

## **Lancashire Local Access Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th October, 2018 at 10.30 am in Savoy Suite 1 - County Hall - The Exchange**

**Present:**

**Chair**

J R Toon

**Committee Members**

County Councillor Ian Brown

Arthur Baldwin

Peter Edge

Ralph Henderson

David Kelly

Steve Kirby

Paul McKeown

Mike Prescott

**Officers**

Lorraine Mellodey, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita)

Paul Withington, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita)

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

Apologies were received from County Councillor Cosima Towneley and Keith Westley.

### **Tribute to Michael Helm**

The Chair, Richard Toon, paid tribute to Michael Helm who sadly passed away. Michael's history with the Lancashire Local Access Forum stretched back to its early days. He made a great contribution to the promotion and improvement of the public rights of way network in Lancashire and for working with colleagues in Lancashire and the Forest of Bowland on access and conservation issues.

He was a keen horse rider and had a great enthusiasm for bridleways and rural parishes. He was instrumental in promoting new routes. He was extremely knowledgeable and active in the local community.

A minute's silence was held in his memory.

### **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 July 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

It was pointed out that the numbers of members on the forum had dwindled and it was important to get the numbers up again to maintain the balance of interest. The Highways Authorities must be contacted for replacements.

Regarding the coastal access, concerns were raised over the delay of the Whitehaven to Silecroft route. The delays had lasted about 3½ years and the forum wanted to know what was going on. Natural England would be invited to the January meeting of LLAF to give an update.

In terms of wildfires the Met Office and Natural England were reviewing their methodology and it was noted that if warnings had been triggered earlier police and other services could have been more proactive. United Utilities were looking at drainage for the prevention of wildfires.

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

The Forum was informed that there was no more to report on the countryside service. Things were still the same. Tim Blythe, the Countryside Asset Manager, had been tasked with managing the county council's portfolio of 90 countryside recreation, open space, rural car parks, picnic and forestry sites and keeping them in a condition that was suitable for free and open recreation. Essentially keeping them safe. Around 45 of these were regarded as key recreation sites. That was those with infrastructure i.e. tracks, trails, visitor centres, toilets, car parks, etc.

Tim had also been tasked with looking to find new ways of working, a new volunteer offer, concessions, forestry harvesting, and, local management arrangements with districts, parishes and other local and volunteer organisations.

Member organisations could contact Tim if they could suggest ways they could help, sponsor a trail, man a visitor centre or make a donation for a piece of work.

### **5. Birds of Prey in the Lancashire's Upland Areas**

The Chair informed the Forum that there had been a report published by the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) on birds of prey. The report pointed out the Yorkshire Dales National Park's determination that the illegal persecution of birds of prey in the Dales should end so that iconic species can return to the uplands. The uplands should support healthy numbers of birds of prey but like many areas of northern England, the population of some of these species was low.

The hen harrier was currently the species in the spotlight and highlighted the current conflict between raptor conservation and shooting interests.

It was reported to the Forum that there had been one successful nesting of the hen harrier which had fledged four young in the YDNP.

## **6. Bolton Council - Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028**

The Forum was informed that Bolton Council had published its draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 and it was open for consultation. It was felt that the plan did the job and reflected Bolton's priorities. The ROWIP set out an assessment of the current rights of way network and identified steps which the council intended to take in partnership with various stakeholders to improve the network for the benefit of the public. The draft ROWIP contained a particular emphasis on the way the network was managed in the context of challenging public finances and addressing the challenges and opportunities which arose as a result of the continued high level of development within the council area. Bolton had an active Public Rights of Way Team.

The Forum enquired if there was any reference on discussions with Lancashire on initiatives. There had been a consultation on the last plan on what people would like in Bolton.

Bolton had a lot of Ministry of Defence land and in certain areas there was problems with red flagging.

It was pointed out to the Forum that the consultation was still open on the Bolton ROWIP. The LLAF complimented Bolton and stated it was vital to maintain contact with surrounding areas. There were still a lot of issues with cross boundaries. The LLAF would reflect back to Bolton.

It was noted that the countryside was now being used by people in different ways. It was felt that public services using the parks and countryside for commercial gain should be charged.

The issue of signage identifying the National Cycling Network (NCN) in Lancashire was raised. It was felt that signs were encouraging cyclists to dominate paths designed also to be used by pedestrians and horse riders. Some cyclists had an aggressive attitude when using the routes. Local authorities were not helping by using signs and road markings which appeared to give priority to cyclists rather than pedestrians and horse riders.

Lancashire County Council, which was responsible for signage on the paths, stated it was actively promoting the network as being suitable for different users. The charity Sustrans, which developed the NCN, stated it encouraged respectful use of the network for the benefit of everybody. Multi-user routes were getting busier and it was important that people respected the needs of others when using the routes. There was potential conflict with all user groups and user conflict had to be resolved.

The Forum felt it was important to discover from other relevant authorities what their strategies were on multi-user groups and also what provision they had regarding education on bridleways, etc. LCC was keen to encourage people, whether they were cyclists, horse riders or pedestrians, to get out and about to enjoy Lancashire's countryside.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Members of the Forum were surprised there had been no further information or updates on the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 4 especially with regards to the future consultation with stakeholders.

There were concerns from the Forum that no LCC officers had attended the meeting. There had to be a political will and an administrative will for the Lancashire Local Access Forum.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 15 January 2019 at 10:30am in the Duke of Lancaster Room (former Committee Room 'C') at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston