



Unapproved Minutes
Annual General Meeting of the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum
Held on Tuesday 1 February 2011
Yoredale, Bainbridge

Present: David Bartlett (DB), Jon Beavan (JB), Andrew Colley (AC), David Gibson (DG), Colin Ginger (CG), Neil Heseltine (NH), Ken Miller (KM), Stuart Monk (SM), Jerry Pearlman (JP), Malcolm Petyt (MP), David Seaman (DS), Sara Spillett (SS), Mike Stephenson (MS), Alistair Thompson (AT), Pat Whelan (PWh), Phillip Woodyer (PW).

YDNPA Officers present: Alan Hulme (AH), Rachel Briggs (RB) – LAF Secretary, Kathryn Beardmore (KB), Meghann Hull (MH), Adrian Shepherd (AS), Robert White (RW).

The meeting started at 1.15pm.

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

KB began the meeting by explaining the process for election of Chair.

DG proposed PW. This was seconded by KM. No further nominations were received. PW spoke to the meeting. There were no questions.

PW was elected as Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum for a year.

PW then asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

KM nominated DG. This was seconded by PWh. No further nominations were received.

DG was elected as Vice Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum for a year.

2. Welcome

PW welcomed Colin Ginger (CG), Sara Spillett (SS) and David Seaman (DS) to the meeting, as new members of the YDAF.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Michael Kenyon (MK).

4. Approval of Minutes

KM said that at the last meeting he had asked for the YDAF to lobby Defra, to change the legislation, so that LAFs were included in the list of statutory consultees for fencing applications on common land. This was not reflected in the minutes. However it was noted that RB had already raised the YDAF's views with both Defra and Natural England.

RB to amend the minutes to include KM's proposal that the YDAF to lobby Defra to include LAFs in the statutory consultee list for fencing applications on common land.

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

Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were several matters raised:

- (a) MP asked if a meeting had been arranged between Natural England (NE), the Wainwright Society and all the local authorities with the Coast to Coast running through their area to look at the management of the route. RB confirmed that Mark Allum, Recreation Manager, had contacted Natural England about organising the meeting and that they appeared positive in principle but had not yet committed to arranging something. MA will follow this up with NE.
- (b) PWh suggested that it would be a good idea to place a press release in the local papers when advertising for new members of the YDAF. RB confirmed that a press release had been issued in October 2010 in time for the recent appointments and that this process would be continued every year.

5. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

6. Future Forum Meetings

Dates of meetings

Dates for meetings during 2011 are:

21 June - Yoredale, Bainbridge – 1.15pm.

18 October – Yoredale, Bainbridge – 1.15pm

Future Agenda Items

Suggested future agenda items put forward by members include:

- A progress report on the boundary review of the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks.
- A report back on the outcome of the budget proposals.

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

7. Access and dogs

JB gave a very informative presentation on the issues surrounding access and dogs (see **Annex 1**). This generated a lot of discussion with regards to the current information supplied by the YDNPA in its publications and website (www.yorkshiredales.org.uk). The general consensus was that the messages were clear, and correct. However it would be helpful if there was consistent messages across the wider area, particularly those given out by surrounding local authorities.

JB was thanked for his presentation.

8. Fencing on common land

Adrian Shepherd (AS), Senior Farming & Countryside Officer, gave a presentation on how the YDNPA was involved in applications for fencing on common land, and used the Ingleborough Common consultation as a case study (see **Annex 2**). It was noted that the YDNPA was only a consultee in any proposals, but it could be involved at two stages:

- As part of Natural England's consultation on entry of an area into the Higher Level Stewardship scheme;
- When an applicant applies to the Secretary of State for permission to put a fence on a common (this could be part of a HLS proposal or for other reasons so could be independent to it).

JB said he had an issue with permanent fences being erected in the National Park as they change the landscape and whilst he accepted that in some cases a permanent structure may be needed, it should be in keeping with the local area eg drystone wall. AS said that the type of structure was governed by cost, and that the cost of a drystone wall would be considerably greater than a fence. The YDAF noted that the HLS scheme agreements run for 10 years. AS added that where a fence was proposed to encourage tree growth, and for this to become established, a fence would need to be in place for a ten year period, as opposed to the five years the YDAF have been suggesting in their consultation responses. DG said that he agreed with this ten year period, but with a review after five years. JP suggested that nine years was a better compromise as this was within the review period.

KM expressed a concern that by creating woodland, the area in question would be removed from open access at a later date. DG pointed out that this was irrelevant, because registered common land is open access land, regardless of the vegetation cover. KB cited Freeholder's Wood which is established woodland, common land, and mapped as open access.

KB explained that the YDAF were currently being consulted 'informally' through the YDNPA consultations. Using the Inglebrough case study KB asked the YDAF to consider if they wished to be consulted at the HLS stage or wait until an applicant had formally

submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State. All members agreed that the YDAF would like to be consulted at both stages of any consultation received by the YDNPA.

It was noted that the YDNPA would pass on the YDAF's response, however it was made clear that the YDNPA did not support a number of the YDAF's suggestions to-date. For example the need for stiles every 200 metres (the YDNPA always asked for stiles or gates to be placed on desire lines and/or rights of way, but did not see the need for stiles at regular intervals in the way suggested by the YDAF). The YDNPA's statutory purposes also mean that it has to balance conservation interests with those of public enjoyment, and where there is a conflict conservation takes precedent in accordance with the Sandford principle. Therefore it supported the fence on Inglebrough as this helped archive nature conservation objectives. It was noted that if the YDAF's comments did lead to a public inquiry, the YDAF would have to defend its comments alone as the views of the YDAF and the YDNPA differ.

Members agreed to look at each consultation as an individual case but that they would consider the following points when compiling their response:

- Stiles do not necessarily need to be every 200m, but where desire lines are identified.
- Access is the most important issue to members of the YDAF and this should not be compromised.
- Self closing gates should be used and should remain unlocked.

DG asked for this issue to be brought up at the Yorkshire and Humber Regional LAF. RB said she would raise the issue. SS suggested that Defra be asked to amend the guidance on fencing on commons to read applicants 'shall' consult the LAF.

Fencing on common land and the need for LAFs to be included in consultations to be raised at the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Access Forum.

AS was thanked for his presentation.

9. Victoria Cave

Robert White (RW), Senior Historic Environment Officer, gave a presentation on the suggested future management of Victoria Cave, near Settle (see **Annex 3**). The key issue highlighted was that there are geological glacial deposits of immense importance. There was concern that visitors to the cave would disturb the deposits and the record they contained would be damaged.

As an experienced caver, JB said that he had first hand experience of the cave. He had the following comments:

- The block of rock highlighted in the presentation as protecting the geological deposits should simply be removed as the natural process would eventually allow.
- The signage at the site is particularly bad and that this needs to be vastly improved.

RW agreed that the large block of rock was of no significance but that the loss of the deposits would be a loss nationally and internationally.

AT thought that the YDAF's concerns should lie with the access opportunity and, therefore, Victoria Cave should remain open as a visitor attraction.

SS had a concern with the message the YDNPA was giving out to landowners, in that it is ok to close off an area as a management technique. JB agreed with the comment and added that no barrier would stop rabbits entering the cave and thus part of the problem would still exist.

AC thought that the preferred management should be to improve the interpretation of the site, with an explanation about the importance of the deposits so that visitors didn't disturb them. Members agreed with this.

There was no clear evidence of how many visitors to the cave actually went into it as far as the deposits, and the general consensus was that this was believed to be few. JB suggested putting in a cave counter to see how many people actually access the area at the back of the cave. It was agreed that this was a good way forward.

Members of the YDAF agreed that their consultation response on the future management of Victoria Cave was the placement of a cave counter at a strategic point at the entrance to the part of the cave with deposits. This should be monitored for a set period and then the interpretation be improved at the site to compare the difference in visitor numbers.

RW was thanked for his presentation.

10. Review of nominated LAF members on groups linked to the Forum

PW went through each of the groups listed in the report and the YDAF reviewed the representatives for each group in turn.

Access on Foot Advisory Group

DS expressed an interest in the work of the Access on Foot Advisory Group. It was agreed that DS's input would be useful.

NH, DB, MK and DS to represent the YDAF on the Access on Foot Advisory Group.

Access for All Advisory Group

MS expressed an interest in the work of the Access for All Advisory Group. It was agreed that MS's input would be useful.

PW, AC, PWh and MS to represent the YDAF on the Access for All Advisory Group.

Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group

Members kept the current membership AT, MK, KM and PWh representing the YDAF on the Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group.

Air Sports Advisory Group

SS expressed an interest in the work of the Air Sports Advisory Group. It was agreed that SS's input would be useful as and when a meeting was called.

SS and JB to represent the YDAF on the Air Sports Advisory Group.

Water Sports Advisory Group

Members kept the current membership AC and PW representing the YDAF on the Water Sports Advisory Group.

Caves and Crag Access Advisory Group

SS expressed an interest in the work of the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group. It was agreed that SS's input would be useful.

SS and JB to represent the YDAF on the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group.

Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group

DG, JP and DS both expressed an interest in the work of the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group. It was agreed that DG would represent the YDAF, and replace Michael Bartholomew on the group.

PWh, JB, KM and DG to represent the YDAF on the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group, as well as their individual interests.

11. Report back from the Yorkshire Dales Advisory Groups

Access on Foot Advisory Group

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

JP asked about a potential new Dales Way route at Scargill House near Kettlewell as part of the planning application at this site. AH said that officers were currently looking at all the options and that these would be discussed at the next meeting of the Access on Foot Advisory Group.

Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group

AT presented the minutes of the Bridleways and restricted Byways Advisory Group.

Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group

JB presented the minutes from the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group.

Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group

MP presented the minutes from the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group.

12. Consultation on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority proposed and indicative budgets

KB presented the report to members. KB began by explaining that the budget was currently a draft budget and would be considered by the Authority at a special meeting on 3 February. Subject to the outcome of this meeting a public consultation on the proposed cuts and also asking about the YDNPA's future priorities would run from 4 February to 10 March 2011. KB asked how members would like to respond to the consultation. Members all agreed that a special meeting of the YDAF was not necessary and that the consultation could be handled via email.

JB thought that in order to help prioritise the 36 work programmes, more information was needed on each of the areas. KB agreed and added that the consultation gave a simple summary description of each programme of work.

JB pointed out that the YDAF's primary concerns were with access issues and asked if members should be prioritising all work areas or just those related to the work of the YDAF. KB said that it was up to the YDAF. However the Authority needed to consider specifically advice from the YDAF relating to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and public access to land in the area for any other lawful purpose (Appendix 10, page 96 of the Authority report). Members felt that the YDAF's expertise was in relation to access and recreation in its widest sense, and on this basis it agreed to only prioritise and give advice on the following work programmes:

- Recreational Activities
- Rights of Way
- Sustainable Tourism
- Green Lanes
- National Park Centres
- Outreach
- Toilets
- Web-based Services
- Car parks

Definitive Map
Open Access
Events
Park Information Points
Pennine Bridleway
Public Transport
Traffic management

KB suggested that RB circulate a modified consultation pro-forma on Friday 4 February and that members are given ten days to complete their responses, and send them back. Once these responses had been collated a combined response would be sent around members for further comment before it was finalised.

It was noted that any one, as an individual, could take part in the consultation process.

RB to circulate the public consultation on the YDNPA budget and a combined response collated.

13. Open Access information and publications review

MH presented the paper to members on the proposed review of Open Access information and publications. MH pointed out to members that whilst some things could be achieved this year, or without much cost, implementation of the review was largely dependent on the budget available.

PW went through Appendix 1 of the paper and asked for members views on each point.

Access information points

Members agreed with the officer view that Access Information Points need to be updated.

Open Access restriction and exclusion notices

Members agreed with the officer view that the Open Access restriction and exclusion notices need to be reviewed.

YDNPA Open Access website pages

Members agreed with the officer view that the YDNPA Open Access website pages need to be updated.

The Big Five – ground nesting birds leaflet

Members agreed with the officer view that the Big Five leaflet needs to be re-designed and re-printed.

Open Access in the Yorkshire Dales National Park (leaflet)

Members agreed with the officer view that the Open Access in the Yorkshire Dales National Park leaflet needs to be re-designed and re-printed.

On-site Open Access signage

Members agreed with the officer view that the current on-site signage continues to be used but that they be re-designed and re-printed as and when the need occurs.

14. Secretary's report

RB presented a report of items for Members' consideration and information. These were:

- Access Committee Dates and Venues.
- Yorkshire Dales Access Forum membership.
- Cumbria Countryside Access Partnership.
- Permissive access.
- Sale of Forestry Commission woodlands
- Unclassified Unsurfaced Roads
- Fencing on Ingleborough Common.

15. Update on members activities

JB – The Dalesbridge Centre has now acquired a Trumper and trailer through the Forest of Bowland 'Awards for All' scheme.

All members wished to pass on their thanks and best wishes to Michael Bartholomew.

Best wishes were passed on to RB who would be leaving the YDNPA on maternity leave from 11 February 2011.

The meeting closed at 4.55pm