

**MINUTES OF THE WEST PENNINE MOORS AREA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD THURSDAY 31 MARCH 2011
IN WHITTAKER'S MILL, HELMSHORE TEXTILE MUSEUM**

Present:

Funding council and company members

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor P Evans (substitute for Councillor J Eaton)
County Councillor P Malpas (Chair)

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Councillor C Thayne

United Utilities

Neville Kidd
Hazel Gannaway

Other council members

Councillor D Boden OBE Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor B Essex Rossendale Borough Council

Officers in attendance

Fiona Cruchley	Lancashire County Council
Bronwen Earnshaw	Countryside Services and Witton Park Manager, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Ian Hart	Countryside Officer, Lancashire County Council
Elliott Lorimer	Lancashire County Council
Tamzin Percival	Rossendale Borough Council
Malcolm Russell	Head of Service (Greenspace), Bolton Council

Sharon Montgomerie Secretary, Lancashire County Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from County Councillors Eaton and Iqbal, Councillors Hall and Ismail and Bill Farrell from Bolton Council, Councillor Higgins from Bury Metropolitan Borough Council and Councillors Rigby and Hayes from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Councillor Marie Gray from Chorley Borough Council and Councillor Judith Addison from Hyndburn Borough Council.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (9 November 2010)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 9 November 2010 were agreed and accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising were raised.

4. Progress Reports on 2010/11 WPM Programme

Blackburn with Darwen Council

Bronwen Earnshaw tabled a document which included several photographs which highlighted work recently undertaken:

- Woodland management work in Sunnyhurst Wood

In light of preparation of a habitat management plan for the wood, a programme of works has been devised, which concentrate on the southern side of the wood designed to tackle the beech regeneration on the steep slopes. Work has been carried out by contractors and BTCV volunteers throughout February and March.

Section 106 (developer) funding has been for the continuation of this work next winter.

- Interpretation on the Tacklers Trail, Witton Weavers Way

Work continues along the Tacklers Trail. There were footpath improvements along the edge of the moors last year and further work is planned along this same section this year. As part of these improvements new interpretation signage is being installed along the route.

- Access Improvements leading to Darwen Tower
- Access works have been carried out up to the moor from Roddlesworth side.
- Improved access on Witton Weavers Way – replacement of stiles with kissing gates
- More access improvements have taken place around the Turton, Barlow and Chapeltown areas – in total 10 stiles, most in poor states of repair have been removed and replaced by kissing gates.

Councillor Thayne highlighted the forthcoming royal visit to Witton Park by Prince William.

The Chair thanked Bronwen for her report.

Bolton Council

Malcolm Russell was in attendance to present the report prepared by Bill Farrell, who was taking early retirement from Bolton Council. The Chair asked that thanks be recorded on behalf of the Committee to Bill for his hard work and commitment.

Malcolm reported progress to the Committee, as set out in the report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Works included:

- Access improvements on Smithills Moor adjacent to Dean Mills Reservoir
- Habitat creation, access improvements and heritage restoration works in the upper Bradshaw Valley
- Eradication of Japanese knotweed and Himalayan Balsam in Raveden Plantation, Brownstones Quarry, Ousel Nest, the Upper Bradshaw Valley and Bridge Street

- Enhancement of the interface between Smithills Hall Grounds and Raveden Plantation
- Access provision, habitat enhancement and heritage interpretation in Dog Kennel and Upper Raveden Plantations, Smithills
- Habitat creation and access improvements at Bridge Street proposed Local Nature Reserve, Horwich
- Wilderswood Plantation, Horwich
The Corsican Pine element of this woodland had for some years been suffering from pine needle cast fungus. This had now resulted in excessive die-back and large numbers of trees dying. The Council, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, had consequently decided to clear, fell and thin large areas of the woodland. These cleared areas would be replanted with native broadleaf species including sessile oak, rowan, birch, alder etc. this spring.

Lancashire County Council

Ian Hart took the Committee through the update report which he tabled at the meeting. Works had taken place on:

- Proposed repairs to White Coppice – Great Hill, which had been planned to be implemented in two stages, although Ian advised that stage two (significant resurfacing works) was now unlikely to be pursued.
- Smithills Estate – Burnt Edge, replacement of derelict access gates, surfaces and drainage
- Renewal of CROW Access Signage
- Brinscall Plantation Circular Access Works
- Healey Nab Improvements
- Ranger Patrols / Monitoring and Maintenance of Routes
- Projects including WPM Mountain Bike Trail feasibility study, improvements at Wards Reservoir, regrading work to the West Pennine Feeder Route between Roddlesworth Information Centre and Darwen Moor and improved access at Rivington.

The Chair thanked Ian for his report and asked for questions from Members. Councillor Evans sought clarity in what help was available for landowners and farmers in respect of dry stone walling and it was confirmed that the only help available came from Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Schemes.

Councillor Essex commended the hard work and commitment of volunteers in progressing many of these schemes, comments supported by other Members.

Councillor Evans asked for clarification on how we inform other parts of the country about the West Pennine Moors; Elliott Lorimer advised that website was the primary method, and that the limiting factor was cost. He advised that WPM publicity material was made available to all Lancashire Based Information Centres.

Elliott Lorimer credited Ian Hart with the success of the Healey Nab Mountain Bike Trail, and advised the Committee that as Ian would be leaving the Authority, this would be his last meeting.

The Chair asked that his thanks and that of the Committee be offered to Ian for his expertise, hard work and dedication over the years and that this be formally recorded in the minutes.

The Committee **resolved** to note all three update reports.

5. Ranger and Information Services report

Neville Kidd tabled the United Utilities update report at the meeting. He gave details in respect of an update on the SCAMP 2 project which was referenced on page 2 of the report.

Hazel Gannaway, who was also present, took the Committee through the remainder of the report and spoke about recent works that had recently been undertaken at:

- Rivington Estate
- Jumbles, Entwistle and Haslingden Estate, and
- Roddlesworth Estate

Neville advised that improved access in these areas however, often attracted access by other vehicles.

Elliott Lorimer went on to say that in the current financial climate, there is likely to be a change in emphasis away from the development of new routes and onto the maintenance of existing ones.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

6. West Pennine Moors Capital and Revenue Budget 2011/12

Elliott Lorimer went through the report that had been despatched with the agenda in some detail. He reported that following written notification from Bolton and verbal notification from Blackburn with Darwen Council, there would be 100% reductions in financial contributions to the West Pennine Moors budget for 2011/12.

In light of this, the County Council was forced to examine what its contributions would be. He advised that spend would now be focussed on areas which could attract match funding from Natural England (NE). However, he wished Members to note that despite the cuts, both Blackburn with Darwen and Bolton Councils remained generally supportive of partnership arrangements.

Elliott also outlined the key staff changes that would affect the partnership:

- Ian Hart was leaving the County Council at the end of the 2010/11 financial year,
- Elliott was taking up the Lead Officer role for the Forest of Bowland AONB,
- Fiona Cruchley was taking on lead officer role for the West Pennine Moors in place of Elliott

Partner authorities currently have a lead point of contact for the Partnership; Elliott asked if they could seek to maintain such an arrangement into the future to help sustain the Partnership during these difficult times.

Additionally, a similar request was made to Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council to continue to clerk the meetings of the Rivington and Brinscall Advisory Group (LAG) and for Blackburn with Darwen and Bolton Councils to consider doing the same for their respective LAGs.

Councillor Essex noted that several months ago, it had been proposed that the partnership be disbanded altogether and so he wished to congratulate the County Council for attempting to maintain some level of partnership structure/working. He went on to say he hoped that in a few years the partnership would be re-invigorated, a wish which was echoed by other Members.

Councillor Evans also supported and recognised that during this period of entrenchment some form of scaling back was necessary, but also hoped for recovery in the fullness of time.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report and supported the proposed WPM Partnership Funding, Staffing and Partner Officer Support arrangements for 2011/12. They also **resolved** that the Partnership should move forward as best it can, especially given the circumstances and the pressure partners faced.

7. Future of the West Pennine Moors Partnership

Elliott Lorimer went through the report that had been despatched with the agenda. The West Pennine Moors Partnership was seriously affected by these reductions, as noted in the report on partnership budgets for 2011/12. This report attempted to set out a future for the West Pennine Moor Partnership within this new funding landscape.

- ***West Pennine Moors Area Management Committee***
The Committee will continue to be managed by the County Council, meeting once a year (in early summer) to update on partnership activity.
- ***West Pennine Moors Technical Officer Group*** (incorporating current Partnership Management Group and Working Groups [Access, Biodiversity, Tourism])
This group will be managed and administered by the County Council and meet between two and four times a year to co-ordinate and monitor the delivery of the WPM Management Plan.
- ***Local Advisory Groups*** (for Darwen Moor and Roddlesworth, Rivington and Brinscall, Turton a North Bolton)

These community liaison groups will continue to be managed at the discretion of the relevant local authorities (namely Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Bolton Council, respectively), holding between two and four meetings a year.

- **"Task and Finish" Groups**

The partnership will keep open the option to ask the County Council to establish a "task and finish" group; for example, to develop a funding bid.

Elliott also advised that the regeneration company "Pennine Prospects" (formerly Scospa) with which he works had recently made an offer of help with staff and resources to the WPM Partnership. This was a natural alliance given that the Landscape Character Area of the South Pennines is the West Pennine Moors.

Members welcomed the offer of help from Pennine Prospects and also received some re-assurance that United Utilities would continue to seek to maintain their commitment to the Partnership, which was welcome news in the face of ongoing budget reductions.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report, and agree that the WPM Lead Officer implement the proposed future partnership arrangements as set out in the report.

8. West Pennine Moors Landscape Partnership

Elliott reported that since the meeting of the Area Management Committee in November 2010 on the proposed West Pennine Moors Landscape Partnership, progress has been made in the development of a Stage 1 bid to Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnerships:

- Expression of interest forms containing almost 20 project ideas were received from partners submitted to partnership lead officer.
- Second bid development workshop was held on Thursday 25 November 2010 at the Barlow Institute to further develop these project ideas and look at how these can form an integrated programme of project activity.
- Project steering group established and met in early January 2011.
- Agreed the partnership be titled 'Three Towers' Landscape Partnership.
- Key community engagement partners (Groundwork Pennine Lancashire, Mid Pennine Arts and the Wildlife Trust) met in February 2011 to discuss working together on co-ordinated programme of activity.

Despite this good progress, in early January 2011, the WPM Lead Officer made the difficult decision to postpone the submission of a Stage 1 bid until the next application deadline in early 2012. This was as a result of increasing funding and management uncertainties for the West Pennine Moors partnership, which have since become a reality.

The next steps in the development of this bid are as follows:

- Establish project lead officer and support (given future unavailability of current partnership officers).
- Project partners agree a lead body to "front" the bid.
- Re-affirm support from key local authority partners
- Full development of project ideas into an integrated programme and Stage 1 bid to HLF Landscape Partnerships in February 2012

The Committee **resolved** to note the report and gave its support to the proposed Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership bid for the West Pennine Moors.

9. Any Other Business

None discussed.

10. Dates, times and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Partnership was to be held on Tuesday 5 July 2011, venue to be confirmed.

The Committee also wished to pass on their thanks to the staff at Helmshore Textile Museum for their hospitality for this meeting.

Ian Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor