

## **Lancashire Local Access Forum**

**Tuesday, 11th April, 2017 at 10.00 am in Blackburn Town Hall, Ground Floor, Conference Room 1**

### **Agenda**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Item</b>
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|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>   |                       |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2017</b>  | <b>(Pages 1 - 6)</b>  |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Matters Arising</b>   |                       |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>The Future of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and the Public Rights of Way Access Forum</b> | <b>(Pages 7 - 10)</b> |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>Update on Coastal Access in Lancashire</b>  |                       |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>Update on the Countryside Service</b>   |                       |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>Upland Chain Local Nature Programme</b>   |                       |
| <b>8.</b> | <b>Any Other Business</b>  |                       |
| <b>9.</b> | <b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  |                       |
|           | To be confirmed  |                       |

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Preston



## **Lancashire Local Access Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 17th January, 2017 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'D' - The Henry Bolingbroke Room, County Hall, Preston**

### **Present:**

#### **Chair**

Cllr J R Toon, Independent

#### **Committee Members**

Arthur Baldwin  
Ms Sue Harrison  
Ralph Henderson  
Sue Hogg  
David Kelly  
Steve Kirby  
Paul McKeown  
Mike Prescott  
Dean Spencer

#### **Officers**

Linda Andersen, Public Rights of Way  
Michelle Holroyd, Planning Officer

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from County Councillor Albert Atkinson; James Daplyn, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita); David Goode, LCC; Andrew Hewitson, LCC

### **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 July 2016**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **Flood Damage**

Linda Andersen, Public Rights of Way, informed the Forum, that a lot of work was still being done in areas damaged by flooding.

#### **Site Visit**

The Forum was informed that officers would not support site visits due to funding problems. A site visit to the coastal footpath with an officer who was involved with the footpath was suggested, or the Forum might organise its own site visit. Complete walking of the coastal footpath could be undertaken by May or June.

## **Countryside Service**

An update report was requested from Tim Blythe, Countryside Service Manager, for the next Lancashire Local Access Forum in April

## **The North West Local Access Forum**

The NWLAF meeting set for 12 April 2016 had been cancelled due to lack of business.

## **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

The Forum was informed that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) had not been signed off yet. The Forum stated that the ROWIP needed to be available in the public domain as soon as possible.

### **4. Coastal Access in Lancashire - Update**

The Forum was informed that Julie Paton, Environmental Projects Officer, was in the process of meeting with landowners to discuss coastal path access.

Cumbria's involvement with the coastal access had been very significant. It would be useful to understand the thinking behind Cumbria's involvement. The LLAF had promised it would be involved in the emergence of the coastal access. The Forum was informed that CROW Act Closures did not apply to coastal footpaths.

Forum members requested a full presentation from Julie Paton on the coastal footpath and access at the next LLAF meeting in April.

### **5. National Trails Trust**

Early in this financial year National Trails Partnerships became very concerned about the lack of annual funding offer from Natural England. Representatives from all trails met in early May 2016 to agree a way of lobbying Natural England to get some clarity on the situation. This resulted in a meeting with senior officers from Natural England in June where representatives were informed of a 50% cut in funding.

Natural England currently provided 75% of the agreed costs of maintenance of National Trails based on an agreed funding formula. Each Partnership had to demonstrate a minimum of 25% match funding which predominantly came from Highway Authority partners.

To better fight this proposed cut some intensive lobbying was agreed which eventually resulted in the restoration of the full budget for 2016/17.

It was also agreed that a better way of lobbying government and raising the profile of National Trails was required in order to make the case for the continued funding of core maintenance e.g. A National Trails Association.

There were no current plans for a Trust although the Trail Partnerships were looking at a range of options to better represent National Trails at Government level and developing evidence of the value of National Trails to support the case.

The National Trails were concerned about funding as an offer had not been received for 2017/18 and had an indication they should work on the basis of a 5% cut but had no written confirmation of this or any indication about future years. In the past in line with the new deal with Natural England there had been a 3 year indicative budget.

Whilst Natural England had assured the National Trails Partnerships that they recognised the need to provide some continued support for Trails while alternative forms of funding were explored they were not able to set out what the pattern or level of funding would be in future years.

Natural England's overall position was that they wished to work constructively and co-operatively with the Trail Partnerships to develop a new funding model for National Trails which made them less reliant on the public purse in future years.

There were 15 National Trails altogether and if funding went the Trails would deteriorate rapidly. The key thing about National Trails was their maintenance, especially signage.

LCC currently benefited from funding to support the Pennine Bridleway National Trail Ranger and an annual programme of maintenance projects.

## **6. Update on Jacobs Lancashire Cycling and Walking Strategy 2016-2026**

Lancashire County Council was working alongside local and national transport and public health partners and had embarked on the preparation of a pan-Lancashire Cycling and Walking Strategy to deliver the transformation in cycling and walking set out in its Highways and Transport Masterplans.

Jacobs was LCC's framework consultant and had prepared its advice for a pan-Lancashire cycling and walking strategy. The draft strategy proposed a 10 year timeframe and presented a vision and targets alongside a series of high level activities, developed through a combination of emerging national priorities and a robust evidence base around trends, needs, inequalities, barriers and opportunities for cycling and walking in Lancashire.

The vision was to see more people cycling and walking in Lancashire. The targets represented an ambitious statement of intent for long term change up to 2026: a doubling of numbers of people cycling; a 10% increase in numbers of people walking; and to raise levels of physical activity in all districts to at least the national average.

Jacobs had taken account of national guidance in the Department for Transport's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (March 2016). The commission with Jacobs was completed on receipt of the draft strategy document. The Central Lancashire Strategy had been delivered first.

The draft strategy was currently on the LCC 'Have Your Say' consultation webpage in support of a revenue funding application to the Department of Transport's Access Fund. A formal consultation exercise for the draft strategy was being prepared by the Lancashire Cycling and Walking Steering Group and Lancashire Local Access Forum would be notified of the consultation launch. Initial feedback on the draft strategy document was welcomed and could be provided through the LCC 'Have Your Say' consultation website.

Getting children to walk to schools was highlighted in the strategy. Forum members enquired where the strategy tied in with the ROWIP and felt the ROWIP should encompass cycling, walking, riding and transport in its strategies. It was felt that the routes should be multi-user routes and should include horse riders.

The Forum requested that the LLAFF be on the list for the next strategy consultation. The strategy was primarily about access and funding. There was also a big public health stance within the strategy. The Forum pointed out that there needed to be more detailed plans at borough level. The strategy would hopefully be signed off by the end of the year.

## **7. Consultation on West Pennine Moors gaining Sites of Special Scientific Interest Status**

The Forum was informed that Natural England had suggested that West Pennine Moors should gain a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status, recognising the national importance of the areas upland habitats and breeding birds. There was a four month consultation period to decide. The consultation was to enable people to send their views before Natural England decided whether to confirm or withdraw this notification. The LLAFF welcomed this suggestion and supported it.

## **8. Letter From Upland Chain Local Nature Programme**

The LLAFF had received a letter from Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to ask whether the Forum had any particular projects, activities or initiatives to which the LNP could usefully contribute.

The primary purpose of the LNP was to bring together local organisations, businesses and people who wanted to improve their local natural environment.

The Partnerships adopted objectives included:

- Promoting public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of the areas and encouraging people to take action for their conservation; and

- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the Northern Upland Chain provided for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being.

Next spring, the LNP would be determining what its priorities should be for the next few years. The purpose of the letter was therefore to ask whether the LLAFF had any proposals for access and recreation that could:

- a) Make a significant direct contribution to achieving the two objectives above; or
- b) Make a significant contribution to achieving other nature conservation benefits

The LLAFF suggested the following three projects:

1. Seek to achieve a sustainable population of hen harriers – (this bird was the symbol of the Bowland AONB).
2. Renewal / replacement of signage and furniture associated with open access land.
3. Work to conserve and renew upland peat areas.

## **9. Auditing The List Of Streets: A Role For Local Access Forums**

It was decided to role this item forward to the April meeting of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and request an update report from David Goode, Public Rights of Way Manager.

## **10. Joint LAF Meeting - 1 November 2016**

The Joint Local Access Forum meeting had taken place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 in Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria.

The day included a site visit in the morning to Devil's Bridge and the River Lune. In the afternoon there was a discussion on access and recreation issues in the Yorkshire Dales National Park extension area.

It was felt to have been a very useful meeting and Forum members who attended could relate to other people's issues.

## **11. Any Other Business**

Regarding the Lancashire Combined Authority, which had been discussed about over the last few months, the Forum requested information on where it was at and how it would be structured.

The Chair of the LLAFF, Richard Toon, informed the Forum that he was having a meeting soon with the Democratic Services Manager, Josh Mynott, on the future progression of the LLAFF.

The Forum was informed that a Garden Village would be created in Lancashire. Bailrigg, the campus of Lancaster University, was set to become a Garden Village, providing up to 3,500 homes. Concerns were expressed about how much access to neighbouring countryside there would be. A report was requested for the April meeting of the LLAF.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 11 April 2017 at 10:00am in Ground Floor Conference Room One, Blackburn Town Hall, Blackburn.

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## **Future of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and Public Rights of Way & Access Forum**

In the context of the significant resource pressures facing all public sector bodies, and the changing public sector partnership landscape it is felt to be a reasonable time to review the role and effectiveness of the LLAFF and the PROWA.

In presenting a paper for discussion, attention is drawn to a number of issues and considerations, including:

### **a. The future of the LLAFF**

1. The statutory status of the LLAFF
2. The resource pressures on the County Council and other partners
3. How the LLAFF can most effectively link to other partnership work in the County
4. Ensuring that the voice of the LLAFF and its members is heard
5. Ensuring that the LLAFF is focussing on strategic priorities

### **b. The future of the PROWA**

### **c. Next steps**

### **a. the future of the LLAFF**

#### **1. The statutory status of the LLAFF**

Local Access Forums (LAFs) were established in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (usually known as "CROW"). It is a legal requirement for highways authorities to establish and support a LAF. In Lancashire, the three Highways authorities (Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council have agreed to establish a joint LAF for Lancashire.

The statutory role of the LLAFF is to advise relevant organisations "as to the improvement of public access to lands in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed". Organisations so advised are required to "have regard" to any relevant advice given by the LLAFF.

In addition, in carrying out its functions, the LLAFF "shall have regard to-

- a. the needs of land management,
- b. the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area, and
- c. guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State"

Regulations produced in 2007 set out details of the arrangements for LAFS, such as membership, terms of office, meeting rules, and provision of secretarial support for the group.

The PROWA has no statutory basis, meaning that there is no legal requirement for an area to have a PROWA type committee.

## **2. Resources**

As is well known, local authorities and other public sector bodies continue to experience major reductions in available resources. Councils are making significant service reductions, and focussing expenditure on statutory services and where maximum value can be obtained. The LLAF, as a statutory requirement, is not itself at risk. However, it is clear that the LLAF is operating in a changed environment, which represents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Resources available for some non-statutory services related to the work of the LLAF (such as the County Council's countryside service) are severely reduced or in some cases, gone completely. Levels of finance available for maintaining and improving rights of way and the countryside generally are simply not available as they may have been in the past – even taking into account that levels of spending were never as high as many would have liked in the first place.

This means that the LLAF needs to adjust its expectations of what it can influence, and recognise that it may not be able to influence individual works that may have in the past been able to be undertaken by the local authorities.

However, as a statutory body with a clearly defined role and remit in law, the LLAF has a significant area of opportunity to make its voice heard at a higher, strategic level. The statutory protection afforded to the LLAF does not exist for other partnership bodies which may be looking at some of the same strategic issue, and it is perhaps here that the LLAF can take advantage of its' position as well as the expertise represented by its membership to influence large projects and the strategic direction of services in Lancashire related to public spaces.

## **3. Links to partnership working in Lancashire**

If the LLAF is to enjoy a significant profile in Lancashire, it is important that it understands and links in with other bodies and organisations in Lancashire. This needs to be a two way process, where the LLAF is actively approached by other bodies for its views, in recognition of the LLAFs status as the expert body on those matters within its remit, and where the LLAF itself seeks to identify the best opportunities and most appropriate organisations to seek to influence and advise.

This requires the LLAF to be clear about its own priorities and to be prepared to focus on large scale strategic issues affecting significant areas or numbers of people. The LLAF needs to demonstrate that it is able to make a valuable contribution to these big issues in order for other organisations to start to recognise the LLAF and positively engage with it.

Examples of where the LLAF could most usefully link to would include Marketing Lancashire from issues around the visitor economy and working with health and wellbeing bodies on the role that the use and enjoyment of public space can positively impact on the wellbeing of the population, either for specific leisure activities or for the more general benefits that come from an attractive and welcoming environment.

#### **4. Ensuring that the voice of the LLAF and its members is heard**

Whilst it is a statutory body, it does not automatically follow that the views of the LLAF are heard or taken seriously in policy development. To achieve this, the LLAF needs to engage in the right issues in a timely and constructive manner. This is likely to mean spending more time engaging with strategic planning and some of the bigger issues facing Lancashire, and moving away from smaller, locally focussed issues (although the LLAF can have a powerful voice on these issues at times). The LLAF also needs to ensure that it has the right mix of membership representing the different interest groups and expertise that exists.

#### **5. Ensuring the LLAF is focussed on strategic priorities**

For the LLAF to become a valued and trusted part of the partnership landscape in Lancashire, it needs to engage in those big issues which are of strategic importance. The LLAF may also need to be relatively strict in how it determines its own future workplan to make sure that the focus remains, whilst being flexible and responsive enough to emerging issues.

Negotiating the various high level partnerships and organisations that exist in Lancashire is, however, not an easy task. The LLAF will need to consider its own role and function and it may need to take a step back to consider its own position in relation to bodies like Marketing Lancashire, the LEP and issues such as health and well-being and planning, and how and where the LLAF can most positively contribute to influence policy and practice.

This does not in any sense, mean neglecting core issues around the use of open spaces in Lancashire, and key projects such as the England Coast Path. However, being able to relate these issues to the broader context will both help the LLAF understand its position and ensure that any interventions and recommendations made by the LLAF in relation to such projects is relevant, timely and much more likely to be taken into account; and when it is taken into account, because it is focussed on the bigger picture, the impact will be greater.

#### **b. The role of the PROWA**

The PROWA pre-dates the LLAF, and has, in its time, made a valuable contribution to the rights of way agenda. However, in recent times, its work has significantly overlapped with that of the LLAF, and to an extent, the statutory nature and areas of work of the LLAF has superseded the PROWA and the latter's influence.

In recent times, the decision was made to effectively combine the two meetings, so they meet one after the other on the same date, and additionally to allow members of one observer status at the other. This has further demonstrated the overlap and duplication.

The PROWA, unlike the LLAf, operates on a Lancashire County Council footprint (and therefore does not include representatives from Blackburn with Darwen or Blackpool). It therefore does not have the same capacity to act on a Lancashire – wide footprint, which is increasingly the relevant geographic and political sub-regional area.

### **Next Steps**

The LLAf and the PROWA will need to consider the above issues and how it would like to respond and develop. However, it may wish to consider some or all of the following actions

1. Review the Terms of Reference of the LLAf
2. Review the membership of the LLAf
3. Consider abolishing the PROWA and merging any remaining functions with the LLAf
4. Review the partnership working capacity of the LLAf, and consider how it can begin engaging with key partners, for example, by seeking reports to future committees from Marketing Lancashire of health and wellbeing partners
5. Consider the structure of meetings and formalising recommendations on matters discussed
6. Consider how issues which would no longer be considered appropriate for the LLAf agenda be dealt with

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