality of the rights of way resource i.e. we should be more interested in the experience, thoughts and feelings of users rather than the scientific survey of paths.
- An annual path perception all user survey could be conducted and the physical path condition survey conducted once in every three years.

40/12 **How can we ensure that any growth in the number of visitors to the North York Moors is sustainable?**

The National Park Management Plan contains an aspiration to increase the number of visitor days spent in the National Park. What are the most effective ways of ensuring that this does not have an adverse impact on the National Park's special qualities?

A brief introduction to the topic was given by C McLees.

Members made comments or asked questions as follows:

- An increase in number of walkers, cyclists etc, in winter could have an adverse impact on Rights of Way and so important to get Rights of Way management right.
- Some impact from an increase in visitor numbers is unavoidable. Finding an acceptable level of impact is crucial.
- Focus on honeypots as arrival points and concentrate on management of these.
- Educate families on using the National Park e.g. Success of the Coast Alive National Trail Tracker Packs. Spread the use of these to other areas, especially the southern parts of the National Park e.g. Hackness.
- Provide a weather forecast on the National Park website but not necessarily the Metrological Office. Mountain Weather Information Service (MWIS) is more accurate (but doesn't cover the North York Moors). Weather Forecast for UK – www.yr.no also a good site.
- We need to be better at promoting the National Park on a national level.
- The sustainability assessment in the recreation strategy is still relevant and worth considering again.
- There will be some visitors who are seeking a quiet and remote experience. We need to tell them where they can get this.
- Following on from interest generated in the Olympics we should promote cycling and horse riding for beginners.
- Consideration given to new audiences e.g. families with babies. Off road buggies which go over bumps and through mud are available.
- Be mindful not to lose focus on those visitors who have less money and who are not in high spend brackets.

41/12 **What does the introduction of Coastal Access mean for the North York Moors?**

A powerpoint presentation was given by M Hodgson, a copy of which appears in the minute book.

Members made comments or asked questions as follows:

- Any negative impacts of access on spreading room could be minimised through the way the vegetation itself was managed.
- Concern voiced over loss of Common Law rights of horse riders to use beaches due to access denial under Coastal Access. Recommendation that a record is made of all beaches along the Coast where horse riders currently enjoy Common Law Access.
- Potential for higher rights to be developed along the coast path at Scalby end where there are greater widths.
- Coastal Access should not lead to more coastal fencing as there would not be a great deal of inland spreading room. There should be resistance to more fencing and unnecessary signing where not needed.
- Recognition of the importance of not damaging wildlife sites was noted. To date there are no recommendations for exclusions as a result of potential damage to wildlife sites. This is based upon the stretches for which Natural England have draft proposals at Durham, Cumbria, Norfolk and Weymouth.
- Believed that there would be a negative impact on landowners due to the lack of availability of compensation. Not all landowners are expected to have issues with Coastal access given that most will be following the existing Cleveland way. Opportunities for mitigation may exist through the provision of gates etc.
- Education of users should also be an important tool in combatting any negative impacts.
- Commercial opportunities should be taken wherever possible such as caravan sites.
- Given access rights already in place, there would not be a huge impact on residents. Where such rights do not exist e.g. in areas such as the area south of Filey, impact would be greater.

42/12 **Huddle**

Discussion took place and members' questions and comments were as follows:

- Are there any higher rights opportunities in National Nature Reserves such as Forge Valley?
- Are there other national nature reserves across the National Park?
- Consultation exercise with Natural England – Can we dedicate rights?

43/12 **Paths for Communities (Catriona Cook)**

The Chair updated members on scheme and following comments were noted:

- No bridleway network because of express trails route. National British Horse riding Society told bridleway groups that they will provide up-front funding which is helpful.
- Guisborough group talking with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council about better links there and landowners may be receptive.
- An expression of interest has been made by Forestry Commission for a route at Dalby Beck, Ellerburn. There are concerns regarding the project because of potentially high costs of future maintenance being the responsibility of the NPA as managers of the Rights of Way network.

44/12 **Report back from the National Park Authority**

The Director of Park Services updated Members as follows:

- **60th Anniversary Celebrations**
Momentous week as the National Park celebrated its 60th Anniversary. Part of celebrations included music and storytelling events for children at the Moors Centre. The level of understanding of the moorland experience was impressive and celebrated young people's talent.
- **National Park Management Plan**
This has just been launched. A summary is available which highlights key policies and the full plan is available on the website. A full plan will be arranged for LAF members. Thank you for individual and forum contributions. The plan focuses on what benefits a wider society and is readable and beautifully presented. People are being asked to support it by signing up via Facebook, Twitter or email.
- **Ash Die Back**
This disease has not yet been confirmed in the National Park though there are some confirmed cases in the near vicinity. Advice for the public is on the Forestry Commission website.
- **York Potash**
A detailed plan of the proposed pipeline is now in, whilst the planning application for the mine itself is yet to be submitted. The process will include an assessment of potential impacts on tourism and enjoyment of the National Park, but we need to wait for clarity of application before we can assess and propose ways of overcoming impacts. Any thoughts are gratefully received and LAF will be kept informed of the progression of the application.
- **Awards**
The National Park Visitor Centres have won the Yorkshire White Rose awards. Highly ranked in the region and voted fifth best facility of its kind in the country. High praise also for the apprenticeship scheme which falls within the top 100 in the country. We have been named best employer in the region for apprentices.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Forum Members commented regarding the matters set out in the report.

45/12 **Items for Future Meetings**

- Removal of barriers to access.
- Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 11 June 2013.

DRAFT

46/12 Other Business

The Chairman ruled that the following items should be considered:

- a) Members could be updated on the Buddy System – One day's instruction from NP staff is not enough for Members to talk about Rights of Way issues.
- b) Offer the opportunity to spend one day at least with a Ranger or Rights of Way team.
- c) Paper copies are available of 'Making Ways for Horses'.
- d) Adopting single status for bridleways is not popular with everyone. Right of responsible access – One of forty different proposals. Needs a response from the Local Access Forum. Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Upgrading of Landrover Tracks to bridleways. Not radical, relatively painless and little cost involved.
- e) Encouragement of new members to join the forum including those with interests in Mountain Bikes, Game Keeping, Land Management and Forestry Commission. The Forum is intended to consist of seven people with an access user interest, seven with a land management interest, six people with a wider (health, education, community, etc) interest and one National Park Authority member. There are currently four vacancies which will be advertised.