

Lancashire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th April, 2019 at 10.45 am in Blackburn Town Hall, Ground Floor, Conference Room 1

Present:

Chair

J R Toon

Committee Members

County Councillor Ian Brown
County Councillor Cosima Towneley
Peter Edge
David Kelly
Mike Prescott

Officers

David Goode, Lancashire County Council
Lorraine Mellodey, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita)
Paul Withington, Blackburn with Darwen (Capita)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Arthur Baldwin, Paul McKeown and Keith Westley.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Regarding the Birds of Prey in Lancashire's Upland Areas the Special Protection Areas (SPA) were not just for Bowland but outside the area as well. The Chair, Richard Toon, informed the forum that he had received a positive letter back from Defra regarding hen harriers.

On the subject of Level Crossings on the Rail Network, the Memorandum of Understanding had been published on Monday 8 April and it was non-binding.

4. Coastal Access Update

The Chair welcomed Danny Moores from Natural England to the meeting. The forum was that the coastal access situation was now a good news story as Natural England had finally heard from Defra. The prospect of a continuous path around Lancashire's coast had moved a step closer after it was announced that plans for part of the route between Silverdale and Cleveleys were to be published in August 2019. Landowners would then have eight weeks in which they could raise any objections and the public could also submit

comments. The only stretch of coastal path open in the North West ran from Allonby to Whitehaven in Cumbria.

Members were told that the 50 mile trail would be split into smaller stretches for the purposes of the consultation period in an attempt to prevent an objection to one part of it, delaying the project still further.

The proposal had to be reviewed and approved by the Secretary of State before the creating of the path could commence. This could not happen until after any objection had been heard by the Planning Inspectorate, which could hold things up for six months or more. Natural England had created a series of mini reports which could be approved in their own right and work could be started on those sections right away.

The forum was informed that plans for the next stretch of path to be created in Lancashire was due to follow in January 2020. This would run from Cleveleys, around the Fylde coast and then beyond the county's borders to Liverpool, although this could be complicated as there was a need for a new foot crossing over the River Douglas. This could be beyond the coastal footpath programme to fund and cash could be required from a third party source.

The Chair, Richard Toon, praised Natural England for the work it had done so far.

5. British Horse Society 2026

The LLAFF was informed the definitive map which documented rights of way would be frozen by the Government in 2026 and any access which existed before 1949, but had not been formally recorded, would be lost.

There was an appeal from the forum for help to track down multi-use paths which could be accessed by horseriders and cyclists, as well as walkers. These higher rights of way were thought to account for about 30% of Lancashire's 3,500 miles of public footpaths. It was noted that the right type of person was needed to look through the maps and find the necessary evidence.

About 75% of the work that needed to be done and looked at would not prove anything. The work had to be evidence based and you had to be able to prove it on the balance of probabilities.

The British Horse Society was working the Lancashire County Council's Rights of Way Team to bring a full set of maps to the region. Some others were available online. The forum was warned about the fallout from failing to identify a complete list of rights of way. The forum was informed that most of Lancashire did not currently have any volunteers researching routes.

The Lancashire Local Access Forum resolved to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment to ask to review the time limit to update the definitive map.

6. Access Land in Lancashire - Officer Responsibilities

The Lancashire Local Access Forum was informed that there was uncertainty at which set of officers looked at access areas. The forum heard that the signage and infrastructure which helped the public navigate around the countryside was in poor condition and falling apart. Much of the signage and infrastructure had been put in place over 20 years ago.

It was stated that there was only Tim Blythe, Countryside Service Manager, and one other officer to look after all the countryside sites. There was nobody to carry out the work on the access land which was open to the public. If something was reported as being dangerous then it would be looked at.

7. The Future of the Forums

A proposal was presented about reducing the Lancashire Local Access Forum and Public Rights of Way Access Forum's four meetings a year to one larger, combined annual meeting.

It was felt that the authority could not see what was being achieved by the LLAF. There were important items on the agenda but nothing was being achieved, there were just discussions.

It was proposed that council staff could make relevant presentations at a new annual meeting based on questions submitted by forum members beforehand.

The Government legislation which established the Lancashire Local Access Forum stipulated that it must meet at least twice a year but members were told there was nothing to stop them from having informal meetings whenever they choose.

The Chair stated a decision would be made at the next meeting in July.

8. Any Other Business

There was no Any Other Business.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 16 July 2019 at 10:30am in the Duke of Lancaster Room (former Committee Room 'C').

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Director of Corporate Services

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