

## **Lancashire Local Access Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 11th April, 2017 at 10.00 am in Blackburn Town Hall, Ground Floor, Conference Room 1**

### **Present:**

#### **Chair**

Cllr J R Toon, Independent

#### **Committee Members**

Arthur Baldwin  
Sue Harrison  
Sue Hogg  
David Kelly  
Mike Prescott  
Keith Westley

#### **Officers**

David Goode, Public Rights of Way Manager, LCC  
James Daplyn, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita)

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

Apologies were received from County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Michael Helm and Steve Kirby.

### **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2017**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **Flood Damage**

The Forum was informed that work was still ongoing with areas damaged by flooding. There were dangers with bridges being scoured and river banks disappearing. There was still a lot of work for the Bridges and Structures Team to do.

#### **Jacobs Cycling and Walking Strategy**

It was felt that horse riding should play a bigger part in the strategy. In addition bridleways and multi-user routes should be part of the strategy. The Forum felt it would be a good idea to invite someone from Jacobs to a LLAFF meeting.

## **Auditing the List of Streets**

David Goode, Public Rights of Way Manager, informed the Forum that this was only a list of streets that were publicly maintainable and it was a requirement to record these streets. This is in practice covered by GIS Mapping which is more informative and convenient to use than a list.

## **Joint LAF Meeting with Cumbria – 1 November 2016**

The Chair, Councillor Richard Toon, informed the Forum that the Joint LAF had been an excellent meeting.

## **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Forum members were informed that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) had now been signed off. A copy of the ROWIP is attached with these minutes.

## **4. The Future of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and the Public Rights of Way Access Forum**

Josh Mynott, Democratic Services Manager, explained that it was a legal requirement for highways authorities to establish and support a LAF. In Lancashire, the three highways authorities (LCC, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council had agreed to establish a joint LAF for Lancashire.

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

The PROWAF had no statutory basis, meaning that there was no legal requirement for an area to have a PROW type committee.

Local authorities and other public sector bodies continued to experience major reductions in available resources. Councils were making significant service reductions, and focusing expenditure on statutory services and where maximum value could be obtained. The LLAF, as a statutory requirement, was not at risk. However, it was clear that the LLAF was operating in a changed environment, which represented both a challenge and an opportunity.

It was felt that this was a good time to consider where the Forum was at and what the future held. Areas to look at were:

- Public Suppliance
- Joint Working, i.e. Combined Authority
- Partnership Working with the LEP and Marketing Lancashire.

Ways had to be found to make the LLAFF work well and have the best impact, especially on policy decision making. It was difficult to see a role for both the LLAFF and the PROWAF. Both had items that overlapped.

One way for the LLAFF to go was to engage in Health and Wellbeing issues. At the Regulatory Committee meetings there could be an item on the agenda from the LLAFF.

The Terms of Reference stated that the LLAFF could have no more than 3 County Councillors. It was noted that some County Councillors on the LLAFF never attended the Forums. The County Councillors on the PROWAF had better attendance records. There must be better County Councillor representation on the LLAFF. If Forum Members felt the agenda for the LLAFF meetings had value then they would most likely attend. The Forum had to be worthwhile to attend.

The LLAFF would welcome working in partnership with Marketing Lancashire.

LCC was told by law to have a LLAFF. The original purpose of the LLAFF was to have an overall view of access. The Government had given some funding for the LLAFF when it was set up. This funding was for the servicing of the LLAFF.

It was put forward that both Forums become one and that existing members of the PROWAF suggest members from their Forum to sit on the LLAFF. It was noted that there were no representatives from the British Horse Society (BHS) on the LLAFF so maybe one of the BHS members from the PROWAF could join the LLAFF.

It was up to LCC to have both the LLAFF and PROWAF meetings, or just have the LLAFF with a few members from the PROWAF joining it. LCC would review the Terms of Reference and Membership of both Forums and come to a solution.

## **5. Update on Coastal Access in Lancashire**

Richard Toon, Chair of the LLAFF, informed the Forum that he had been invited by Danny Moores from Natural England to attend a site visit near Heysham regarding coastal access. The area of coastal access looked at was a stretch of land around Heysham nuclear power station. There was a rapidly changing environment around this area but progress with coastal access was good.

Richard informed the Forum he wished to establish a coastal access working group consisting of 4 to 5 people and asked for volunteers for the group Sue Harrison, David Kelly and Michael Prescott all volunteered along with Richard Toon.

## **6. Update on the Countryside Service**

David Goode, Public Rights of Way Manager, presented a summary on the Future of the Countryside Service.

In the Autumn of 2015 it had been agreed that the Lancashire Countryside Service would cease in April 2018. The main thrust would be that the 90 countryside recreation, open space and forestry sites would be passed to the voluntary sector to manage. This had not been possible.

LCC was therefore going to be maintaining much of the portfolio, only looking to transfer 13 sites initially. The Forum requested a list of the 13 sites for the next LLAFF meeting. It was very important to note that LCC had never said it was closing sites. It was looking to lift costs from the authority and the sites to be transferred would all have continued public access. Key sites at Beacon Fell, Wycoller, Spring Wood, 5 former railway lines (greenways) and many rural car parks and picnic sites would be retained.

LCC would be maintaining much of the portfolio and managing the sites in a condition that was suitable for continued informal recreation. There would inevitably be a reduction in ranger cover and visitor centres could well be closed in quieter periods, but all sites would remain accessible.

The new approach was being referred to as an asset management model where a planned approach to maintenance and investment ensured that the assets were retained in a condition suitable for public use. It was anticipated that an asset manager would oversee the key sites and whose main role would be:

- Develop an Asset Register
- Develop an Investment Programme
- Develop a programme of site inspections and delivery of local works programme
- Progress community asset transfers.
- Develop Local Management arrangements where local organisations (parish councils, volunteer groups, etc) operate and oversee specific sites to agreed prescriptions
- Develop external funding bids to see investment in sites
- Seek alternative methods of generating income

The involvement of local individuals, organisations and agencies would be explored and if any partner organisations felt that they could contribute to this then they should make contact with Tim Blythe, Countryside Service Manager.

A new volunteer offer would be developed this year. It was likely that a promoted programme of community action days and the development of Champion Volunteers would emerge in time.

## **7. Upland Chain Local Nature Programme**

Richard Toon informed the Forum that he had attended a meeting of the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Programme in March.

The LLAFF had proposed three projects for the Northern Upland Chain LNP.

- Seek to achieve a sustainable population of hen harriers

- Renewal / replacement of signage and furniture associated with open access land
- Work to conserve and renew upland peat areas.

Out of the three projects the Programme was looking at the conservation and renewal of peat areas. The Programme was looking sustaining the population of curlews and not hen harriers. The Programme was not looking into the renewal / replacement of signage and furniture associated with open access land.

It was suggested to have a presentation at a future LLAFF meeting on the use of land areas and different ways of farming.

## **8. Any Other Business**

Richard Toon informed the Forum that he would be attending the Local Access Forum Conference on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017 at the Carrs Lane Conference Centre, Birmingham.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 4 July at 10:00am in the Henry Bolingbroke Room (former Committee Room 'D') at County Hall, Preston.

I Young  
Director of Governance,  
Finance and Public Services

County Hall  
Preston