

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum**11 October 2017****LAF Project Updates****Report of the Secretary****1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update the Forum on activity since the last meeting

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This agenda item provides an opportunity for the Forum to be updated on activity since the previous meeting in relation to various projects and partnerships which the LAF is involved with.
- 2.2 LAF members have provided the following updates:

Teesdale Way Partnership – Paul Sherwood has confirmed that there is no further progress to report

Yorkshire Wolds Way Partnership – At the last meeting, Roma Haigh agreed to represent the Forum on this Partnership. As she was unable to attend the meeting on 12 September, Tom Halstead agreed to attend on her behalf.

Regional Access Forum – Roma Haigh and Councillor David Jeffels attended the meeting in Bradford on 26 September. Councillor Jeffels has provided the attached feedback from the meeting.

- 2.3 Members are invited to provide any additional feedback on activity undertaken in relation to the LAF's work.

3.0 Other issues

- 3.1 From time to time, the LAF is made aware of other projects and initiatives that are taking place, which may be of wider interest to members or may lead the Forum to consider undertaking a piece of work itself.
- 3.2 The Chair has asked that the following items be included here on the agenda for Members' information:

Greenspace Mapping Project

Launch of Greenspace Mapping project – new online maps

Ordnance Survey has released a comprehensive map of greenspaces throughout Great Britain. The culmination of a project to comprehensively map greenspaces throughout Great Britain was published on Monday 10 July 2017.

The greenspace mapping project funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and delivered by the Ordnance Survey provides the public with a source of information on the location and extent of greenspaces up and down the country. Greenspaces featured on the map include local parks, play areas, sports pitches and allotments.

For further details please see the link to the information on gov.uk link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-online-maps-to-help-britons-experience-their-local-greenspaces>

Public Parks

See attached press release - National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces' response to the Government's response to the Select Committee Report on the Future of Public Parks

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That members note the updates.

BARRY KHAN
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)
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NORTHALLERTON

Report author: Kate Arscott, Secretary to North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

Background Documents: None

NOTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
MEETING HELD AT BRADFORD CITY HALL, TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 26 2017

FUTURE - While there was a disappointing turn out of LAF representatives, despite the comprehensive agenda, there was discussion on a wide range of issues.

Members discussed the future of the Regional LAF and frequency of meetings, with differing views. It was agreed that the LAF should continue but that consideration should be given at the next meeting, due to be held at Calderdale in March 2018, as to whether the meetings should be held every six months, as at present, or annually.

Members expressed some concern about the cost of holding such meetings and the distance involved in travelling, while others felt it had a potentially significant role to play in enhancing and promoting public rights of way and encouraging people to walk as part of a healthy way of life and for well being.

The meeting agreed to have the next meeting in Calderdale Council's area, because the LAF in that area had wanted Rights of Way and Rights to Roam issues and the law, to be discussed.

Members were told that the region covered some 14 LAFs and it was felt appropriate for the Regional Meeting to be held in different locations, and the chairman of the LAF in which it was held, should chair that particular meeting of the Regional LF.

CHAIRMAN - The Chairman, Jerry Pearlman, said he would be standing down from the position after four years, but would chair the meeting. He was thanked for his dedicated service and hard work as Chairman.

Mr Pearlman told members that an MP is promoting a Private Members Bill in Parliament on Coastal Access, but no more details are currently available.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

These included Rights of Way Improvement Plans; public transport in National Parks; Contacts with regional MPs; Trans Pennine rail route and the proposed HS2 and the impact that it could have on PROWs.

The meeting was advised that following the announcement of the likely route in July this year, a Parliamentary Bill would be lodged in 2019, and the project and Bill was expected to receive Royal Assent in 2022. Construction of the new rail links which affects several parts of the Region, is expected to be completed by 2032. (Further details on HS2 can be obtained by phone on 0207 7944 4908 or at HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk.)

Members discussed ROW Improvement Plans, and endorsed a proposal that the surfaces should reflect local engineering.

The Plans should include a plan of maintenance. Local LAFs should be involved in Neighbour Hood Plans where they were being created.

NATURAL ENGLAND

The meeting expressed disappointment that there was no representative attending from Natural England, although a report had been submitted. The report said that work was progressing with NE's Conservation 21 Strategy "with its greater emphasis on putting people's interests at the centre of what NE does".

There is an indication that the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Gove, is looking at a more wide ranging, post Brexit use of environmental/agricultural funding which would give opportunities for making the case for supporting public access and engagement.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act Select Committee is currently accepting written evidence to consider and report on the Act (details posted on HUDDLE).

Details are available at ynl.hub@naturalengland.org.uk. The contact is Andrew Clarke, the team leader.

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Sarah Moss of Bradford Community Action, gave advice on setting up a community organisation for a wide range of projects, including community housing.

LEGAL ADVICE ON RIGHTS OF WAY AND RIGHT TO ROAM LAW AND PRACTICE

Members accepted a kind offer by Mr Pearlman to give a presentation on PROW Law at a future meeting.

DAVID JEFFELS (North Yorkshire County Councillor and Member of the Local Government Association's Board for Culture, Tourism and Sport)

Government Response to the Select Committee Report: The Future of Public Parks



Dear Friends

This week the Government announced its response to the growing chorus of alarm over the under funding crisis facing the UK's public green spaces. It at last acknowledges the need for action to safeguard parks, but has not committed any additional funding so desperately required for park management and maintenance throughout the country. So, what kind of action is being mooted, and is it the start of a genuine debate over what's really needed to address the seriousness

of the deteriorating situation?

[To read the report, please click here.](#)

The Government has also committed to work with the green space sector. It has invited the NFPGS and 8 other key green space national organisations to form a Parks Action Group to liaise with them over a range of issues flagged up by the Select Committee of MPs in their Public Parks report in January 2017. The NFPGS will be participating to ensure the voices of the Friends Groups movement will be heard loud and clear on behalf of the UK's green spaces.

The Government's announcement

On Tuesday 19th September the Minister for Parks Marcus Jones announced the Government's response to the recommendations of the MPs' Select Committee 'Future of Public Parks' National Inquiry Report published in February 2017. Basically it accepts or welcomes some, notes others, and kicks the rest into the long grass! [1]

The NFPGS and the Parks Action Group



The Minister has invited the NFPGS and 8 other key greenspace sector bodies [The Parks Alliance, Heritage Lottery Fund, Groundwork, Fields In Trust, Local Govt Assoc, Association of Public Service Excellence, National Trust, and Natural England] to develop a Sectorial Parks Action Group

(PAG) to help ensure the agreed recommendations are discussed and implemented. The Minister stated: *'We recognise the value of parks and green spaces to local communities... but we need to do more to make sure future generations are continuing to enjoy their benefits. That's why we have announced a new expert-led Parks Action Group to work closely with the sector to find the right solutions.'*

The PAG's first meeting will be chaired by the Minister. The PAG will be a *'consultative and collaborative process'*, and one with a remit to include *'skills, networking, knowledge and good practice sharing, resources and delivery models, valuing green space, data evidence and collection, and equality of access to open space.'* It will be expected to make proposals to a soon-to-be-formed cross-government group of 7 Government departments.

The NFPGS is the only community-level organisation in the PAG. This recognition is a testament to the hard work of tens of thousands of grassroots activists in local Friends Groups throughout the UK, and our growing coordination and influence at local, regional and national levels. As the umbrella organisation for what is now a dynamic movement of over 6,000 local groups, we welcome any opportunities to work in partnership with others and the Government to safeguard and improve all our public parks and green spaces. Such spaces, around 27,000 across the UK, are vital to every community and need to be properly resourced, managed and protected for current and future generations. We are determined to ensure the voices of our communities are heard loud and clear at Government level.

The Select Committee's Recommendations, and the Government's response



The 'Future of Public Parks' Select Committee MPs' Inquiry, which the NFPGS and others had lobbied and campaigned for, took place at the end of last year. It resulted in a shocking Report in January which demonstrated that public green spaces are essential facilities that all sections of every community treasure and depend on, but that these vital but vulnerable spaces are being plunged into crisis by savage government cuts to public services.

The NFPGS, like many other local and national bodies and 322,000 petitioners, called for the Inquiry to insist parks be made a statutory service - as the previous Committee Inquiry had done in 2003 (although unfortunately not implemented). [2]

The 2017 Report quoted our views at length, and our explanation that such a duty would oblige Local Authorities to monitor local parks and ensure nationally-accepted standards (ie Green Flag award standard) - and that this would need to be backed up by adequate public funding. The Inquiry recognised this was a major proposed solution to the growing under funding crisis, but disappointingly stated: *'we believe that other mechanisms are more likely to achieve the outcomes we all want to see'*. These *'other mechanisms'* included Local Authorities nominating senior elected members and officers to be parks champions, and *'very clear guidance to Local*

Authorities that they should work collaboratively with Health and Wellbeing Boards, and other relevant bodies where appropriate, to prepare and publish joint parks and green space strategies.... If the guidance does not prove effective in raising the profile and priority afforded to parks the Minister should consider legislating to place a statutory duty on Local Authorities' to do this. However, without the status of being a properly-funded statutory service, we think these 'other mechanisms' will be ineffective. The Minister's response this week is to support but unfortunately water down the above recommendation even further.

Among its other responses, the Government:

- recognised that parks should remain free for public use and stay in public ownership.
- failed to commit any of the extra funding urgently needed throughout the country to ameliorate the budget crisis. But it welcomed the Select Committee's recommendation that *'parks, and green infrastructure more widely, are properly recognised in the Government's forthcoming 25year Environment Plan.'* The Minister expected planning inspectors to reject draft Local Plans (LAs' strategic planning documents) if they *'havent appropriately assessed and planned for green infrastructure to meet health and well-being needs (alongside other functions).'* The Government said it *'is committed to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it.'* No details yet on how this will be ensured regarding the funding and protection of the UK's public green space.
- will fund the PAG (£500k) and the cross-governmental group *'to support the delivery of the recommendations of the Select Committee'*, and are *'exploring opportunities for match-funding from other government departments... to deliver the best possible outcomes for the sector.'*

- supported moves towards *'innovation', 'service transformation', 'best practice'* and *'varied and diverse models'* of management and funding. These can be used as code words for the promotion of alternatives to Local Authority direct management and Government funding responsibilities.
- welcomed the enthusiasm of volunteers and *'the range of ways in which they can contribute to their parks.'*

We note the Select Committee MPs have concluded last January that they should *'return to the issue of parks before the end of this Parliament to assess the progress which has been made.'* We don't believe the actions agreed so far will result in the greater funding levels needed, and so to reverse the ever-worsening crisis there will be no alternative but for the Government to make the management of parks a statutory service. If not, things will continue to spiral out of control until the Government takes seriously its responsibility for causing and solving the current situation.



The Select Committee MPs praised the work of the Friends Groups movement and we welcome their calls for all to help the movement grow including a call for Local Authorities to *'encourage and support... and work with'* local Friends of Parks Forums covering every LA area - a key aim of the NFPGS. The Minister *'welcomes this recommendation.. We will explore how local authorities can work with groups such as Friends Forums, and look at what more can be done to mobilise*

local people to form Friends Forums and actively support the sustainability of local parks'. We pledge to continue to help achieve that.

We also pledge to continue to speak out, and to strengthen the grassroots efforts to defend and improve the UK's green spaces.

Dave Morris

Chair, National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces
