

Lancashire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 17th October, 2017 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

Chair

Cllr J R Toon

Committee Members

County Councillor Ian Brown
Arthur Baldwin
Peter Edge
Michael Helm
Ralph Henderson
David Kelly
Steve Kirby
Paul McKeown
Mike Prescott
Dean Spencer

Officers

Danny Moores, Natural England
Linda Andersen, LCC
Julie Paton, LCC
Debbie Thompson, LCC
Russell Walton, LCC
Andrew Hewitson, LCC

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received County Councillor Cosima Towneley, Ms Sue Harrison and David Goode, Public Rights of Way Manager.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 July 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

A link to the ROWIP had been circulated to LLAF Members and other relevant organisations and bodies. The Plan had also been sent to Natural England.

An update on Lancashire Countryside Service was circulated to the Forum. LCC's financial position remained a challenging one and the Council was experiencing an ongoing period of unprecedented financial pressure as a result of the national programme of austerity combined with significant increases in demand for public services. The Countryside Service was not immune from these pressures.

Regardless of what was thought of the Countryside Service, the valuable work it did, the dedicated staff and volunteers it had; there wasn't the funding available to support everything it wanted to and used to do.

Tim Blythe, Countryside Service Manager, had to think hard about what the Service focused its attention on. The Service had a portfolio of over 90 countryside recreation sites, open spaces, rural car parks, picnic areas and forestry sites; and its focus was to ensure they all stayed open for public use.

4. Update on Coastal Access in Lancashire

The Chair welcomed Danny Moores from Natural England North West Coastal Access Team and Julie Paton, Environmental Projects Officer from LCC, to the meeting, to update the Forum on coastal access in Lancashire.

The Forum was informed that the first section of the coastal path in Cumbria, from Allonby to Whitehaven was now open. 18 months ago Natural England commenced work on Stretches 5 and 6 of the coastal path. Stretch 5 was from Silecroft to Silverdale, and, Stretch 6 was from Silverdale to Cleveleys. A public hearing would be held in early December for objections. Natural England was continuing to make good progress on developing its proposals. The target for publishing the report on the coastal access had slipped by and now it was hoped it would be published in early 2018. Natural England hoped to arrange a fuller briefing for the Coastal Access Working Group of the LLAFC prior to the report being published. After the proposals were run by the Coastal Access Working Group there were 8 weeks for objections to be produced. The objections got run through the Planning Inspectorate. After the objections had been dealt with the Secretary of State then approved the report.

It was pointed out that the Morecambe Bay area was a very challenging and complex stretch for many reasons, but in particular due to the many important nature conservation sensitivities that could be found along much of the stretch of coast. Natural England were working on.

Natural England continued to get good support from LCC. They were working closely together on route alignment and identifying appropriate infrastructure. It was essential to have LCC on site visits.

Work had also begun on the final 2 stretches of coast in the North West: Stretch 7 – Silverdale to Pier Head, Liverpool and Stretch 8 – Birkenhead to the Welsh Border.

Natural England's focus at the moment however was very much on completing their work on the current stretch involving Lancashire (Silverdale to Cleveleys).

5. Linking the LLAF to Work that Improves Health and Wellbeing

Debbie Thompson, Health Equity, Welfare and Partnerships Manager, was welcomed to the Forum to discuss how to link the LLAF to work that improves health and wellbeing.

Public Health's priorities were promoting and protecting health and wellbeing, preventing ill-health, and prolonging life. Wellbeing ran through Lancashire County Council as an organisation in all of its functions. A safer, fairer and healthier Lancashire was what it was striving for.

One area of service Public Health was keen on was Healthy Lifestyles. This included looking at physical activity, weight management, diabetes, etc.

The Forum was informed that part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan was to make outdoor Lancashire more accessible. Unfortunately a lack of resources was inhibiting this. Simple maintenance of paths, signage, gates, etc, was deteriorating.

Communication with the public about what outdoor facilities were available was very important. Provision of information on these facilities was vital. Leaflets must be made available and social media had to be used more. Free use of public parks must also be encouraged for park fun runs, etc. The Forum was informed of a NHS project called "Couch to 5K". This was a running plan for absolute beginners. It hoped to inspire people to get themselves outdoors and keep going. The plan was to help the beginner gradually work up to running 5K in just 9 weeks. "Couch to 5K" worked because it started with a mix of running and walking to gradually build up fitness and stamina. The plan involved 3 runs a week, with a day of rest in between, and a different schedule for each of the 9 weeks.

It was suggested that the of the LLAF, Richard Toon, attend a future Public Health Specialist meeting to discuss how the LLAF could work in partnership with Public Health.

6. Update on the Cycling and Walking Strategy

The Chair welcomed Russell Walton, Assistant Partnership Development Officer (Health, Equity Welfare and Partnership), to the meeting.

The Forum was informed that there had been a rewrite of the Cycling and Walking Strategy. It now made reference to all users including horse riders.

There were three main themes to the framework of the strategy. The themes were Place, People and Promotion. Place was to do with building on Lancashire's existing walking and cycling assets and centres of excellence. It was also about developing a high quality, safe, comprehensive and joined up network with complimentary facilities such as cycle parking. People was about supporting people to walk and cycle for everyday and leisure journeys on Lancashire's active travel network. Promotion was about promoting the Lancashire walking and cycling offer and inspiring people to travel actively.

A report from the meeting of the Cycling and Walking Steering Group held on 27th October would be going to the January meeting of the Cabinet.

7. Free Use of Public Parks

The Chair welcomed Andrew Hewitson, Policy Officer, to the meeting. Andrew pointed out that park authorities did not have the jurisdiction to stop the public from using the parks. Only landowners had this right.

Parks were a place where groups and organisations met and recreated. Parks were valuable community assets and could be used for community events and these events might involve a commercial element. Parks were also the home of traditional businesses such as cafes. People travelled a long way to use parks and they had money to spend which was beneficial to the local economies.

Parks provided a place for people to exercise, to come together, to enjoy nature, and to play sports in a pleasant recreational space. Safety was a priority when it came to organised events in parks. National Parks wanted to engage more with well organised events. Forum Members were informed that the Bolton Ironman 2017 event had brought £2.3m to the local economy. Information and help on organising events could be found in "Your Guide to Sustainable Organised Recreational Events". A sustainable event would not only be one that could happen again and again, but one in which negative environmental, social and economic impacts were kept to an absolute minimum and positive impacts were encouraged, enhanced and celebrated.

Road closures with large, organised events was a problem. The Forum felt there should be an LCC officer in place to liaise with organisers of large events. Andrew Hewitson would look into this.

8. Update on Lost Ways Research

Linda Andersen, Public Rights of Way Officer, was welcomed to the meeting. Lost Ways research was about identifying routes not shown on the Definitive Map. There could be many historic routes which for a variety of reasons were not recorded on the Definitive Map. There was presumption in law that 'once a highway, always a highway'. This would stop in 2026 when historical claims to put a highway on the Definitive Map would no longer be a possible process.

It was important to gather information on Lost Ways and get it circulated to encourage wider involvement from Parish Councils, local historical groups and other interested parties. Public Rights of Way were meeting with parishes at the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) to discuss how the parishes could distribute Lost Ways information.

MARIO was Lancashire County Council's on-line Graphical Information System (GIS). It was helpful for looking up information on Lost Ways. It was a very useful resource and contained a huge amount of information in map form. The Forum was informed that the

Lancaster Group of Ramblers had a training programme on Lost Ways, especially around using the MARIO system.

Volunteers from U3A (University of the Third Age) groups could also be used for searching out information on Lost Ways. U3A was a UK movement of retired and semi-retired people who came together to continue their educational, social and creative interests.

Regarding the User Evidence Forms, Forum members felt they were too big and not very user friendly. It was noted that this was a national problem and it was felt that they needed to be slimmed down.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 16 January 2018 at 10:00am in the Duke of Lancaster Room (former Committee Room 'C') at County Hall, Preston.

I Young
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