



Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum(YDAF)
Tuesday 18 May 2021
Meeting held remotely in the Lifesize meeting room

Members present: Jon Beavan (JB) (in the Chair following his re-election), John Bucknall (JBU), Nick Cotton (NC), Leo Crone (LC), Neil Heseltine (NH), Heather Hodgson (HH), Ken Humphris (KH), Alex Law (AL), Malcolm Petyt (MP) and John Richardson (JR).

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

The meeting started at 1.15pm.

21/01. Welcome and introductions

Pending the election of a Chair, KB opened the meeting.

21/02. Apologies

Apologies were received from Barbara Gravenor (BG), Debbie North and Helen Pollard.

21/03. Election of Chair

Jon Beavan was nominated for the position of Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

RESOLVED: that Jon Beavan be appointed Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

Jon Beavan in the chair

21/04. Election of Vice Chair

Malcolm Petyt was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

RESOLVED: that Malcolm Petyt be appointed Vice Chair of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

21/05. Approval of Minutes

Subject to correction of a typo to JBU's surname, the minutes of the last meeting, held on 24 November 2020, were approved as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes: None

21/06. Question Time

No public questions or statements had been received.

21/07. Future Forum Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 1.15pm, venue to be confirmed.

It was confirmed that the Forum could choose to hold future meetings remotely or in person. Members could see benefits in both options and expressed a preference for at least one in-person meeting per year.

JB and RB will review the venue for the next meeting nearer the time, in light of Covid guidance in place at that point.

21/08. Suggested agenda items for future meetings of the YDAF

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

- Design of stiles, gates and bridges on public rights of way;
- Responses to the statutory advice provided by the Forum over the past years;
- Rights of way improvement plans and the process for these;
- Fencing –enforcement of removal / review after 10 years (raised later in the meeting), plus should the LAF give advice on new fencing going up to protect tree planting.

Actions: AH to liaise with JB and bring a report/s to a future meeting on the design of stiles, gates and bridges on public rights of way within the National Park, and on the County Councils' improvement plans for rights of way; RG/RB to bring a report to a future meeting on the responses to / outcomes of the statutory advice provided by the Forum over past years. RB to add "LAF advice on new fencing" to the agenda for a future meeting, and ascertain the availability of a representative from Natural England to answer any questions.

21/09. Report back from Advisory Groups

1. JB gave an update on the key points from the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group meeting, held on 18 March 2021. NH asked members to note recent local concerns regarding parking and bolting of climbs at Malham Cove - these were being resolved at local level.

2. Members urged RB to see if meetings of the Access on Foot Advisory Group, the Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group and the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group could be arranged soon. KB advised that the production of the annual report would help guide the latter, and groups should meet only when there were specific issues to discuss.

Action: RB to continue to liaise with the relevant advisory groups as to when meetings should take place.

21/10. Miles without Stiles

1. RB presented this report, which gave an update on accessibility in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. RB advised members that, in order to be classified as an accessible route, national standards (gradient, surface etc) as described in the Countryside Agency, '*By all reasonable means*', must be met - only routes which meet these standards are included in the target and publicised as accessible.
2. Discussion included the following points:
 - Developments in technology continue to open up access - just as electric bikes are enabling more people to cycle, future innovations in equipment for those with mobility issues (such as all-terrain wheelchairs), will increase access to routes which do not meet the current accessibility standards.
 - It was queried whether different "levels" of difficulty of routes could be publicised, particularly those not meeting the current accessibility standards, so that people looking for adventure could decide upon a suitable route;
 - A suggestion that relief maps at information points could be considered, as these can be a helpful aid for visitors with limited sight;
 - In response to questions, RB advised that many organisations which provide opportunities for disabled people use the Yorkshire Dales National Park, eg visually impaired walking groups, dementia groups and groups supporting autistic people;
 - The Dales Countryside Museum was one of the places being considered for a Changing Place as part of the feasibility study. A suggestion was made that the Museum could be developed as a hub for "Access for All", given that it, and Hawes more generally, has a lot to offer in this regard;
 - The importance of working with land-owners to improve accessibility was emphasised. In response to questions, KB and AH advised that one key action a land-owner could take to improve accessibility was to permit the YDNPA to replace a stile with a gate, or permit a gate alongside an existing stile, if requested;
 - It was suggested that Green Lanes be considered for future potentially accessible routes, if not already included.
3. Members expressed thanks to RB and YDNPA for the work being carried out in this area.

21/11. Public Rights of Way Annual Report 2020-21

AH highlighted the key issues from this report and members were asked to comment prior to submission of the report to the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority on 29th June 2021.

In response to member questions:

- KB advised that the relevant councils (as Highway Authority, with whom responsibility lies), did not provide direct funding for the maintenance of the rights of way network even though delegation agreements were in place for this work to be undertaken on their behalf. External funding totalling £243,329 had been secured and resources were also provided by the YDNPA;
- AH advised that if discrepancies were found during surveying, for example in the location of a route or designation of a right of way, it was discussed with the relevant Council (if the discrepancy related to the Definitive Map). Where necessary, the OS were also informed.

Discussion included the following:

- Members were very pleased with the progress made by YDNPA on public rights of way over the past year, particularly given the pandemic, when the importance of rights of way to visitors and local residents alike had been demonstrated.
- Members noted that the YDNPA was on course to achieve its target of 90% of public rights of way in the National Park being easy to use by 2023.
- The input of volunteers in surveys and maintenance work was very impressive and was commended.
- The flood damage caused in July 2019 and February 2020 had resulted in a lot of repair work being required to the public rights of way in the affected areas – members were pleased to note most of these works had now been completed. The contribution of £150k from North Yorkshire County Council had been instrumental in achieving this work. It was likely that climate change would lead to more similarly heavy, localised cloudbursts. AH advised members that planning to reduce future flooding problems was underway – for example tree-planting, peat restoration schemes, and in the design and materials used for replacement bridges and route surfaces to make them more flood resistant.
- Partnership working with landowners was recognised by all as crucial.
- The Pennine Bridleway would benefit from further circular routes. Suitable accommodation and promotion were key, and Natural England grant money could not be spent on these.
- Members were pleased to note that the final delegation agreement with Lancashire had now been completed, which meant that YDNPA was now responsible for all the public rights of way within the National Park.

21/12. Access Officer's Report

1. RB presented the Officer's report.
2. Members noted the new Countryside Code and the new inclusion of reference to wild swimming, which was growing in popularity. Members of the public should be made aware of the risks from dangerous obstructions in the water (particularly after flooding) and cold water shock.

21/13. Update on Members' Activities

1. JR advised the meeting that he had submitted evidence to the relevant council regarding closure of a route near Tan Hill, following change of land-owner. (A very small proportion of the route was in the National Park).
2. LC advised the meeting that North Yorkshire Police now has an off-road motorbike team to deal with illegal trail riders. Intelligence was being shared to clamp down on these practices.
3. BG had sent a message to the meeting to advise she had become a member of the Transport and Travel Group of Richmondshire District Council's Climate Action Partnership. She was looking to arrange a meeting of the cycling and walking groups of the Forum to discuss ideas to improve access to the National Park by means of Active Transport.
4. JB had attended a regional LAF meeting by vc. Other LAFs were adopting the Forum's statement on forestry development across access routes. Issues had been reported by other LAFs on the use of electric scooters on public rights of way.
5. JB also advised the meeting of an exciting discovery of a new cave near Ingleborough.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3:07pm.