

YORKSHIRE, HUMBER & NORTH Lincs REGIONAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT LEEDS CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

Date: 13th September 2023 Start time: 10.30 Finish Time: 3.30 pm

Attendees:

Phil Maude (PM)	YH & NL RAF Acting Chair	Leeds LAF
Paul Bruffell (PB)	Guest Speaker	SUSTRANS Senior Network Development Manager
James Copeland (JC)	Senior Environment & Land Use Adviser	NFU Northern Region
Mike Willison (MW)	Chair	Leeds LAF
Alison Fuller (AF)	Chair	NYMNPA LAF
Didy Metcalf (DM)	Y & H & NL RAF Secretary	Bradford LAF
Pam Allen (PA)	Chair	Bradford LAF
Paul Sherwood (PS)	Chair	NYC (outside NPs) LAF
Bob Buckenham (BB)	Parks & Countryside Dept.	Leeds CC
Mark Corrigan (MC)	Yorkshire Regional Access Field Officer	British Horse Society (BHS)
Hazel Armstrong (HA)	Chair	ER & H JLAF
David Jeffels (DJ)	Councillor	NYC
Julie Swift (JS)	Secretary	Calderdale LAF

Apologies:

Jon Beavan (JB)	Chair	YDNPA LAF
Frances Ross (FR)	Vice Chair	N Lincs LAF
Graham Hale (GH)	Disability Action Forum	Calderdale LAF

Actions:

ITEM 2	DM to liaise invite PB to our next meeting &: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request PowerPoint presentation (if it can be shared) • Request contact details for Sustrans officers • To agree a suitable way to share project details with members.
ITEM 5.c	Coast to Coast National Trail: as there is uncertainty, MC will report back from the meeting on 27 th September, and DM will ask Andrew Mackintosh (AM) if he is able to clarify the situation.

ITEM 3	Duly noted: DM will issue open invitations to BP, JC & MC to all our meetings
ITEM 6	s. 14 Applications: DM to co-ordinate and collate
ITEM 8	Recreational signage: PS to raise concerns about guidance point 1.2, "Open Access land not to be waymarked".
ITEM 11	DM to invite Ian Kelly (NYC) & Russell Varley (City of York C) to our next meeting
ITEM 11	Active Travel Guidance: DM to circulate when published early next year DM to invite a representative from Active Travel to give a presentation at our next meeting.

1. Introduction/Apologies

PM welcomed Guest Speaker Paul Bruffell (Sustrans) and guest James Copeland (NFU) who joined the meeting via Teams. PM thanked Leeds CC for the use of the Committee Room and facilitating the technical arrangements.

2. Active Travel Presentation - Paul Bruffell, Sustrans Senior Network Development Manager

PB explained the area covered by the Sustrans England North team and how it is split in to three sub-regions, each region having a regional office. The Yorkshire Region has an office in Leeds. The Network Development team deal with the strategic vision for the National Cycle Network setting out how to fix and grow the Network. The Yorkshire Region has two Network Development Managers, namely Josh Molyneux covering West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, East Riding, York and Hull, and Helen Kellar covering South Yorkshire but also having responsibility for the communications strategy across the whole of the England North region. The Yorkshire Region also has a Project Officer but this post is currently vacant. E-mail contact details are shown on the last slide of the presentation.

The Network Development team has in recent months been developing the Network Development Plan for the National Cycle Network which sets out how the Network is to be fixed and where the Network is to grow. This work builds on a review of the Network in 2018 which quantified issues such as surface quality, wayfinding, accessibility and road safety along the 3,123 miles of the current Network. This review highlighted that about 42% of the Network is of a poor or very poor standard, much of it along roads that have motorised traffic volumes/speeds too high to meet current design guidance.

Sustrans is establishing a database for each element of the Network so that we can understand and quantify the improvements necessary to existing routes, where we need to realign routes and the types of new routes that we are seeking to create.

Sustrans will be working in partnership with councils and other organisations to agree improvements to existing routes and agree where routes are to be realigned and where new routes are to be created.

This database will also include indicative costs for fixing and growing the Network, and will facilitate the establishment of programmes to undertake development of projects and ultimately delivery projects on site.

This strategic information gathered over the last 3 years will help to inform the consultation on the whole of the National Cycling Network which is scheduled to take place later this year.

Sustrans has 9 quality standards for the national Cycle Network as set out on slide 8 of the presentation.

Sustrans Communications Strategy is an important new development for the Network Development team and has been instigated this year to facilitate the Network Development Plan process. It aims to consult extensively with councils, highway departments, national bodies such as the Forestry Commission and National Trust, as well as those representing land managers, cycling, walking and the British Horse Society.

The Network Development Plan will give consideration to the public rights of way network e.g. understanding which section of the National Cycle Network need to be bridleway status or where there is an opportunity to upgrade the status of a PROW. Removing barriers, upgrading wayfinding, path enhancements and improving road crossings on the National Cycle Network will also benefit the public right of way network.

Sustrans will also look at ways that the Network can be enhanced by introducing Quiet Lanes in rural areas and Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes in urban areas. Active Travel England is due to update its guidance to LAs on Quiet Lanes in January 2024. Current Quiet Lane guidance dates back to 2006 and requires updating in line with recently published guidance such as LTN 1/20.

Sustrans is also reviewing all road crossing to ensure that they meet LTN 1/20 design guidance. This will raise challenges in rural areas where high speed roads require expensive interventions such as bridges/subways or signalled crossings.

Sustrans' preferred surface is flexipave where the route is used by equestrians. We are aware that flexipave has other advantages such as being less susceptible to creating slippery condition when temperatures are freezing. It also has some give in it making it an attractive surface for use by walkers, runners and horse riders, (particularly travelling long distances). Providing routes of sufficient width is also an important element that allows different user groups to feel comfortable sharing our routes.

Finally, Sustrans route numbering and signage needs to be reviewed. For example, so that named routes have only one route number rather than several numbers as is

the case with the Way of the Roses route between Morecambe and Bridlington. There are a lot of missing signs across the network, currently having stickers in place as a short-term solution. We aim to simplify the numbering, provide destinations on the signage, and some additional routes may be named to make them more relatable, to complement routes such as the TPT, Way of the Roses, C2C, etc. Some routes will have artwork (particularly at start and end points) and logos that create identifiable narrative.

There followed a question and answer session, notes of which are circulated at Appendix 1, this includes a photo showing how Flexipave copes with cold weather sent by MC.

Also, PB has kindly shared his presentation with us, which has the contact details of officers are on the last slide. This will be circulated separately as it is a large file.

PM Summarised the main points that came out of the discussion: the varying standards of existing routes and the need to uplift these routes in line with Sustrans' 9 design quality standards, a significant expansion of the National Cycle Network is proposed, there is significant investment required to achieve these goals and there are challenges in partners being able to manage the future maintenance liabilities of the National Cycle Network. Going forward, our Forum especially welcomes Sustrans' emphasis on wider consultation, and would like to develop ways of working constructively with them.

PM asked PB: Are you able to let us have details of projects you're looking at? Could you provide contact details for your project officers, and be willing to attend further meetings? PB agreed those things were possible.

Resolved: that DM liaises with PB about providing contact details for Sustrans officers, and to agree a suitable way to share project details with members. We can discuss those at our next meeting in March and invite PB back to join us.

3. Natural England Update

New SharePoint site

NE provided a link to its new site for LAFs and is encouraging members to join up, by applying by email to Danielle.Radley@naturalengland.org.uk.

HA Is it worth asking Danielle speak to us about this? DM thought it unlikely as her impression was that NE resources are very stretched at the moment. LAF members are invited to register with the site, and perhaps when more people have signed up there will be more to say about progress. PA noted that AM's update invites members to get in touch with queries, which is encouraging.

Environmental Land Management Scheme ELMS/Countryside Stewardship Plus (CSP)
PM noted that AM mentions possible permissive access elements could be included in the ELMS Landscape Recovery tier and the CSP, but as it referred to as a 'secondary objective' it's difficult to tell if it will make a widespread impact.

JC We are beginning to see a very slow stop and start transition to the ELMs programme. We were hoping to see the Sustainable Farm Incentive (SFI) go live this autumn but that has been postponed and people can only express an interest. There are various Landscape Recovery options but as yet we have not seen any access provisions. This is disappointing as we were hoping to see options continuing previous agreements in the old schemes.

PM Do you think this will affect the General Election; they seem to be making heavy weather of this? JC said there are political elements, as these agreements could be complementing other government strategies. That is why I mentioned it to Sustrans earlier; correctly designed schemes will enable our members to help deliver public goods.

Defra Guidance on diversion and extinguishment of ROWs

PM said his understanding is that where Defra is looking at diverting rights of ways over working farms, the guidance gives more weight to the rights of the landowner than was formerly the case. In his experience diversion applications can meet with stiff opposition from the Ramblers and others, perhaps unfairly. He thought the principle is not unreasonable providing the diversion is well designed and maintained.

HA We have an example where a farmer blocked a bridleway through his farmyard, and informally created a diversion. He didn't follow the proper procedure but it wasn't unreasonable. Now however, he wants to close the informal route and divert the bridleway onto a nearby quiet lane, removing that part of the bridleway completely. That is sharp practice and this new guidance gives him everything he wants to manipulate the system. AF commented that it requires a robust response from the council.

PM asked JC how he views the guidance. JC Our key concern is safety in the modern working farmyard where there are many more large vehicle movements and other activities than there used to be. The priority is to keep farm workers and countryside visitors safe. We hope LAs will consider any reasonable proposals for diversions on that basis, but I know of 3 cases where they have been turned down, and hope they may re-consider them now. This guidance presents an opportunity for the public to better understand why these diversions are necessary. There will always be people who attempt to manipulate the rules, and LAs should act against them. Again, our priority is safety.

PM thought the example described by Hazel is clearly not right. If wholesale diversions onto other routes are permitted to effectively rationalise the network it will inevitably reduce the quantity of RoWs available.

AF I certainly support getting RoWs out of farmyards, there are circumstances where that is better for everyone. Problems arise with routes near private dwellings where

owners wish to expand their gardens, and then complain of a lack of privacy. DM added that is likely to increase with more redundant farm houses and buildings being converted to private dwellings as farm land is consolidated into larger holdings.

PM LAs will only embark on a diversion if the person seeking it undertakes to meet all the requirements, including costs such as compensation under s. 26 28?. Complications and possible conflict may arise where the only option is to divert a route over someone else's land and the neighbour may not agree. JC said that their recommendation is that those seeking a diversion should ensure that the entry and exit point to their land remains the same, which eliminates some of the problems. PM In conclusion, the general feeling is that the emphasis of the guidance was rather skewed toward the land owners' interest. In principle, everyone is supportive of the diversion of RoWs away from farmyards where they present a hazard to farm workers and the public. However, these measures may be open to abuse and members will need to monitor their impact.

Walking with Livestock

PM reported 2 incidents where he had encountered curious, frisky cattle while out walking in groups of people over the summer. Cattle can be intimidating and it is hard to judge if they might become aggressive. At our last meeting, it was suggested that the Forum might produce a newspaper article (assisted by the NFU), to explain the best way to respond. Since then, the Sunday Times had published an article entitled "Killer Cows" which seemed critical of farmers and several unhelpful letters on the subject were sent to the Yorkshire Post. He wondered therefore if a positive contribution from us might help, and asked JC for his opinion.

JC Yes, there has been quite a lot of coverage and we have been ramping up our health and safety advice. There are some main areas we have focused on: signage, stock management, the positioning of feeders, fencing (leaving enough space for RoWs), wider risk assessments and permissive paths. It is becoming more complex and unfortunately more legally complex, to inform and advise our members without creating more difficulties.

PM What sort of legal issues arise? JC Liability, insurance and signage are all sensitive issues. The wording of some signs can imply a risk is known about and therefore it could be argued that the farmer is aware that the arrangements do not meet the health and safety risk assessment criteria. Responsible livestock owners are finding that the rules are just becoming too complex.

PA Made the suggestion that where bridleways go through farmland, the risk assessment should include making sure the gates are fully functioning. It's not unusual for horse riders to get boxed into a corner by cattle near a gate. If the horse is nervous or the rider needs to dismount it creates a dangerous situation.

PM thanked JC for making time to attend our meeting on behalf on the NFU. It is always interesting to hear the farming perspective on these topics, and PM hoped he would be available attend our next meeting in March.

PA suggested that as we already offer an open invitation to our meetings to MC as the Regional BHS representative, it would be a welcome addition if JC and PB could also receive an open invitation to all our meetings.

Resolved: DM will issue open invitations to BP, JC & MC for all our meetings

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Proposed HA and Seconded MW.

5. Matters arising

a) HS2/Trans Pennine Route update

PM noted that the situation with HS2 was still unclear. The route to Leeds has since been abandoned.

MW said the Trans Pennine Route is gradually working its way east. Network Rail has applied for a Transport Works Order for the upgrade of the Leeds to Micklefield section. PM commented they are working on the Manchester to Marsden section. MW confirmed that section is a new route and onward from Marsden is an upgrade.

b) Network Rail crossings

MW said Leeds LAF has objected to the proposed diversion of a route crossing the railway near Micklefield. PM said the Network Rail consultation had contained an option to create a bridleway and improve the network, which we supported. After the consultation had closed, we were informed that they had decided it's not value for money, and they will not provide what was originally promised. We objected on the basis that it was dis-ingenuous to consult on something they would not be able to provide. PM warned members that the Network Rail consultation procedure is not clear cut, and they should be aware that options may be offered that cannot be fulfilled should they become involved in similar consultations.

MW added that Leeds CC had also found errors in the actual application. As it wishes to keep the dialogue open in the hope of finding a way forward; to date it has only reserved the option of opposing the application. It is unclear whether LAF can be a statutory objector in its own right; however, if Leeds CC decides to submit a formal objection, there is a commitment to make sure that the LAF has an option to give evidence to an inquiry. For now we have been asked to provide evidence of use. PM We will report on developments at the next meeting.

c) The Coast to Coast National Trail

AF They have appointed a part time officer for the section in the NYMNP who is making progress, some bits will need orders and bridleways need re-surfacing. There could be benefits assuming the money comes through, but no cheques have been written and there is no time scale.

MC said he has been involved with the mapping of the cycling and riding route and we will get an update at a meeting on 27th September. Basically we are scoping three routes, and it will not be possible for all sections to be shared with walkers. AF Do I understand that you're talking just about the cycling and horse route as opposed to the Coast to Coast Route that Government has already approved? MC said that he understood that to be the existing "Wainright" route and the one he referred to would be the proposed new national trail. PS commented that he thought the walking route already announced and projected to be completed by 2025 was the national trail, but the position of a bridge over the A19 had yet to be agreed.

MC summarised the situation as he understood it. Originally, the proposed route was to be a bridleway throughout. Following an initial consultation process, Cycling UK and the BHS heard nothing for months. Then Government announced its approval of a walking route approximating to the existing Wainright route which it planned to designate as the Coast to Coast National Trail. Cycling UK and the BHS appointed a barrister who applied for a judicial review challenging the creation of a National Trail that was not a shared route. Government backed down, as it was proven that they were not authorised to create a National Trail that is only a footpath. The new alternatives they have been consulting on are the result. HA commented that that is why the Coastal Path has been designated as access land and is not actually a National Trail.

Resolved: As there is uncertainty, MC will report back from the meeting on 27th September, and DM will ask AM if he is able to clarify the situation.

d) UUCRs

DM said there is nothing to report. NYC has made orders to add to routes to the Definitive Map as BOATS and those are working their way through the system.

6. Quantifying outstanding Schedule 14 applications

HA Had suggested at the last meeting that it would be useful to have some idea of how many outstanding applications there are in each LAF area, details of how many have actually been processed in the last 2 years, and the date of the earliest applications awaiting attention. The East Riding has helpfully provided that information, and HA's questions and their answers have already been circulated to members. HA thought it important for LAFs to monitor their LA's the progress of claims. She cited as an example, the discovery of a number of older applications that could not be certified, because the applicant now has dementia. As they are footpath applications, the Ramblers were consulted and the claims re-submitted.

AF pointed out that NYC deals with all the National Park applications. PS reported that 215 are awaiting investigation, with 47 currently being investigated, and 8 of those are with PINs, that figure includes the 2 National Parks as well as the County. HA asked the date of the oldest application? MW & AF said that information will be the NYC website but it would take a long time to go through them all to find the earliest.

HA pointed out that LA websites don't contain details of the rate at which they are being determined either.

MW reported that Leeds had around 53 going back to about 2003. BB added that about 6 have been determined in the last 2 years and he is happy to provide answers to the suggested questions.

JS thought that although it was not her area, Calderdale has around 50 outstanding claims some many years old.

DM reported that according to its website Bradford has 78 outstanding claims the earliest being 1989 (FP). However, objections had been lodged to the status of roughly 159 paths in 1980 which the applicant claimed were vehicular. As these under-recorded routes represented the majority of our missing bridleway network, DM had assumed they would be dealt with in due course and therefore no need to submit claims. A few years ago, the council asked the (by then elderly) applicant to withdraw his claim and therefore they now seem to be "off the books" and will need applications.

MC asked how many LAs used Planning rather than officer's decisions to determine orders. AF said that NYC use officer's decisions except were contested; in that case it goes to Committee to decide what stance to take. HA East Riding Definitive Map Team evaluates the evidence which goes to a pre-consultation, followed by a full consultation, then legal takes it forward. MC suggested that standards need to be established before the Deregulation Act comes in so that it is administered fairly. Government should be made aware of the vastly different rates at which LAs process claims: e.g. NYC are making steady progress with 8 at PINs, while other LAs haven't processed 1. There are also variations in the way that claims are dealt with nationally, with 70% determined by Planning Committee and 30% by officers (unless contested).

PM said that the order in which they are processed is another hot topic. There are arguments for taking them in chronological order, and, for dealing with current challenges immediately (e.g. a recently blocked route). Another aspect is diversions resulting from planning applications. These need to be processed and are financed by the applicant, but divert officer time away from the dealing with the backlog.

AF NYC formerly had a points system evaluating the weight of historical evidence & user evidence, giving preference to stronger cases while also processing some of the

oldest. This seemed fair, but NYC has recently changed to a date order system – earliest first. This has upset some applicants who may not be alive to argue their case. Added to this PINs is increasingly allowing people to effectively jump the queue by applying to have their cases processed after one year. She felt that Government will claim that the Deregulation Act deals with these anomalies, and it should be up to each authority to decide how it processes claims, but that will not address the unfair elements.

PM suggested members try to obtain the number of claims submitted, rate of processing and dates for the oldest.

Resolved: DM to co-ordinate and report back

7. Communication with other RAFs /LAFs

MC had forwarded the Worcestershire and Devon LAF Annual Reports for our information. PM commented that these LAFs clearly had the resources to produce them, but did not think such funding is available to many LAFs in this region. DM thought the new SharePoint site might stimulate interest in LAFs sharing news of their progress.

8. Signage for recreational routes

PS circulated 3 documents on Waymarking produced by NYC in April this year, on resolving problems, principles and guidance, which he thought were possibly a response to discussions the LAF had earlier. AF welcomed them as helpful. PM questioned the Guidance at point 1.2 “Open Access land is not to be waymarked”. Where the land is not fenced that might be appropriate but in fact much of the land has walled or fenced boundaries where and access and egress needs to be identified, particularly in remote locations. MW added that where a PRoW crosses Open Access Land and the access is temporarily suspended, Waymarking needs to make clearly that the RoW is unaffected by closure. PS said he would raise those concerns with NYC.

9. Chair of next meeting – Secretary next meeting

PM agreed to act as Chair and DM as Secretary

10. LAFS

a. Attracting new members

PM said Sustrans attendance this morning is encouraging: as it offers the opportunity to become involved with some of their projects. HA also welcomed the fact that JC had attended on behalf of the NFU, and MC’s (BHS) regular attendance, which broadens the base information we can share. PM acknowledged the difficulties of getting new members involved in the current political climate. PS thought that even a change of government might not make a difference, as lack of funds to support the RoW network would still be a problem. AF pointed out that LAFs also advise on and promote public engagement in RoWs matters, which is not necessarily a funding issue.

b. Reports from constituent LAFs

NYMNP LAF

Our last meeting was held virtually on 7th June 2023 and most members were present. We discussed

- rights of way surveys
- methods of volunteering and a new system is being developed to make it easier for groups e.g. bridleway groups to volunteer with the resolution of the 3rd party liability insurance issue
- guidance for planning applications where PRoW were impacted; guidance has now been revised so that the Ramblers and BHS are to be consulted
- Miles without Stiles; easy access routes identified
- Coast to Coast new national trail; a part time officer has been appointed and Orders being worked on. Lack of consultation with landowners and consideration for a route for horse riders and cyclists were flagged up and a letter sent to Natural England.
- Moorsbus; concern that there will be no funding from the NPA
- Ryedale Cycle Forum; liaison with other organisations regarding bids for work and routes
- Off road motor cycles using routes illegally
- Signage on UURs and BOATs to indicate type of user to expect; examples from the YDNP
- Illegal damage to a crag used by climbers
- Stewardship payments; re maintenance of PRoW
- Dog faeces on Scarborough to Whitby dismantled railway

BRADFORD LAF

PA following our former secretary's move to Calderdale, Danny Jackson is still acting as temporary Secretary, but PA finds communication patchy and would prefer to have meetings booked well in advance. A new member of staff has been appointed, but only part time like the rest of the team. We had an online meeting on 28th March, which was reasonably well attended. PA had suggested a summertime site meeting, which was held a couple of weeks ago when members walked routes in the Aire Valley in Saltaire, Bingley and Baildon, which was a really useful exercise. This is an exceptionally important area with access along the canal and the river, taking in Salts Mills, the Milnerfield Estate and ancient packhorse routes in Baildon. But, some routes are under-recorded or blocked to the users of higher rights. MC who also attended commented that Bradford will be the City of Culture in 2025, and this area offers potential for developing a new heritage route, which could meet the miles without stiles criteria.

NYC LAF

- Since the last RAF meeting, very little has happened within the NYCC LAF membership has declined to five plus two elected members. We should have thirteen with an absolute lower number of ten.
- The general feeling of the existing membership is that we achieve nothing and receive very little support from the authority. To the extent that it was even suggested we all resign as a block. It was eventually decided that by doing this it could result in the new unitary authority not even bother having an LAF.
- To exacerbate matters the authority cancelled our May meeting, with little notice and little in the way of reasons. We therefore have not met since 25th January.
- As a result, it was decided that we demanded a face to face meeting with relevant management and director of the relevant council directorate. To basically ask “what the hell is going on?” Clearly the current excuse for apathy is the re-organisation from the old two tier system to the unitary authority, having run out of Brexit, Covid & Ukraine excuses. This meeting has been scheduled (and altered) several times since about June, was fixed for 5th September and cancelled last week.
- A further dismal performance on the part of the council was the eventual (at long last) recruitment process for new members, had been decided in early May that this was urgent they commenced the procedure in early July. About fifty application packs were sent out, sixteen applied, the initial ‘sifting’ process came up with ten to interview, the interviews were last week. [the interview panel consisted of Head of Democratic Services, Countryside Access Manager, myself and someone from Human resources] bearing in mind we needed seven members to get back to full strength, one pulled out before interview, several were totally unsuitable and we were to appoint five. It remains to be seen how many accept the offer.
- On the positive side; the A66 Trans Pennine upgrade is now (after seven years) in a stage awaiting final acceptance by government, we, along with Cumbria & Durham LAF’s keep getting updates, but little is actually going on. Likewise the ‘Coast to Coast’ plans for National Long Distance Path is ongoing, we, along with Cumbria, Durham, North York Moors, Lake District & Yorkshire Dales National Parks LAF’s are getting involved with Natural England. We set up a working group to look at the thorny issue of ‘planning’ that has made some extremely slow progress and of course the current planning system is involved with reorganisation from seven district/borough + county council to one county authority – we ask questions and receive ‘nowt’ back. Possibly someone knows what’s going on.

DM said HA had mentioned that an NYC officer, Ian Kelly, had attended one of their meetings and expressed interest in attending an RAF

meeting. When DM had contacted NYC to invite him she was told that NYC does not provide contact details of its officers. The 0300 phone number given to contact the RoW Department on the council's website does not connect. DM thought that really isn't good enough and the public ought to be able to contact RoWs.

PS said he would mention this. HA said she would provide Mr Kelly's email address and also that of an officer from York who had expressed and interest.

Resolved DM to invite both to the next meeting

ER & H LAF

HA we have just got over a mile of new route added to the Definitive Map, (although it's not online yet). As Chair of the LAF, HA was threatened with a disciplinary hearing by the agent of a landowner associated with a planning application, for apparently over-reaching LAF powers. However, when she asked for more detail and if she could bring legal representation the matter was quietly dropped. There is now 4 miles of new bridleway under construction along the estuary from Skeffling, near Spurn Point, to Cottingham, which should be completed next year.

PA asked for clarity about the disciplinary threat. HA explained, it concerned a planning application along a quiet road used by walkers and horse riders. Permission was granted with the proviso the road would be closed. The RoWs Department was not consulted and objected, along with the Ramblers, the BHS, BBT and the LAF. We objected because we were specifically asked our opinion by the Department of Transport, who clearly believed that we could object. But as a body she was told that LAFs may only advise; and that we have no right to object except as individuals. As it happens, some time ago we had a similar problem with a planning application in Cottingham, Andrew Mackintosh (NE), became involved and I remember us looking at the Defra Guidance which suggested we can advise only.

MW asked why the Secretary of State had not told them their objection could not be considered, citing other examples in Essex and Nottinghamshire where that had not happened. HA thought they just weren't aware of the issue. PM understood the rationale of LAFs set up as advisory bodies not objecting to their own council. But it is different when a third party is involved and the LA may welcome robust support from its LAF, and their ability to give evidence.

JS said we are currently being consulted on the A 641 Improvement Scheme, which aims to better connect communities between Bradford, Brighouse and Huddersfield, she was surprised to learn the LAF would not be able to object to some aspects of it. HA suggested that the LAF could raise any issue in a section 9.44 advice notice, to which the authority is obliged to reply.

PM said he would check the guidelines to clarify the situation. MW thought the guidelines state LAFs are a statutory body that can advise: they do not say they cannot object. HA suggested they are available at meetings.

Resolved PM and MW will look into the issue and report to the next meeting with the aim of clarifying our position.

CALDERDALE LAF

JS reported that the LAF is thriving with 2 councillors attending regularly. There are historic problems to correct but the council is trying hard to move in the right direction. We have meetings every 2 months. Online meetings have made it easier for people to attend and we plan to carry that on.

MC commented that the Forum is engaging well. It has the council support and is representative of the population, including cyclists and a strong disability membership. The list of claims is steadily being dealt with.

LEEDS LAF

MW reported that:

- The Forum last met on 16th May and next meets on 19th September. We have continued to hold 4 business meetings per year with a site visit in the summer.
- We had a presentation by Sustrans on the proposed improvements between Rothwell and Temple Newsam funded by Highways England. An update is scheduled for the September meeting.
- The LAF has lodged an objection to Networks Rail's TWAO application for enhancements to the Trans Pennine route between Leeds and Micklefield. The objection relates to the proposed closure of the bridleway crossing at Micklefield.
- The site visit in July was to Post Hill in west Leeds the site of a DMMO to upgrade 2 footpaths to bridleway and add a linking bridleway between them.
- The Forum continues to be part of pre-consultations for PPOs and DMMOs.
- The Forum is consulted on Neighbourhood Plans and the advice given is usually followed by Neighbourhood Forums and Inspectors.
- Following the departure of the Principal Definitive Map Officer to PINS the PROW team has now recruited a Definitive Map Manager and a Definitive Map Officer; a vacancy for a second Definitive Map Officer remains.

BB gave an update on staffing: with Charlotte Hamer is now the Definitive Map Manager and Finn Connor-Watson is now the Definitive Map Officer. The rest of the team consists of BB and 2 officers who oversee a range of duties over the whole area.

PM mentioned a particular unrecorded path brought to their attention by a planning application. There are many similar instances dotted around the area

and because people use them daily without challenge, it doesn't occur to anyone that they need to be claimed.

11. Items for next agenda

HA's suggested s.14 statistics, DM to coordinate collection.

HA also suggested inviting Russell Varley a RoW officer of City of York Council to attend. She had met him recently and thought he may be able to let us know about progress in York as they don't appear to have had a LAF for some time.

DM is liaising with PB who will hopefully be able to share details of proposed Sustrans schemes, which we can distribute to LAFs and discuss at the next meeting.

PB also mentioned that the Active Travel guidance will be published early next year. DM to circulate when available

PA suggested inviting someone from Active Travel to give a presentation, and has a contact there who might be prepared to speak.

12. Date and location of next meeting

Date of the next meetings will be Wednesday 6th March 2024 (**NB.** This has been changed) – followed by Wednesday 4th September 2024.