



Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum (LAF)
Tuesday 7 December 2022
Meeting held virtually, by Zoom

Members present: Jon Beavan (JB) (in the Chair), Peter Baggaley (PB), Leo Crone (LC), Rachel Forsythe (RF), Hannah Gardner (HG), Barbara Gravenor (BG), Neil Heseltine (NH), Alex Law (AL) and Malcolm Petyt (MP).

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

David Lepper (North Yorkshire LAF) joined the meeting as an observer.

The meeting started at 1.15pm.

22/15. Welcome and introductions

JB opened the meeting.

Members welcomed Rachel Forsyth to her first meeting, who shared information about her background and interests as relevant to the Forum.

22/16. Apologies

Apologies were received from Paul Bucknall, Nick Cotton, Debbie North and Paul McGee.

22/17. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 14 June 2022, were approved as a true record of the meeting.

There were no matters arising which were not already covered by items on the agenda.

22/18. Question Time

i) **Ruth Annison's Public Statement**

Ruth Annison read out a statement related to public transport, noting some of the current limitations and expressing concern about the uncertainty of future public transport services. Mrs Annison asked whether the Forum could have a role in encouraging and promoting the development of good transport networks across the National Park, particularly in the light of an ambitious target to reduce private car usage by 48% by 2030 contained in the "Routemap to Carbon Net Zero" developed by the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

It was acknowledged that the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is not a statutory transport authority.

JB read out the statutory remit of the LAF, set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. He explained that, although the LAF could make representations to whoever it saw fit, the transport authorities were not under any statutory duty to consider or act upon that advice under the CROW Act.

Discussion included the following:

- In terms of reducing private car travel, members commended routes such as the Coast to Coast route, which not only provide a sustainable means of journeying through the National Park but also bring wider benefits to the area;
- The new multi-user route from Hawes to Garsdale was also commended and a suggestion made that more multi-user routes could be investigated;
- Other measures could also be considered in tandem with routes designed for active travel into and around the National Park, such as ensuring sufficient places to securely park a cycle to allow a rider to walk around a town or visit a place of interest once they had arrived at that destination;
- The shortage of accommodation in some areas has led to the use of taxis and shuttles to take long-distance walkers back to their evening accommodation; and
- The LEP's goal to reduce private car usage by 48% by 2030 to help tackle climate change is very ambitious and a lot needs to be done if it was to be achieved.

JB thanked Mrs Annison for raising this issue.

Action: Members to email their suggestions to JB as to how more sustainable travel can be promoted.

ii) Tim Allen's Public Statement

CT read out a public statement received from Tim Allen, local resident caver and access campaigner, to the meeting. Mr Allen highlighted the landowner's decision to prevent access over their land to the caves at High Birkwith Farm, which had impacted on introductory and novice caving trips and groups. Mr Allen indicated that the Council of Northern Caving Clubs had tried to work with the new landowner without success. He asked whether the LAF could give any advice or help on what might further be done.

JB declared an interest in this item as a caver and former caving instructor.

JB was well aware of this issue and had met with RG and RB to discuss the matter. He explained that access to the caves was not over open access land nor did a public footpath lead to their entrance although there was one fairly close by. The previous landowner had permitted access, with a small charge for parking. JB suggested that the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group would be the right venue to discuss this issue at length. Part of their decision may be to ask the LAF to provide formal advice to the YDNPA, should this be thought appropriate.

JB also advised members that there were a few spaces on the Cave and Crag Advisory Group and invited anyone interested in joining the group for their next meeting to let him know.

**Action: The LAF to ask the Cave and Crag Advisory Group to consider this issue.
Members interested in joining the Cave and Crag Advisory Group meeting should inform JB.**

22/19. Report back from Advisory Groups

Members noted the report from the Access Officer, who had circulated the draft minutes from the relevant groups.

AL provided further detail from the meeting of the Bridleways and Restricted Byways Advisory Group held on 30 November 2022, including that the Group had asked for signage for bridleway users about the obstacle at Marrick Priory, that the Lickber Lane issues had been resolved, and that it would be useful to have additional parking during busy times for those wishing to use the popular Swale Trail. There was a wider move to promote horse riding in the National Park. The Group had considered latches for horse riders. LAF members noted the risks to horse riders from sprung self-closing gates. The Group's advice is that the hunter type of latch closing was the preferred gate latch for horse riders.

MP provided further detail from the meeting of the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Advisory Group held on 1 December 2022. The Group commended the positive news that, over the last three years, most people were obeying the Traffic Regulation Orders which were generally working well. The Group continued to monitor the condition of Long Lane, Helwith Bridge and the Ravenstonedale Moor bridleway. The North Yorkshire Path Keepers Scheme was working well – users work with rangers to deal with minor issues such as potholes and washouts and funding had been made available for this.

22/20. A New Coast to Coast Bridleway Route?

KB's report provided further detail on the feasibility of the "orange route" as a coast to coast bridleway route, as requested by the LAF at their last meeting.

Members thanked KB for her report. Discussion included the following issues:

- A braided route, providing different levels of challenge for users, would be the ideal;
- There had been an increase in cycle touring and gravel bikes since the report in 2008 and it was felt a bridleway route would become very popular;
- Some members preferred a bridleway route to have the same start and end points as the Coast to Coast walking route;
- The chosen route(s) would need to have suitable overnight accommodation to include stabling of horses and places to re-charge electric bikes;
- It would be helpful to join with the LAFs of Cumbria and North Yorkshire to agree the preferred route(s) to put to Natural England; and
- Natural England had not yet confirmed its proposals for the A19 crossing.

AL suggested that members of the Bridleways and Restricted Byways Access Group could work on developing a proposal for Natural England. AL would co-ordinate with those interested and both JB and BG expressed an interest.

Action: AL to work with relevant parties and RB to set up a group to consider the different routes and put forward a proposal to Natural England with preferred route(s) for a Coast to Coast bridleway. Such group to liaise with the LAFs of North Yorkshire and Cumbria in developing these proposals.

22/21. Officer's Report

Members noted the dates for the next meetings of the Forum. A suggestion was made that the spring meeting be face to face, possibly after a training event, and that the autumn meeting be held virtually.

Members were aware of a growing campaign for "Freedom to Roam", primarily in the south of England (which does not have as much open access land as in the north).

Members commended the Access to Eden Project, which would identify 20 walking routes within the Eden Valley project area, 5 of which to be accessible to all plus 1 sensory trail.

22/22. Update on Members' Activities

JB and HG had attended the Pennine Bridleway anniversary event.

JB had attended the regional LAF Chairs meetings.

22/23. Any other business

NH advised the Forum that Malham Parish Council had been looking into ways to improve access for all, including whether a circular route could be designed. Trampers would soon be available for hire.

There was some discussion on the wording of the LAF's fencing advice, to ensure plain rather than barbed wire was used where possible.

Action: JB to work with RB to formulate different wording for the fencing advice and circulate to members for agreement.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3:15pm.