



Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum(YDAF)
Tuesday 14 June 2022
Meeting held at the Lunesdale Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale

Members present: Jon Beavan (JB) (in the Chair following his re-election), John Bucknall (JBU), Nick Cotton (NC), Leo Crone (LC), Hannah Gardner (HG), Neil Heseltine (NH), Paul McGee (PM) and Malcolm Petyt (MP).

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

The meeting started at 1.15pm.

22/01. Welcome and introductions

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

The meeting welcomed new members Hannah Gardner and Paul McGee to their first meeting, and each member shared information about their background and interests as relevant to the Forum.

22/02. 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

22/03. 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.

22/04. Apologies

Apologies were received from Peter Baggaley, Rachel Forsyth, Barbara Gravenor, Alex Law and Debbie North.

22/05. Approval of Minutes

Subject to the correction of the location of the walk at Ruskins View as being Kirkby Lonsdale not Kirkby Stephen, and the addition of detail that the “excellent path” referred to is the one which runs from Kearnstwick and past Underley Estate Offices (both at point 4 on page 5), the minutes of the last meeting, held on 23 November 2021, were approved as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes: JB advised the meeting that the Government had now removed the cut-off date for registering rights of way to appear on the definitive map. “Lost ways” projects were still continuing. Further detail was awaited on how the government now intended to move forward with this issue. It was noted that the recent legislation included making it easier for landowners to apply for path diversion orders.

22/06. Question Time

No public questions or statements had been received.

22/07. Future Forum Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at 1.15pm, at YDNPA offices, Bainbridge.

22/08. Future Agenda Items

A suggestion was made that the LAF may wish to consider the development of electric bikes (“e-bikes”) and electric motorbikes. If the distinction became blurred, this may give rise to issues, including whether it was more akin to a motorbike being ridden on a bridleway.

LC and NC advised that there was already a clear legal definition to distinguish “electrically assisted pedal cycles” from electric motorbikes / mopeds. The former came into the same legal category as pedal cycles. The latter had to be registered and taxed. To be classed as an “electrically assisted pedal cycle”, the motor output had to be below a certain level [250W] and the motorised assistance should not propel the bike at a speed more than 15.5 miles per hour / 25 km per hour – speeds above that had to be self-propelled.

AH informed the Forum that it would be the police’s role (not a ranger’s role) to determine the correct classification of a bike, when deciding if the law had been broken. CS advised that the police had issued a caution for an incident last year when an electric motorbike had been ridden on bridleways, but other than that, neither AH nor CS had encountered any issues.

In terms of speeding e-cyclists, members acknowledged the potential for conflict between all different types of users on multi-user routes. Maintaining a decent width of passage was helpful (eg cutting back overgrown vegetation) and, as with any route, respect between different users is vital. It was thought that wear and tear on surfaces was more impacted by the overall weight (user and bike combined), style of riding and type of tyres than whether a pedal cycle is electric or not.

Members agreed that e-bikes had brought many benefits to society, including the ability for riders to venture further afield, and to make cycling more accessible to a wider range of people.

It was agreed that this topic had been suitably aired and did not need to come to a further meeting of the Forum, unless issues arose in the future.

There were no other suggestions for future forum meetings although members commended the preceding joint LAF / Authority Members' Public Rights of Way training and development session, and expressed interest in similar future events.

22/09. Review of nominated LAF members on groups linked to the Forum

RB introduced this item with an explanation of the remit of each of the seven advisory groups and KB provided additional detail regarding membership of the Green Lanes Advisory Group. RB confirmed that she'd asked for expressions of interest from members not able to attend today's meeting.

The following expressions of interest were made:

- Access on Foot – Malcolm Pettyt
- Access for All – Debbie North and John Bucknall
- Bridleways and Restricted Byways – Alex Law, Hannah Gardner & Peter Baggaley
- Cave and Crag Access – Jon Beavan
- Green Lanes – Jon Beavan, Malcolm Pettyt and Hannah Garder (KB will check for required balance and confirm membership). It was noted that three other LAF members sit on this group, but not in their capacity as LAF members [NC as the Authority's Member Champion for Recreation Management is the group's Chair; NH sits on this group as a co-opted member as landowner, and Leo Crone sits on this group as a recreational motor vehicle user].
- Yorkshire and Humber Regional LAF – Jon Beavan

As the Air Sports and Water Sports advisory groups only meet when an issue arises, expressions of interest would be invited at that point.

JB advised the meeting that he also attends the Cumbria and North-West Regional LAF.

Members were invited to let JB know if they hear of any future meetings to which they felt it would be beneficial for a member of the LAF to attend.

<p>Action: KB to confirm which LAF members to join the Green Lanes Advisory Group. All members to let JB know of any additional meetings to which they feel a member of the LAF should attend.</p>

22/10. Advice of the Forum - making a difference?

At the forum meeting in May 2021, MP had requested that a report come to a future meeting on the responses to / outcomes of the statutory advice provided by the Forum over past years, to see if the LAF is making a difference.

JB gave a verbal report to the meeting. He had looked back through the minutes of all the LAF meetings and noted that the LAF makes decisions by consensus and discusses a wide variety of issues, not all of which would be “advice”.

Discussion about the LAF’s impact as a **statutory consultee, providing formal advice**, included the following:

- The LAF, as an independent statutory body, provides formal advice as a statutory consultee to a number of bodies including YDNPA, other Local Authorities, the Highways Authority, Natural England and DEFRA;
- The number of times in which the LAF is required to provide advice as a statutory consultee to YDNPA has very much decreased since the period just after the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act came into force. In recent times, only a handful of cases arise each year (such as the three CRoW Act public exclusions on which the LAF was consulted as a statutory consultee at the last meeting and on which YDNPA accepted the LAF’s advice);
- Natural England and DEFRA do not provide feedback on the advice received from the LAF. However, there is evidence that the LAF’s advice does have an impact. AH gave the example of where the LAF has recommended ten-year time limits for fencing in the past and subsequent applications to extend those time limits have been received - showing that the ten-year time limit had been incorporated as one of the conditions of permission being granted.

Discussion regarding the LAF’s **wider impact and influence** included the following:

- Although the number of times in which the LAF gives formal statutory advice may be small, the LAF has a very significant influence, particularly on YDNPA’s decision-making, in many other ways;
- The LAF’s discussions and suggestions are taken into account and help shape YDNPA’s strategies and policies on recreational access. For example, the strategy, “*Special Qualities, Special Experiences - An integrated access, recreation, visitor management, diversity and tourism strategy*”, first published in 2010 and revised in 2019, incorporates a lot of the LAF’s advice. The LAF’s comments and suggestions on the National Trails and regional important long distance routes have also been very helpful, shaping the delivery of these;
- The LAF’s suggestions for practical improvements and additional facilities are often dependent on time, resources, and the views of others which all have to be balanced, hence not all suggestions will be implemented (for example, the suggestion to add grid references to all way-markers). Good ideas sometimes take time to come to fruition (for example, the suggestion to create coloured waymarked routes for visitors has been partly implemented with coloured routes at Malham, Grassington and Aysgarth);
- The expertise and specialist input of LAF members and advisory groups helps to raise and maintain awareness of the needs of different user groups. Not only does this influence policy decisions, but also operational decisions made by staff, for example which surface materials to use, design of gate openings and stiles;
- The LAF’s balanced briefings help both YDNPA members and staff to take better-informed decisions;
- Having both YDNPA’s Chair and the Member Champion for Recreation Management as LAF members aids the flow of information and influence from the LAF onto the Authority.

22/11. Public Rights of Way Annual Report 2021-22

AH introduced this report and also gave a presentation on the National Trails – the existing Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway as well as the proposed designation of the Coast to Coast walking route as a new National Trail.

In response to members' questions on the Coast to Coast trail, AH advised that:

- Natural England were due to submit a final report to the Secretary of State later this month – the Secretary of State would make a public announcement in due course (timescale not published); and
- Natural England (NE) have received further details from the consultants looking at the options for the section of the route which crosses the A19 in North Yorkshire (outside of the National Park).

Discussion on the proposed designation of the Coast to Coast route as a National Trail included the following:

- The popularity of the route with visitors from abroad was noted, alongside the high-spending of many of the users of this route, which already provides a significant boost to the local economy;
- There are further opportunities for local people and businesses including farmers to offer accommodation, particularly for one night stays and also in the areas where such accommodation is in short supply;
- The alternative coast to coast routes to the official "Wainwright" route were discussed, which include a multi-user route to the south (the "orange" route). Although this wouldn't receive funds as a designated National Trail (not being part of the official route), members were keen to learn more about this alternative route, including how it could be developed and promoted. KB agreed to bring a report to the next meeting;
- It was thought that many more people would walk small sections of the Coast to Coast walk, including circular day walks, than do the entire length in one journey.

On the draft report, Members were pleased to note the overall "ease of use" results, which again stood at 90%. In response to member's queries, AH advised that the ease of use result of just 30% for the Lancashire area of the National Park had arisen as the random selection of paths this year had included a very long section of path in that area, the whole length of which was not satisfactory. Work was being undertaken to address this, with rangers undertaking work on the infrastructure. Members noted the signage results were very commendable and that, on the signage target, Lancashire area results were 100% and members congratulated AH, his team and the volunteers for all the achievements made during a successful year.

<p>Action: KB to liaise with HG and bring a report on the alternative "orange" multi-user coast to coast route to a future meeting.</p>
--

22/12. Action Plan for the YDAF

KB suggested that the Forum may benefit from having an "action log" to act as a reminder to members about the actions which members have agreed to undertake.

22/13. Officer's Report

Members were pleased to note the plans to install Changing Places at Grassington and Hawes National Park Centres.

In response to a specific request for ideas Members put forward the following suggestions for promoting opportunities for horse-riding in the National Park:

- Promotion on where horse-boxes can be parked;
- Promotion of a selection of horse-riding routes – following a guide can increase confidence especially to new riders to an area.

AH advised that the Pennine Bridleway has just completed a film which is now on You-Tube and indicated he'd share the link with members.

Action: AH to share the link to the You-Tube Pennine Bridleway film with members.
--

22/14. Update on Members' Activities

JB had attended the regional LAF meetings (held online). Most of the agenda items were of little relevance to the YDAF, being of a more urban nature.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3:20pm.