

Lancashire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Special Meeting held on Tuesday, 24th November, 2020 at 10.00 am in Zoom Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Members of the Public Rights of Way Access Forum were invited to attend

Present:

Chair

Richard Toon, Independent

Attendees

David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Steve Kirby
Chris Kynch, Lancashire Association of Local Councils
County Councillor Stephen Clarke
Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council
Neil Herbert, Lancaster Ramblers Association

Officers

Julie Paton, Public Rights of Way LCC

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from County Councillor Ian Brown, County Councillor Cosima Towneley, County Councillor Jimmy Eaton, Jenny Allen, Arthur Baldwin, Adam Briggs, Peter Edge, Rosemary Hogarth, Ms Chris Peat, Michael Prescott, Paul Withington and Councillor Phil Riley.

2. Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair pointed out that the LLAF first made representations in March 2020 on the northern part of the coastal path from the Cumbrian Border down to Cleveleys. The LLAF had concentrated on the bigger issue of the Pilling embankment. The reason for this was that the forum hoped to enhance the speed at which the process was carrying on. The forum wanted the footpath put in quickly.

It was pointed out that during Covid there was a flurry of illegal signs put up to stop people using rights of way. The LLAF had asked the Public Rights of Way Team to take urgent action on this which they had done.

It was noted that the Regional Access Forum had still continued which the Chairs of the Local Access Forums attended. It was important for these meetings to continue. The Chair pointed out that the last Regional Access Forum Zoom meeting was cancelled as there was no funding for it.

3. Notification of publication of Coastal Access Reports - Cleveleys to Pier Head, Liverpool

The Chair wished to thank all the staff and Natural England and all the local authorities involved with the coastal path.

Julie Paton, LCC Public Rights of Way Officer, stated that it was Lancashire County Council's responsibility to implement the line of the trail once it had been agreed by the Secretary of State.

One issue with the path was at the River Douglas. The biggest concern here was that the path stopped as there was a lack of a crossing. The forum was informed that LCC would not be making any representations on this section as it felt there were no areas it could make a difference to on the proposals. It was pointed out that Hesketh with Becconsall Parish Council was looking to do some of its own work which was considering the option of using the redundant pipe bridge to become a pedestrian bridge. LCC was looking at where the path could cross the River Douglas and where the correct place would be. It would be costly as the river was tidal and very large. The Ramblers Association stated that it was regrettable there was not a crossing over the River Douglas and that funding should be provided for one. LCC had ruled out where it could not put a bridge due to various circumstances but had not ruled in where it could. It was also noted that there was no financial support to put a bridge in due to the cost.

Regarding maps CPH 3e and 3f, another place of controversy was around Hutton Marsh and the embankments near the Dolphin Pub. It was thought that a route along either embankment would provide better views. There were exclusions to existing public rights of way here due to the protection of nesting birds. Where the path had been ruled out was due the Lancashire County Council and Natural England being aware of existing nesting birds and would be managed as a bird nesting site. It was pointed out that nature conservation had to be balanced with access rights. It was stated that LCC was not making any representations on this area. LCC was not the landowner. The legislation looked at access and whether it was appropriate access and took into account nature conservation concerns.

The forum was informed that the whole of the English Coastal Path allowed access for pedestrians and their dogs. There were some sections where the dogs must be on leads and some sections here they did not. The only reason where access would be denied would be for nature conservation. The Ramblers Association's response would be to the different standards of rules around the country. The Association felt there was no uniformity in decision making across the country.

Regarding Map CPH 3g and the section of the path near the old Longton tip which was now grassed over, the Ramblers Association felt the path could go further to the west than what was being proposed. They felt the path should continue running south along the side of Little Hoole Marsh. It was noted that existing rights of way were being used on this section.

On Map CPH 2a, Brades Lane, Freckleton to Toll House Bridge, there were concerns over where the path ran alongside the dual carriageway. This was due to a combination of nesting birds and access. Nature conservation was the reason the path ran alongside the dual carriageway. There had been discussions with the landowners around here and several route options had been proposed and Natural England believed the path alongside the dual carriageway was the best option. It pointed out that one of the issues for Natural England was that these were statutory protected sites for birds. A majority of the area was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Ramblers Association was in discussions internally regarding its response. The LLAF felt there needed to be a realistic alternative proposed that fitted in with all the criteria.

Regarding Map CPH 2e, Preston Go-Kart Track to Wallend Road, Riversway, Preston, it was noted that the path was on the north side of the race track going east. The Ramblers Association felt a short part of the path could go east and then south between the two tracks towards the river and the run along the river bank. The reason the path ran along the north side of the track was to do with land use. Even though it was open access land there was motocross taking place on it. There was concern for people's safety if they walked between the tracks. The Ramblers Association had agreed an alternative route to send to Natural England.

Regarding Map CPH 4a, Tarleton Lock to Douglas Avenue, Tarleton, there was concern over the path between Sutton Avenue and Ashland Gardens. Hesketh with Beconsall Parish Council was looking at preparing their own footpath which deviated slightly from the Natural England path. At high tide the proposed route from Natural England could be submerged. LCC stated that if the parish council had a better line for the path it should raise this with Natural England.

It was pointed out to the forum that objections to the path that would be sent to Planning Inspectorate could only come from landowners. Representations from LCC might not be picked up by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Chair, Richard Toon, would be doing a submission on behalf of the Lancashire Local Access Forum to Natural England.

4. Any Other Business

There was no Any Other Business.

5. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston