

WEST YORKSHIRE PENNINE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MEETING HELD ON 16TH APRIL 2009 AT THE TOWN HALL, HALIFAX

PRESENT:

Members:

Ms J Turner (in the Chair)

Ms P Ashton

Mr R Gibbon

Mr R Hindley

Ms D Metcalfe

In Attendance:

Mrs R Finney

Mr D Jackson

Mr R Malkin

Mr S Westwood

Ms K Windett

Apologies: Mr D Nortcliffe, Mr T Norris, Mr G Ramsden, Mr I Condliffe

39 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY 2009

IT WAS AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2009 be approved as a correct record.

40 MATTERS ARISING

Minute Number 33 – Natural England’s Review of National Trails and Routes – David Nortcliffe received some comments from Members and managed to incorporate all of these into a composite reply which had been sent to Natural England. If any Members wished to have a copy they could contact David who would e-mail it to them.

Minute Number 36 – Entry Points onto Access Land – a copy of a letter from Councillor David Sheard, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Transportation from Kirklees Council, was circulated at the meeting. Concerns were expressed at the meeting that funding was not available for this. David Nortcliffe referred to the view expressed by Councillor Sheard that even the survey of what was needed would take two more years and was not really satisfactory. Most other authorities did that survey work five or six years ago and Countryside Agency money was available then. One might have hoped that staff time could be allocated to that work in the near future so that they get an accurate measure of the extent of the problem. It was feared there was no concept by the writer of the letter that access was permitted by law and they are the “Access Authority” responsible for seeing that walkers can gain access to such land. General concerns were expressed that the letter made no effort to move this issue forward.

IT WAS AGREED that Rachel Finney be requested to prepare a letter for signing by David Nortcliffe expressing this Forum’s concerns that the situation is unacceptable, and it is hoped that staff time can be allocated to this work in the near future to obtain an accurate measure of the extent of the problem.

Minute Number 34 – Update on Robin Dalton’s Survey Project – it was noted that Robin would present his report to the next meeting of this Forum.

Minute Number 35 – Hard Surfacing of Bridleways – Response from Local Authorities Planners – the BHS view was read out at the meeting and this accords with the view from Bradford Council, i.e. planning consent would be required for the hard surfacing of bridleways. This conflicted with the view from Calderdale Council.

IT WAS AGREED that Rachel Finney will speak further to the Planning Services in Calderdale about the advice received from them.

41 SITE VISIT – COLEY ROAD

Prior to this meeting a site visit had taken place to Coley Road when the new footbridge had been officially handed over to Calderdale. Members of the Forum expressed their thanks to Peak and Northern Footpaths Society for their financial support towards this project. Reference was made to the leaflets which the Society had handed out at the visit, and this would be circulated to Members.

Please note: the leaflet referred to above can be found at www.peakandnorthern.org.uk/pnfs-publications/membership.htm.

42 REPORT REGARDING REGIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS MEETING IN WAKEFIELD, 22ND OCTOBER 2008

The main points from the regional meeting which had taken place on 22nd October 2009 were reported at the meeting. There had been a further regional meeting in Hull during March but David Nortcliffe had been unable to attend. It would be helpful if the Minutes from this recent meeting could be obtained from the Regional Secretary to ascertain what had happened at that meeting. The two main items on that agenda were on Coastal Access and Disabled Access Facilities.

43 DISCOVERING LOST WAYS – REPORT FROM THE THREE AUTHORITIES

A written response from Bradford was circulated at the meeting. This advised that 43 formal applications covering at least 47 routes were currently recorded on the Register of Definitive Map Modification Order Applications for Bradford. Of these, 12 were currently at various stages of investigation, advertising or appeal. The paper also provided detailed comments in relation to:

- (i) other definitive map work; and
- (ii) priorities for definitive map as outlined in Bradford ROWIP.

Insofar as Calderdale was concerned, Rachel Finney advised that the Council had files on 100 possible definitive map modifications, of which 58 were formal applications based on user evidence. 10 were form applications based on documentary evidence and the rest were files of evidence relating to possible claims; but with incomplete or no formal application form. Action on investigating these claims was prioritised according to a matrix taking into

account the Council's corporate priorities. A written summary of the claims and priority matrix would be circulated with the minutes.

Insofar as Kirklees was concerned, there was no detailed information available at present, but this should be circulated to Members next week.

Concerns were raised at the meeting that pressure should be put on local authorities to carry out their duties, and this concern should be fed through the regional meetings. A suggestion was made that volunteers from the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society could be used as they had the necessary expertise.

IT WAS AGREED that this issue be raised at the regional meeting to consider whether pressure can be put on local authorities to provide more funding for this work. Also, if funding is available to local authorities to undertake this work then local authorities should apply for this funding.

44 UPDATE OF FENCING OF RISHWORTH MOOR

David Nortcliffe was not aware of any written reaction following this Forum's letter to Yorkshire Water after the last meeting. The fire there over Easter and the continuation of motorcycling on the moor added weight to the case we had put to Yorkshire Water. Steve Westwood advised that Natural England were pursuing a system of preventing motorbike problems, and there was a need to get the police involved. He would report on progress to the next meeting.

Yorkshire Water have agreed to install bridle gates rather than wicket gates in all the fencing on Rishworth Moor. Yorkshire Water have applied to Calderdale for permission to erect gates on PROW on Rishworth Moor and this has been approved by Calderdale. The first tranche of fencing has been put in by Moors for the Future, but work has stopped now as agreed with RSPB to allow for ground bird nesting season. Work will resume later on in the summer. Consultations have taken place with the police to look at the best way to prevent and report vandalism and damage from motorcyclists to both the fence, gates and the moorland surface.

IT WAS AGREED that an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to obtain a progress report.

45 CONSULTATION ON ACCESS LAND AT DEER HILL

Roy Malkin and David Nortcliffe had a recent meeting with Peak District NP and Natural England. David Nortcliffe's feelings were still in line with those expressed in the circular he had sent to Members last month – basically, that access ought to be possible when there was no firing. However, Peak Park had a similar case where they had refused to support a total ban for a clay pigeon shoot and said they could only have a ban when firing was in progress. The club appealed and the inspectors subsequently ruled that having to notify Natural England each time, put up flags each time, search the area to ensure nobody was there already, etc placed an "unreasonable burden" on the club. The inspector then varied Peak Park's ruling and determined that the range area should be closed for the five years on the application. The only way to reverse that was to go to the High Court. Thus

Peak Park felt they had to abide by that precedent and confirm full closure for the next five years.

IT WAS AGREED that a letter be sent to Natural England expressing concerns that this Forum considers this to be an unreasonable restriction and is a totally unsatisfactory situation.

46 CONSULTATION ON ACCESS LAND AT MEG DIKE

This was an application for renewal of the existing restriction on access. The area was small, the farm does use it for cattle grazing, there is a public right of way through it already, and it was arguable as to whether it really was true “moor” anyhow. David Nortcliffe did not think it was worth opposing unless some member had evidence that there really was a pressing need for access there.

IT WAS AGREED that no opposition be raised to this application.

47 CONSULTATION ON HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP APPLICATION ON DEANHEAD MOOR

The Forum was circulated with a letter from Natural England advising of a proposal for some fencing on open access land at Deanhead Moor. Some of this would be new fencing and some would be replacing old fencing. The purpose of the fence was to be able to reintroduce sheep grazing onto this area. The applicant had proposed stiles at approximately every 250 metres although some of the stiles would need to be changed to kissing gates to provide easier access.

Concerns were expressed at the meeting that this was yet another area in the Peak District which was going to be fenced off and this was an ongoing trend.

IT WAS AGREED that this Forum expresses its disquiet that this involves another proposal for more fencing on Pennine moorlands. If this proposal is to proceed then this Forum would not wish to see barbed fencing and would wish to ensure that all “traditional access points” and those on rights of way are provided with appropriate means of access, with reference to the British Standard on gates and stiles.

48 UPDATE FROM THE THREE AUTHORITIES REGARDING CURRENT PROJECTS

In relation to Bradford, a paper was circulated at the meeting advising that projects were currently ongoing in relation to:

- (i) Airedale Greenway;
- (ii) higher level Stewardship Scheme, Ilkley Moor;
- (iii) Flappit area;
- (iv) Peak and Northern Bridge project;

- (v) bridleways project;
- (vi) non-slip surfacing for horses;
- (vii) Grove Mills, Keighley;
- (viii) Ilkley Tarn;
- (ix) Great North Trail; and
- (x) South Bradford Spen Valley Greenway Link.

In relation to Calderdale, Rachel Finney advised that improvement works had been completed creating a bridleway link between Withens Reservoir in Cragg Vale and the Pennine Bridleway at Lumbutts. Legal work to create a bridleway to link with this route across Cragg Vale and up to Sowerby was continuing but was being delayed by opposition from some local residents.

In relation to Kirklees the Forum was advised that no projects were planned. The management steer was to concentrate on green travel and green ways.

49 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Horse Riding on Urban Commons – David Nortcliffe had received a comment from one concerned landowner about horse-riding (legally) through areas where moorland birds are currently nesting. There was a fear that they would cause disturbance at least, and possible damage to nests and eggs at worst. The landowner wondered if there was any scope for trying to get equestrians to kerb their activities voluntarily for a couple of months in sensitive areas. Ms Metcalfe advised of research which had been undertaken on this issue and agreed to e-mail David with the results of this research.

50 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 9th July 2009, at 2.00 pm in Halifax Town Hall.