



Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum(YDAF)
Tuesday 24 November 2020
Meeting held remotely in the Lifesize meeting room

Members present: Jon Beavan (JB) (in the Chair), John Buchan (JBU), Nick Cotton (NC), Leo Crone (LC), Barbara Gravenor (BG), Neil Heseltine (NH), Ken Humphris (KH), Alex Law (AL), Debbie North (DN), Malcolm Petyt (MP) and John Richardson (JR).

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) officers present: Kathryn Beardmore (KB), Alan Hulme (AH), Rachel Briggs (RB); Clare Tamea (CT) (taking the minutes).

The meeting started at 1.15pm.

20/12. Welcome and introductions

JB opened the meeting.

20/13. Apologies

Apologies were received from Heather Hodgson and Helen Pollard.

20/14. Approval of Minutes

JBU asked that his apologies be noted for the last Forum meeting. Subject to this, the minutes of the last meeting, held on 2 June 2020, were approved as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes

JB confirmed that a response had been submitted to DEFRA, on behalf of the Forum, on the Ravenstonedale Common fencing consultation.

20/15. Question Time

No public questions or statements had been received.

20/16. Report back from Advisory Groups

1. Members observed that most of the advisory groups had not met for some time, and expressed the hope that once face-to-face meetings were permitted, meetings of these groups would resume.

2. DN advised that one of the key points from the Access for All Advisory Group meeting, held on 6 November 2020, was to see if a Changing Places Room could be provided within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. (A Changing Places Room provides the right equipment and space to enable people with profound and multiple disabilities to safely and comfortably use a toilet and get changed without having to use the floor of a public toilet). If provided, it would enable a greater variety of disabled people to visit the National Park and/or to stay for a longer period, which would also have knock-on benefits for the local economy. There are currently no Changing Places Rooms within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the nearest ones being at Skipton, Northallerton and Ripon.
3. Discussion included the following:
 - Members were very supportive of this suggestion, which would advance the progress already being made to increase wider, more inclusive access across the National Park;
 - Hawes was discussed as a potential location for a Changing Room Place (possibly by the Dales Museum or at the Creamery);
 - Security – DN advised that, as a Changing Places Room is kept locked and users open the door with a radar key, DN believed the risk of vandalism of the sort seen in the past at the public toilets at Hawes should be minimal;
 - Funding – the cost of installing a Changing Places Room is significant, and fund- raising would be necessary to contribute towards the cost. Sources of potential funding were suggested, including the National Lottery. DN would welcome assistance in putting together funding bids.
 - Members generally wish to learn more about the ways in which the National Park increases accessibility to people with a variety of disabilities.

Action:

- **DN to look at opportunities to raise funds towards a Changing Place in the National Park.**
- **RB to report back on indicative costs for a Changing Place rooms and also provide wider information on measures taken by the YDNPA to improve accessibility for disabled visitors to the National Park, to the next Forum meeting**

20/17. Way-marking the Lady Anne Way

1. AH presented this report, inviting the Forum to consider the request from “Friends of Lady Anne’s Way” to have the Lady Anne’s Way (“the Way”) marked on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps as a long distance route. AH advised the meeting that further information had been received:
 - Sale figures for the Way’s well-written and recently revised guide book had steadily increased from 225 copies sold per year (following first publication in 1995), to over 400 copies sold last year;
 - Friends of Lady Anne’s Way estimated that approximately 1000 people walk the Way each year, but AH questioned what this figure was based upon, as it would mean an average 20 people a week which was unlikely;
 - North Yorkshire County Council broadly support the proposal;

- Cumbria County Council support the proposal, particularly as there are currently no other promoted walks near their section of the Way.
2. In response to questions from members, AH confirmed that way-marking of such routes was carried out by the YDNPA, given its role in liaising with landowners and maintaining the network. AH also confirmed that the whole section of the Way within the National Park was on public rights of way.
 3. Discussion included the following points:
 - Too many long distance routes in one area marked on an OS map can cause confusion;
 - OS map marked routes should be reviewed periodically to see if the Forum would recommend removal from the OS map (for example if their popularity waned);
 - The Way meets all the required criteria that had been set for inclusion on the OS Map;
 - Members' local knowledge confirmed the use of the route;
 - Walkers of the Way spend over a week in the area, bringing benefits to the local economy (staying in local accommodation and spending money in local pubs, cafes and shops).
 4. Members supported the request to add the Lady Anne's Way to the OS map. The Forum recommends that the YDNPA (being one of the three local authorities) supports this proposal.

(NH left the meeting)

20/18. what3words

1. JB gave an informative verbal presentation on the what3words app and its potential uses. Every 3 metre square throughout the world (including oceans, forests, moors) has been given a unique combination of three words, making this a great tool for sharing precise locations (for example, the cairn on the top of Ingleborough is [///tracking.forgotten.buzz](https://www.what3words.com/tracking/forgotten.buzz)).
If someone requiring emergency assistance is able to provide the what3words for their precise location, it enables their location to be pinpointed, so is far more useful than many verbal descriptions (which could be quite vague) or 6 digit grid references (which cover a larger area). Mountain rescue teams, the police, ambulance, fire service and coastguard all use the what3words for that purpose.
The app can be used offline, so the three words can be generated even in areas without phone signal, however it does of course need a smart phone or device and some charge on the battery.
The app is continuing to grow in popularity and is an alternative means of providing a location, especially for those who struggle with an OS grid reference from a map. JB wished to encourage Forum members to have a look at this app if they were not already familiar with it.
2. KB, AH and RB confirmed that the app was used by some staff members working in the National Park Authority. Instructions on how to use the what3words app were on the Yorkshire Dales National Park website and the relevant three words for all the major attractions, car parks, toilets etc were

also publicised on the website. Officers also confirmed that it was a great tool for people to use when reporting issues such as a broken stile or footbridge. It was also noted that there were other apps available, such as OS locate, which was also very simple to use.

20/19. Access Officer's Report

1. RB presented the Officer's report.
2. Members expressed concern at the National Farmers Union's proposals to allow temporary diversion of public rights of way, where livestock are present, for safety reasons. Discussion included the following:
 - There had been some recent tragic events in which cattle had killed or injured walkers;
 - The definition of "livestock" includes horses and sheep which was too wide - members were not aware of any incidents involving sheep;
 - The proposals had potential to significantly disrupt walking routes, bridleways etc., as it would allow diversions being permitted for 40 days out of every 90;
 - Members recognised the concerns of farmers and land-owners. There had been a huge increase in visitors to the countryside in recent months, many being first-time visitors to the National Park. Some of the new visitors were not aware of the Countryside Code or of how to act when passing through farmland. For example, farmers had experienced issues in relation to the increase in the number of dogs being brought onto the land, not all of which were on short leads / under proper control, and members of the public had opened gates and failed to close them;
 - Education of visitors was essential. Members were impressed with the YDNPA's information signs , including information for dog walkers in the countryside;
 - From a land-owner's perspective, JBu praised the work of rangers in their tactful resolution of potential conflict between various parties – farmers, land-owners and visitors.
3. Members discussed a range of issues which had arisen during the first lockdown and the influx of visitors including those arising due to a lack of open toilet facilities, car-parking and littering. It was recognised that the National Park provides a vital resource for people from urban areas to connect with nature. KB advised that, as a third of visitors surveyed did not use any information prior to their visit as part of their planning, engaging visitors and providing information on arrival at their chosen site is key. Members praised the work of the rangers who had provided an excellent service during the past months.
4. The numbers of motorcyclists riding through the National Park had also raised a number of complaints, particularly regarding excessive noise and speeding. NC advised members that he had worked closely with police and the council to try and address these issues. It was a difficult issue to completely resolve.

5. In response to questioning, AH advised the Forum that the restrictions under section 22 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act were largely as a result of active estates entering restrictions related to shooting activity. It was noted that other National Parks had not recorded as high levels of this type of restriction.

20/20. Update on Members' Activities

1. Other than the updates provided as part of the discussion on the preceding items, BG advised the meeting that she had been involved in reviewing the plans for the upgrade of the A66 (to dual carriageway). One of the issues on which BG had sent in a comment was the proposed closure of the gap in the central reservation which currently allowed cyclists to cross from the road to Barnard Castle to the road leading to the Stang – an important gateway to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. BG had asked if a cycle-path could be provided to enable cyclists to cross at the next gap by Cross Lanes tea-room.

20/21. Future Forum Meetings

Suggested agenda items for future meetings of the YDAF

Members suggested the following agenda item for future meetings, which were agreed:

- Information on the ways in which the Yorkshire Dales National Park improves access for people with a variety of disabilities.
- AH advised the meeting that there were five long-term restrictions on access which due for review at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 18 May 2021, 1.15pm at Yoredale, Bainbridge (or by video conference if necessary).

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3pm.