

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held in The Brierley Room, County Hall, Northallerton on 30 November 2016, commencing at 10 am

Present

Roma Haigh (Vice-Chair) (in the Chair), David Barraclough, Doug Cartwright, Edward Dennison, Tom Halstead, County Councillor David Jeffels, Barrie Mouny, Sue Raper, Paul Sherwood and Richard Smith

Officers: James Langler (Harrogate Borough Council), Jennine Nunns (Hambleton District Council, Ian Kelly and Rachel Pillar (Business and Environmental Services) and Kate Arscott (Legal and Democratic Services, Secretary to the Local Access Forum)

135 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rachel Connolly (Chair), Michael Bartholomew, George Bateman, County Councillor John Fort BEM and County Councillor Robert Heseltine.

136 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2016

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2016 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Vice-Chair.

137 Matters Arising

The Secretary reported that there were two actions still outstanding from the minutes of the previous meeting. In relation to minute 127, the Secretary had still to clarify the route for Forum members to access the Local Street Gazetteer. In relation to minute 129, the Secretary was still in the process of collating information on the planning notification and consultation processes for each of the various planning authorities within the LAF area for circulation to LAF members.

It was confirmed that the LAF annual review had been submitted to Natural England, and that the updated LAF Principles and Advice had been finalised.

138 Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

139 Harrogate District Draft Local Plan Consultation

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary introducing the current consultation by Harrogate Borough Council on the draft Local Plan for the District. James Langler, Principal Planner, Harrogate Borough Council, attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on the consultation and respond to Members' questions.

The presentation outlined the key milestones in the development of a new local plan. The Plan will cover the period to 2035 and it was anticipated that, following the various consultation and examination stages, the Plan would be formally adopted in 2018. Alongside the draft policies and proposed housing allocations which had been published for consultation, there were a range of additional supporting evidence documents.

In presenting the consultation, James Langler drew particular attention to the following points in relation to local access:

- Growth strategy seeks to focus the majority of growth on areas well related to key public transport corridors
- New housing development is expected to make provision for open space, sport and recreation
- Developments will be required to provide adequate pedestrian and cycle routes, with linkages and improvements to existing networks where required
- Sites including existing Public Rights of Way to maintain current alignment or provide a suitable convenient and attractive alternative route

Richard Smith, as the LAF representative for liaison with Harrogate Borough Council, reported that he had attended a pop-up café run by the Council prior to the formal consultation period and also one of the consultation events. He commended the draft plan's overall recognition of the importance of access and its strong emphasis on alternative transport options to the car, backed up by references to healthy lifestyles, sport and recreation. He confirmed that the plans accompanying proposed site allocations at this stage do not include details of Public Rights of Way, but that they will be included at a future stage when strategic choices about preferred sites have been made.

The Forum strongly supported draft policy HP5 relating to Public Rights of Way and the commitment to protect and enhance the recreational and amenity value of rights of way. Members particularly welcomed this recognition of the importance of the ambience as well as the access aspects of rights of way.

Members stressed their view that Section 106 monies intended to apply to Public Rights of Way should be ring fenced for this purpose, and, in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council as the Highways Authority, the choice of appropriate surface materials for the range of intended users should be determined with a view to minimising future maintenance costs.

Members of the Local Access Forum asked about the potential impact of the Harrogate bypass. It was confirmed that work was being undertaken currently by North Yorkshire County Council, but a preferred route had yet to be identified. The modelling undertaken did not indicate that this was a requirement in order to achieve Local Plan growth at this point in time, hence it was not specifically included in the current draft Local Plan.

Members also commented on the lack of brownfield sites for development in the Harrogate area. James Langler confirmed that there are few sites, but that they are being identified and used where there are potential opportunities.

Resolved – That the relevant District Council liaison representative and the Secretary prepare a draft formal response to the consultation, and circulate it by email for members' comments prior to submission on behalf of the Forum.

140 Hambleton Draft Local Plan Consultation – Preferred Options

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary introducing the current consultation by Hambleton District Council on the preferred options for the Local Plan. Jennine Nunns, Planning Policy Officer, Hambleton District Council, attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on the consultation and respond to Members' questions.

The presentation set out progress so far in developing the new Local Plan for Hambleton and the evidence base. It described the housing and employment requirements and set out the preferred spatial approach to meeting those requirements, which had emerged from the previous phase of consultation. Brief details were provided of the proposals for each of the market towns. This version of

the Plan set out the preferred policy approach for consultation. The proposed policies would then be set out at the next stage in the draft Local Plan.

Members were reminded that the Forum had responded to an earlier stage of consultation, the Local Plan Issues and Options stage, in February 2016.

As the Chair was the relevant District Council liaison representative for Hambleton and was unable to be present at this meeting, she had provided some initial comments which were circulated at the meeting.

Members commented that the structure of the document meant that access issues related to a number of the headings in Part 1, and asked about Hambleton's general approach to access. Jennine Nunns described how the town centre strategies seek for example to promote connectivity; to enhance green infrastructure provision; promote cycling opportunities; develop a strategy for each town centre area; and explore health links. The Council promotes sustainable travel choices and seeks to protect and connect open space, public rights of way and recreation opportunities. It would welcome comments from the LAF to help inform the further development of policies.

Whilst the LAF acknowledged the desire expressed in relation to the preferred option for the spatial distribution of new development, that smaller settlements should not be left to stagnate, members expressed concern that the lack of public transport in the District is a barrier in terms of connectivity. Development at the lower end of the settlement hierarchy was likely to result in increased car ownership and the Council was urged to consider the transport and climate change implications of proposals for development.

Whilst not within the LAF's direct remit, a member asked whether space standards for new developments included storage, for example for bins. Jennine Nunns confirmed that she would pick this up as a separate issue.

Resolved – That the Secretary co-ordinates a draft formal response to the consultation, incorporating the comments provided by the District Council representative, and circulates it by email for members' comments prior to submission on behalf of the Forum.

141 Joint Minerals and Waste Plan Consultation - Publication

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary introducing the current consultation by North Yorkshire County Council. The report also provided a copy of the responses to the LAF's comments at the previous consultation stage.

Rachel Pillar, Senior Planning Policy Officer, North Yorkshire County Council, attended the meeting to introduce the consultation and respond to Members' questions. In particular she outlined the scope of comments at this publication stage of the process, which must be representations relating to the legal compliance and soundness of the Joint Plan. It was not anticipated that there would be any major fundamental changes to the document following this consultation phase. Rachel also indicated that the Forum may wish to consider affirming its support for any part of the content of the Plan.

Members were reminded that they would still be able to comment on individual proposals as they came forward at planning application stage.

The Forum congratulated those responsible for their work in getting the Joint Plan to this stage of development in preparation for submission to the independent Inspector.

Resolved – That the Vice-Chair and the Secretary prepare a draft formal response to the consultation, and circulate it by email for members' comments prior to submission on behalf of the Forum.

142 Countryside Access Service Review Update

The Forum considered a report of the Assistant Director – Waste and Countryside Services. The report provided a summary of progress in implementing the various aspects of the Service review, and sought Members' comments in particular on the approach to work processes.

Ian Kelly, Countryside Access Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members' questions. He introduced the report by summarising the progress made with the review. He reported that the service would shortly be going out to public consultation on proposals for route categorisation. The consultation proposals took into account earlier comments made by the LAF at its meeting in February 2016. He also confirmed that, following consideration of the existing issue prioritisation model and potential alternatives, it had been concluded that the existing model should be retained with only very minimal changes.

Members shared officers' disappointment at the lack of progress in selecting and implementing a new IT system. They were concerned that this would impact on the team's ability to maximise the use of volunteers, and the public generally, as the 'eyes and ears' of the service, being able to send in photographic evidence and geographically pinpoint issues accurately.

The Forum strongly welcomed the progress on working with third party volunteer groups. Richard Smith of the Lower Wharfedale Ramblers particularly thanked Ian Kelly for his leadership and Sheila Laking for her hard work in getting the pilot scheme up and running. Richard confirmed that the group had now signed an agreement with the County Council and had already started work within the framework set out. The Forum looked forward to other groups starting up.

The report particularly sought members' views on Section 6, the review of working procedures, using the example of ploughing and cropping. One member who was unable to attend the meeting submitted comments suggesting the use of press releases to remind landowners of their responsibilities, and of good practice. It was also suggested that volunteers could check and photograph some cross field paths in the spring. The option of taking no action against reports of problems in low priority areas was questioned, and a low key alternative approach suggested.

At the meeting, discussion focused around a desire to identify common sense solutions to issues through path reinstatement or diversion to field boundaries, which could satisfy the concerns of both landowners and users. It was acknowledged that misunderstanding on both sides could be perceived as threatening, and it was desirable to avoid getting into a 'them and us' situation.

However, it was felt that there were various constraints that can mitigate against implementing practical solutions, for example the limitations and prescriptive nature of legislation regarding diversions, and EU legislation restricting landowners to hedge cutting once every two years. Permissive access was felt to be helpful in some circumstances, although the impact of any changes on retaining the 'pleasure' of a route also needed to be borne in mind.

In conclusion it was proposed that the LAF have a more in-depth discussion on the topic of reinstatement at a future meeting, with a view to considering whether the Forum would like to pursue the matter at a national level.

Resolved – (a) That the Secretary prepares a summary of the Forum's comments on the report, and circulates it by email for members' comments prior to submission on behalf of the Forum.

(b) That a more in-depth discussion on the topic of reinstatement be scheduled for a future meeting.

143 Permissive Access – Referral from Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Access Forum

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary, presenting a referral from the Regional Access Forum regarding permissive access. Members agreed that this was not a priority for the LAF's own work, but that they would encourage local people, particularly the Ramblers or NFU, to follow it up if they wished to.

Resolved – That the Local Access Forum does not consider this issue to be a priority for inclusion in its forward work plan.

144 Schools and Education Project

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary providing an update on the Getting Out and About (GOAT) project.

County Councillor David Jeffels reported that he had met recently with Ian Fielding, who had confirmed his support in principle for the objectives underlying the project, which were complementary to an initiative being promoted by the service through the Pathways to Health pilot project.

The Forum agreed that a pilot would be the appropriate way forward. They also noted that various initiatives are currently taking place across North Yorkshire County Council to encourage school children to access the countryside, and agreed that a report on this should be added to the agenda for a future meeting.

Resolved – (a) That the Forum supports the piloting of the worksheet with a small number of schools.

(b) That a report on the various initiatives currently taking place across North Yorkshire County Council to encourage school children to access the countryside be added to the Forum's forward plan of work.

145 Secretary's Update Report

The Secretary presented an update since the last meeting of the Forum, covering the following issues:

- Consultation responses
- Natural England staff changes
- Regional Access Forum
- Engagement with other bodies
- Local Development Plans
- North Yorkshire County Council Planning Applications
- Notification of Open Access restrictions

It was noted that the next meeting of the Regional Access Forum will take place on 8 March 2017 at Scunthorpe. It was agreed to decide who would attend on behalf of the LAF at the next meeting.

Paul Sherwood reported on a positive meeting with representatives from neighbouring LAFs to discuss the Teesdale Way and River Tees Re-discovered. He circulated notes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016. There is a very small section of the Teesdale Way in North Yorkshire. The Forum was supportive of continued involvement with the project. The next meeting was planned for February 2017.

Roma Haigh reported that she had attended the launch of the latest section of the Coast Path on behalf of the LAF.

Members thanked the Secretary for starting to circulate regular details of new North Yorkshire County Council Planning Application consultations. Members asked that details of the relevant district council area for each application be added to the email notification.

Resolved – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) To decide attendance at the March 2017 Regional meeting at the next meeting of the LAF.

(c) That the Forum supports continued involvement with the Teesdale Way and River Tees Re-discovered project.

(d) That the email notification of North Yorkshire County Council planning applications by the Secretary include details of the relevant District Council area in future.

146 District Council Updates

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary providing an update on liaison with District Councils. The report included information on liaison with Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale and Scarborough District Councils.

The Vice-Chair agreed to ask David Gibson whether he would be prepared to consider taking on the role of Ryedale representative, with support from herself.

Resolved – That the updates on liaison with District Councils be noted.

147 Forward Plan

The Forum considered a report of the Secretary inviting members to identify items of business for future meetings.

Further to the discussion earlier in the meeting, it was agreed to move the update on the use of volunteers to the April 2017 meeting.

Members agreed to the proposal from the Chair that she seek a meeting regarding future plans for the Catterick Garrison area and report back to the next meeting.

Members asked the Secretary to explore options for the Local Access Forum to have its own website, or to have a presence on the North Yorkshire County Council website.

Members agreed to consider whether or not to change the start time of meetings to 9.30am at the next meeting.

Members were reminded that the Forum would need to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the issues identified during the meeting and recorded in the minutes be incorporated into the Forum's Forward Plan.

148 Dates of Next Meetings

The next meetings of the Local Access Forum will be held at 10am on
Wednesday 11 January 2017

Thursday 6 April 2017

Wednesday 12 July 2017

Wednesday 11 October 2017

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Wednesday 11 April 2018

The meeting concluded at 12.50pm.

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