

MINUTES

Cumbria Local Access Forum meeting held on Thursday 25th February 2016 at The Courts, Carlisle

Attendees:					
Charles Ecroyd (Chairman)	CE	Jim McQueen (Vice-Chairman)	JM	David Gibson (CCC)	DG
Elizabeth Barraclough	EB	Oliver Coles	OC	Ron Lyon	RL
Chris Lyon	CL	Kathy Miles	KM	Bridget Pickthall	BP
Sylvia Woodhead	SW	Phil Greenup (CCC)	PG		

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, and Phil Greenup (Regulatory Services Senior Manager) was introduced to members.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Nick Cotton, Alan Dougherty, Terry Jolley, Elizabeth Mallinson, Mike Murgatroyd and David Young. The Chairman noted again that none of the County Council Members were present and acknowledged that Nick Cotton had sent his apologies. A LAF member commented that it was a particular shame that the Barrow county councillor member on the forum had not attended the previous meeting, though held where he lives.

CE confirmed that the letter to Council Leader Stewart Young, regarding the lack of attendance by Councillor Murphy, would be sent shortly.

CE

3 Public Participation

No representations or questions had been received from members of the public.

4 Disclosure of Interest

There was no disclosure of interest by any member in relation to agenda items.

5 Exclusion of Press and Public

There was no requirement to exclude members of the public or the press.

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were accepted as accurate and ready to be uploaded to the website though with the following wording substituted in 11:

“SW and BP reported that the path through the Candle Factory at Lindal-in-Furness had been extinguished, showing that the Map Modification Order process can work quickly when in favour of the landowner. [It is to be hoped that the proposed improvements to the alternative path have been made.] BP and SW had also visited a proposed diversion of the footpath crossing a farmyard, where the farmer had shown them a well thought out alternative.”

7 Matters Arising

7.1 **8.4** DG (Senior Countryside Access Officer) reported that there was nothing further on Cow Green for now as Durham CC were negotiating with the farmer/landowner involved.

7.2 **8.6** SW would be unable to attend the Marble Quarry public inquiry on 15th March.

- 7.3 **9.** CE had yet to hear back from Ken Taylor and Geoff Wilson about the fencing database.
- 7.4 **9.** CE had received a phone call from Ken Taylor who had been engaged by one of the consultants in relation to the ground work for the new water pipeline. DG had heard nothing recently; he added that 17 ROWs outside of the national park would be affected. CE reminded that United Utilities were committed to making it as easy as possible for the ROWs to remain open and any closure would be minimised as far as possible. However, DG clarified that some paths would have to be closed, as any bridge would involve heavy machinery/diggers, requiring the path to be closed for safety reasons.
- 7.5 **11.** Jo Cleary had been somewhat disappointed with David Gibson's response regarding the situation with the Greenodd footbridge. DG had since contacted Sustrans, who again confirmed that they were content for it to remain a footbridge and for cyclists to dismount.
- 7.6 **11.** Ron Lyon explained that work on producing a map of access for the less able in the Penrith area was on the 'back-burner' because people were busy with the flood response.
- 7.7 **13.** The December meeting on the Allonby to Gretna section of the coastal trail was deferred because sections of the proposed path had been washed away. It would now take place on 11th March in Kendal.

8 Chairman's Actions

- 8.1 CE informed members that sadly the portfolio-holder John McCreesh had died. He had been replaced by Janet Willis. CE will write to her and make himself available for a meeting with her, as well as invite her to a future LAF meeting. She already knows of Countryside Access and has sponsored a ROWIP in the past.
- 8.2 The last date for objections to the national park extensions has been and gone and as far as CE is aware there were none made. He has spoken to Nick Cotton about the Yorkshire Dales National Park and also Dave Robinson at the Lake District National Park Authority. One suggestion that has been made is that membership is shared; with members sitting on each other's LAFs. There will be little progress on this until the three Access Authorities have decided among themselves on possible ways forward.

CE

PG confirmed that discussions had been started with the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. The big issue would come down to money; therefore until it is known if the national parks will receive funding for the extra ROWs, it will not be possible to move forward on this. It appears at present as though the YDNPA are keen to keep a YD Access Forum covering the whole of the Yorkshire Dales, whereas the Lake District may like to see a single LAF for the whole of Cumbria (minus the Yorkshire Dales area). It would be up to the membership of a joint LAF to manage priorities so that one area's interests did not outweigh the other's. The three access authorities need to liaise on the way ahead.

- 8.3.1 An email from Simon Stainer, Natural England (NE), had been received about proposals at Mallerstang to slow the flow of water courses. CE confirmed that he will attend the meeting in April; and that all relevant parties had been included in the circulation except for the Yorkshire Dales. Simon Stainer had thanked CE for his suggestion that YD also be invited and for alerting him to this oversight.
- 8.3.2 CE observed that it is currently perceived that there is a need to stop water cascading off the fells during heavy rainfall events. There is a fine line to be drawn regarding storing water: tree planting, bogs, paying landowners to store water etc. He wished to flag up that many more applications for woodland planting on Open Access land are likely to be made. This makes the setting up of the fencing database all the more important.

9 Membership

- 9.1 CE had invited Jo Cleary to extend her membership. However, she declined, saying she felt that due to other pressures she had been unable to contribute much to the LAF over the previous couple of years. She would try to think of someone else who might cover cycling on the LAF.
- 9.2 Having now retired and moved to Scotland, David Young has stood down from Cumbria LAF. CE observed that he and David had first attended a CLAF meeting in 2004 and he had been a valued member for many years.
- 9.3 CE asked members to encourage interested people to consider joining the LAF.

10 Members' News

- 10.1 OC had of late followed the Health & Wellbeing Board online, but agenda items had not been particularly relevant to countryside access. The Public Health Alliance is a link between local and the umbrella organisation and is multi-sided including the Third Sector. OC was not aware of anything particularly relating to countryside access and wondered if anyone else was aware; and whether it was worth him continuing to monitor this.

PG felt that the Public Health Alliance sat at such a strategic level that it may not be worthwhile, but the various local H&W boards, which set their own agendas, are certainly worth engaging with. In each locality area there are public health managers.

JM observed that OC's attendance would not only be to feed back to the LAF, but also to make them aware of the LAF and its role, to which OC responded that he had initially been welcomed, but was subsequently looked on as a member of the public and observer.

PG would take an action for the Director to find a mechanism for the H&W Director of Public Health to link in with the LAF and Countryside Access in order to get people using the ROW network.

PG

- 10.2 JM had heard recently about a presentation in Morecambe about a proposal to build a bridge across Morecambe Bay, with wind turbines on it and whatever was needed to support the electricity cable under the Bay. DG had heard a similar rumour of this new link.

JM would be happy to represent Cumbria LAF at the annual Morecambe Bay conference on 9th May and this was agreed.

At the last LAF meeting JM had reported that Suzanna Bleakley and Ian Stewart had agreed to work together to produce a draft contract to engineers for the Arside viaduct. At present this is still awaited.

JM reported for information that Ordnance Survey are willing to take back old OS maps. They can be sent back to OS for £1.50 towards a new map, the amount per returned map decreasing the more that are sent.

- 10.3 SW and BP had gone to look at a footpath diversion only to find that the path had been washed away in places and it was necessary to find out who the landowner was. A second visit had therefore been necessary, as the first had been a waste of time. She thought that DG's suggestion during the LAF's session in the morning about volunteers being eyes and ears to report problems on ROWs was good news.
- 10.4 CE reported that Mike Murgatroyd had forwarded a CLAF response to a scoping report on a proposed mining application submitted by West Coast Mining which could materially affect a PROW. In the absence of any substance relating to the PROW CLAF was unable to endorse any proposal.

11 News from National and Regional Access Bodies

- 11.1 CE confirmed his intention to attend the northern National LAF conference in Leeds on 1st March and will report back.
- 11.2 The next Northwest Regional LAF meeting will be held in Manchester on 12th April.

12 Coastal Access Update

The February Northwest Coastal Access update had been circulated by KM. There is to be a meeting with Danny Moores at Murley Moss on Friday morning, 11th March. CE encouraged all LAF members to attend if they can and to let him know as soon as possible.

DG had spoken before about the conflict between access and nature conservation on the third Cumbria stretch of the coastal trail. As a result the proposed route is looking increasingly likely to be on the road for a considerable distance in order to avoid land used by Brent geese, despite the fact that the bulk of use of any coastal trail will be in the summer and not in winter months when the geese are present. Cumbria County Council (CCC) are seen by NE as a contractor and have little say in this matter. Members were very concerned about this matter particularly as the Government's instruction/proposals are based on a coastal path with minimum off-road sections. CE undertook to raise this at the 11th March meeting.

CE

DG reported that Section 2 was going very well, particularly around St Bees Head. The section to the south was certainly going to provide a considerable amount of new coastal access. Section 2 was easy to do, with a lot of consultation, and if there was damage due to winter storms, the path can be rolled back.

EB asked who could be responsible for making the case for going through conservation areas and was this something that the LAF could or should be doing. CE felt the LAF should wait until after the 11th March meeting to do this and also to say that they had been aware of the conflict between the two arms of NE: Nature Conservation, and Access. If there is conflict between interpretation of the Act and implementation of access, this should also be highlighted.

SW suggested there may be a need to do some homework on this before the 11th March meeting as her recollection was that the path should only in exceptional circumstances be diverted on to the public highway. JM suggested that following the meeting, if necessary, the LAF should write to the NE director responsible.

13 Countryside Access Work Programme

13.1 Countryside Access Progress Report

There was little to report on the countryside access work programme, on hold from 6th December 2015 to 1st January 2016, as CA team members were diverted to flood response, tackling the huge amount of damage caused by the exceptional rainfall. Members fully understood this situation.

- 13.1.1 • PROW Enquiries (defect reports) programme
The number of enquiries has gone up. The new apprentice is very good and has taken to survey work with great confidence.
- 13.1.2 • Coastal Access Project – England Coast Path
Looking at scrub clearance at the airport on Walney where there can be access. NE will be starting Section 5. DG had asked if some work could be done on the Lancashire side of the border before coming to Cumbria.

13.1.3 • National Trail Maintenance Programme

The Hadrian's Wall Path, heavily damaged in the Carlisle area, has diversions in place. A section of the Pennine Bridleway has been washed out a bit in the region of The Clouds. The Pennine Way has suffered nothing significant.

Waiting to see what defence rock-armour works Network Rail will come forward with at Flimby on the coast path to protect their asset.

13.1.4 • Major PROW bridges programme

Diversion at Abbeytown because Rumbling bridge has been damaged.

CA are doing standard bridge inspections themselves. Major structures are flagged up to Highways engineers for inspection.

DG informed members of Ramblers' contribution to help pay for the repairs to Rothay Bridge following flood damage, as reported in the Westmorland Gazette the previous week: "Ramblers to the Rescue". Members were very pleased to hear of Ramblers' help.

13.1.5 • Mapping orders

Mapping orders have been easy because of closures. If there is a bridge missing there is a sign to say so; people can still enjoy the walk to and from the bridge. However, where there is a landslip the footpath is shown as closed.

To a question from a LAF member, DG replied that this information was not on the website.

13.2 Reorganisation

Phil Greenup updated members on staffing in Environment and Regulatory Services which had been through two restructures. CA will have DG and six countryside officers, amounting to the equivalent of 6¾, from April. The work budget has not been reduced but the staffing budget has.

CE contacted the three CCC members asking for their comments on the proposed staff reorganisation to which Elizabeth Mallinson and Nick Cotton responded. This led to an email from Angela Jones [Asst Director Environment & Community Services] which mainly covered his questions about staff cuts and reorganisation within an already depleted unit. She indicated that she wanted to organise a meeting to discuss these matters as well as the extensions of NP boundaries, Flood Recovery and the use of volunteers. She proposed an initial meeting with Phil Greenup which had so far not taken place.

PG observed that CCC has to balance the budget and the sad reality is that the service will have to be reduced to statutory duties. CCC recognise the importance of the ROW network and it may be that alternative ways of working may have to be found.

CE reminded of the ramifications of 2001. The message that Cumbria is closed for business needs to be countered for the sake of the Cumbrian economy. ROWs are of paramount importance. The LAF will be interested to hear what CCC ideas for alternative ways of working are going to be. CE restated his concern that too many councillors have little idea what the LAF is or of its role – and that they should have consulted with the LAF and taken them with them in considering cuts.

EB observed that in some areas it is big business offering and putting money into recovery.

CE thanked PG for his attendance and appreciated the fact that a more senior officer was present for the first time in a considerable while.

14 **Feedback from morning Training Session / ROWIP Best Practice presentation**

CE asked DG to convey thanks to Chris Graham for an extremely useful piece of work. His paper should be put on the LAF website and be circulated to CALC, CCC Members and anyone else appropriate.

15 Revised Dates of Future Meetings

The next CLAF meeting is now rescheduled to Thursday 21st April 2016 – venue tba.

Proposed dates of further meetings were also revised and are now as follows:

Wednesday 20th July 2016

Thursday 20th October 2016

Tuesday 17th January 2017