

MINUTES

Cumbria Local Access Forum meeting held on Thursday 21st April 2016 at Newbiggin village hall near Penrith

Attendees:					
Charles Ecroyd (Chairman)	CE	Jim McQueen (Vice-Chairman)	JM	David Gibson (CCC)	DG
Elizabeth Barraclough	EB	Douglas Chalmers	DC	Oliver Coles	OC
Terry Jolley	TJ	Chris Lyon	CL	Ron Lyon	RL
Kathy Miles	KM	Mike Murgatroyd	MM	Bridget Pickthall	BP
Sylvia Woodhead	SW	Phil Greenup (CCC)	PG	David Robinson (LDNPA)	DR

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, including Phil Greenup (Regulatory Services Senior Manager) and Dave Robinson (Lake District National Park Authority).

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Alan Dougherty, Nick Cotton, and Elizabeth Mallinson, the two county councillors being unable to attend because the LAF meeting clashed with the Full Council/AGM meeting.

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 with the following amendments:

10.1, last line but one – 'Board' to be replaced with 'Director of Public Health'

10.3 – change 'SW' to 'SW and BP'

12, 2nd para – after 'contractor' insert 'by NE'

13.2, 3rd para – amend to 'the service will have to be reduced to statutory duties'

7 Matters Arising

7.1 **14** DG (Senior Countryside Access Officer) will ask Chris Graham to get his ROWIP paper ready to put on the CLAF website and for circulation. **DG**

7.2 **7.2** SW had been unable to attend the Marble Quarry public inquiry on 15th March and, as reported in the paper, the decision will be announced in due course.

7.3 **7.3** DR reported that Dave Pickup, Lake District National Park (LDNP) Ranger, is working with them on setting up the fencing database.

7.4 **7.4** Following the meeting that CE attended about the new water pipeline from Thirlmere, he received an email from United Utilities saying that they would contact him again when there

was something to report and they would keep in touch with everyone who had been around that table. DG had received notification that United Utilities would like to meet. SW had, in another capacity, received copies of the planning application with detailed mapping of the ROW both inside and outside the NP.

- 7.5 **13.2** A date for a meeting with the Assistant Director had not yet been set. However, PG rather thought that it was envisaged to do this at the meeting with the new portfolio-holder.

8 Chairman's Actions

- 8.1 CE was pleased to inform LAF members that Janet Willis, the new portfolio-holder, had responded very promptly and a date had been set for their meeting. He will report back to members following the meeting. **CE**
- 8.2 CE had been unable to attend the Mallerstang meeting but Geoff Fewkes (GF), Countryside Officer, had done so. Natural England (NE) are very keen to do sympathetic planting. There will be a fund set up for fence removal. CE had been keen for CLAF to be represented this time as this location will be within the Yorkshire Dales from 1st August. At the end of 15 years, the database will trigger an email to remind that a fence needs to be removed.
- 8.3 The Ravenstonedale Common meeting had been convened a fortnight earlier by Shirley Muir, consultant to NE. The planting plans have been revised with some bits removed. Desire lines and natural walking lines have been acknowledged, thus providing some significant improvements for walkers. GF is looking at where gates will be located and there will be some stiles, scarcely 100-150 metres from a gate; anyone fit enough to walk to this location would be fit enough to climb a stile. There have been no objections from any interested parties and it therefore appears this can now progress to the next stage. CE had advised Shirley Muir and Simon Stainer that, subject to the LAF meeting, the LAF would not object.

On Wild Boar Fell NE, together with the commoners and the owner, are proposing two large enclosures on the common to slow water flow and create more complex vegetation to provide habitat for black grouse and other species and formal applications will follow.

- 8.4 CE reported on the Moorside meeting. Ken Taylor is employed by Amey Foster to look at access on the current pre-, during and post-construction of the Moorside power station. There will be a quadrant roughly between Sellafeld and Braystones stations where a fence will be constructed around the site, involving movement of common land etc. The meeting was very professional and all points raised were taken. There will also be additional sites: three main ones and a fourth which falls outside the area. DG confirmed that at the end of the project there will be significant gains for access, so the project is a short-term irritant with huge long-term gains. This is therefore a massive opportunity. The inference is that the coastal path will be open before Moorside is officially opened.

9 National Park Boundary Changes

From 1st August both national parks will have their boundaries extended. PG confirmed that it looks as though the Yorkshire Dales will take on responsibility for ROW, dependent on funding. If this goes ahead, it may be phased. Under CROW, the Yorkshire Dales LAF will be responsible for all Access land.

PG reported that YDNPA have written to CCC asking for CCC's view on their proposal that they have a single LAF for the whole YD area. CE asked DR what the LDNPA and LD LAF take on a joint LAF was. DR replied that there is broad support for this. The LD LAF has been asked to get more involved in strategic aspects of the national park, but they will continue to look at other areas as well.

In response to a question from SW as to how CCC feels about a merger of the LAFs, PG replied that it was important to take the views of the LAF into account. SW thought that the LAF felt there may be a danger that the national park could overshadow the area outside.

JM asked if the Lake District Board and CCC members had been made aware of the LAF. Both DR and PG indicated that so far only senior officers/management were aware. JM felt that the LAFs serve two different objectives, however was not opposed to a merger.

EB would very much like to see a joint LAF and felt there would be a lot to learn from each other: for instance on sustainable transport.

RL, as a Disabled Ramblers member, was in Langdale talking to the National Trust about access. He was a little concerned that 'tourism equals cash' could overshadow.

OC, brought up in Cumbria, did not remember there being any problem with access in those days in respect of the Lake District. He thought that the promotion of tourism in the Lake District may benefit areas outside of the Lake District with the formation of a joint LAF.

MM brought up the workload of the prospective joint LAF. There may at present be some duplication. Much of the work will be case specific and therefore an almost doubling of the workload of a new joint LAF.

DC accepted the useful points made and observed that LAFs' visibility had declined over the years. Referring to the 'Northern powerhouse' he observed that as a united Cumbrian voice, a joint LAF may be a little more visible.

JM remembered that at the outset, CLAF had had an uphill struggle to convince the County Council of the value of the countryside outside of the National Parks. He worried that having been successful, if the LAF now merged with the National Park this may be lost.

DC observed that for ordinary people it would be difficult to understand the new boundaries and a straight forward Cumbria-wide LAF would make more sense.

CE referred back to earlier comments from around the table and concluded that having ad-hoc sub-groups to deal with location specific matters to report back to the full LAF meeting would help manage workload. He also felt that four meetings a year of the full LAF would be necessary. At the national LAF conference he had spoken at length with the chair of the YD LAF and they both agreed that it would be helpful if each LAF sent observers to each other's LAF meetings, irrespective of whether the Cumbria/Lake District merger went ahead.

CE observed that it would be sensible to wait for the outcome of the LD LAF meeting and to see if there was a groundswell of opinion in favour of going forward from both LAFs. If so, they would then need to get together. He invited CLAF members to let him know if they were opposed. JM thought that if the main reasons for a merger were purely financial then there should be no merger.

RL wondered if there could be some way of working together as a first step. SW suggested a standing item on the agenda on the YD and LD LAFs.

In summarising CE observed that the feeling of the LAF was that they were not against a merger and would wait to hear what happens at the LD LAF meeting. DR added that the arrangement for a merged LAF would have to be agreed by both authorities, including appointments. The decision on merging/becoming a joint LAF is relevant to the 1st August commencement of boundary changes but the merger does not have to happen by this date. Both LAFs have experienced some difficulty in recent years with regard to membership.

PG added about the Yorkshire Dales that his interpretation was that they would like to have their LAF covering the whole of the YD in place by 1st August. There will have to be an agreement between YD and CCC on ROW.

10 Membership

Alan Dougherty had advised CE that he would not wish to renew his membership. CLAF will therefore lose its caving and uplands representative, as well as representation on the North Pennines AONB Access & Recreation working group meetings. However, DG also attends these meetings.

11 Members' News

- 11.1 JM and TJ had attended the Morecambe Bay Partnership meeting on 11th March with a presentation by National Grid. JM had spoken to Suzanna Bleakley about the Arnside Viaduct and she confirmed that they are still happy to take a lead role on this. He had the previous day mistakenly gone to a drop-in session which had actually been for landowners, of whom there were not many.
- 11.2 TJ reported the opening of a new footpath from Unthank to Skelton, from the Upfront Gallery, with hundreds of trees. It is not particularly long and is mainly for local people.
- 11.3 MM was continuing to look at proposed footpath diversions. CE had reported to the previous LAF meeting on MM's behalf on a mining application. MM elaborated that this was ostensibly relating to production of coking coal, but may actually be intending to move to gas extraction. MM had looked at another diversion where a landowner wished a path to be moved, and would be looking at another the following week.
- 11.4 OC informed members that as Public Health Alliance reports are given verbally there is no paper. He felt there was nothing particularly relevant to access. However, he thought that DEFRA's 8-point plan for national parks may be of interest.
- 11.5 SW and BP had produced the 2015 CLAF annual report. KM had put this on Huddle and reported that the Lancashire LAF annual report was the only other one on there so far. BP suggested that following publication of the annual report this may be an opportunity for some publicity and volunteered to write an article. **BP**
SW & BP had visited a FP at Bowston to rectify a map error. SW asked if a FP diversion request had been received from Burlington slate quarry on Kirkby Moor. **DG**
BP observed that horse riding is not given the same promotion as cycling and walking on the CCC Countryside Access website, and enquired if it could be given equal merit as is the case with the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales NP websites. DG will look into this. **DG**
- 11.6 DC informed members of the livestock flood appeal following Storm Desmond. In addition he reported that a walk would take place on Black Combe on St George's Day to draw attention to the potential damaging impact on beautiful views by the new giant pylons being planned to carry electricity from the new Moorside power station.
- 11.7 RL mentioned that the Penrith Access project was still on hold, but not forgotten. DG had received correspondence from an Ulverston disabled user who offered a list of foot path improvements. DG had responded saying that the ROWIP programme may be able to address some of these and also suggested contacting the Cumbria Disabled Ramblers.

12 News from National and Regional Access Bodies

- 12.1 CE had attended the northern National LAF conference in Leeds on 1st March and had found one of the best presentations was the session on the Disabled Ramblers, which included a photo of Ron and Chris Lyon; the one on dementia was also very well received.

He had attended the 'white roads' presentation as well and found this very confusing; DG had subsequently sent him a 10-sentence summary which explained the subject very adequately. EB had run into trouble on white roads before because it is not obvious on maps which are white roads and which are not. DG responded that the Cumberland and Westmorland maps differed when footpaths were claimed, leaving anomalies such as unclaimed roads.

CE reported that Richard Toon (NW Regional LAF chair) was devoting energy to the caving and potholing debate on CROW land, but without progress. Generally speaking the conference was good, but whether one would take place again was debateable.

[Conference materials subsequently made available to download from the following page: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5560243957268480?category=4680890114375680>]

12.2 Representation was expected at the NW Regional LAF meeting from six LAFs. Last minute apologies from two of these however meant that the meeting was very poorly attended. The Bury LAF Chair was able to provide a brief update on Stockport and Wigan LAFs as well as his own.

Gareth Lawler continues to support the Regional LAF but now has barely 1% of his time to give to Access work. Dates were set for three further Northwest Regional LAF meetings, returning to the pattern of three meetings a year.

SW observed that attending neighbouring LAFs' meetings may be more worthwhile.

JM mentioned that Lancashire, from being in the forefront of access related schemes, had now closed its countryside service. Richard Toon had reported that Lancashire was also looking to become a unitary authority.

13 Coastal Access Update

CE thanked those LAF members who went to the meeting at NE's Murley Moss offices. He had subsequently spoken to Gerry Rusbridge (NE) and last week with Geoff Fewkes (CCC). They had talked about the closed season for preventing disturbance of wildfowl from 1st September until 31st March. On the LAF's behalf he had said this was not acceptable; 1st November would be better and we would be prepared to discuss this. The 31st March date is non-negotiable, but Gerry will speak to Kevin Vigars about the autumn dates. CE felt that a mid-October date or even 1st October could be considered, but not September. **CE**

GF had said that near Metal Bridge a very convoluted arrangement had been reached between Castletown Estates and NE.

Stretch 3 was now more or less ready to go to the next phase.

DG was able to give an update that Stretch 4 will now not go into the South Walney Nature Reserve and added that the other significant change was that estuary crossing will now be addressed.

14 Countryside Access Work Programme

Countryside Access Progress Report

- PROW Management programme

Parishes have been carried over because of this winter's storms. However, only eight parishes have not been looked at at all and the rest are nearly complete.

- PROW Development programme

The £100k budget is to be reduced to £91k for the coming year, but £21k of match funding has already been found. The flagged steps put in at Ambleside have worked really well and survived Storm Desmond, simply behaving as a waterfall and not damaged.

- PROW Enquiries (defect reports) programme

Enquiries are to move to a new approach, to an asset based system. EB asked what would happen to the outstanding enquiries, and also what would happen to long-term enquiries that had never been tackled. DG replied that some paths are not used and can be sorted out when there is money available. Others may be solved through ROWIPs. EB wondered if some could not be got rid of such as those which are actually under buildings. DG gave various examples of instances where some were found to have been resolved, showing the importance of having a list as a record when cases arise through the planning process.

- National Trail Maintenance Programme

There is quite some concern over Hadrian's Wall Path staff in Northumberland, because NE have not released any money. NNPA may have to serve redundancy notices. The only money that CCC will receive to date is through a memorandum of understanding for the England Coast Path staffing costs.

- Definitive Map and Statement Digitisation Project

DG advised that he may remove this item from the Work Programme as there has been no movement on it for two years. Highways were to fund the necessary £29k, but Countryside Access have now been told to find it within their own budget.

- Land Regeneration Project (LRP)

Working with Maryport Town Council in the Coastal Park to remove and relocate a seating area.

- Major PROW bridges programme

The bridges list has a 50% commitment this year to date and there is a reasonable chance it will be fully committed shortly.

- Mapping orders

Mapping orders have gone through the roof because of storm damage, with closures being put in place along with appropriate signing to say where paths are closed.

15 AOB

In a radio interview the Wainwright Society chairman suggested that once the coastal trail is finished, the C2C should be the next national trail. It will not, however, be a national trail and DG explained that CCC Highways have spoken to the Wainwright Society about all the issues.

Geoff Fewkes has informed CE that Nine Standards has received Crowd-Funding and contributions from other bodies which will enable a good standard of surface to be put in. CCC are willing to dedicate a footpath up to the national park boundary.

16 Feedback from morning Training Session / Upgrading of Power Lines in Cumbria

The morning's presentation to the LAF from National Grid was extremely good and informative. CE would fill in a contact form on behalf of the LAF so that the LAF will receive contact emails.

17 Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 20th July.
Further meetings: Thursday 20th October 2016 and Tuesday 17th January 2017