



LOCAL ACCESS FORUM County Durham

County Durham Local Access Forum

Date Monday 22 January 2024
Time 5.00 pm
Venue Committee Room 1A/B, County Hall, Durham (Hybrid via Teams)

Business

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 October 2023 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Matters Arising
5. David Butler - talk on Turnpike Roads
6. National/Regional Issues
 - a) A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project
To receive update Angela Johnson/Mike Ogden
7. Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)
Helen Barber
8. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 4 (Pages 11 - 14)
To receive update and note minutes of the last Steering Group meeting held on 8 November 2023
Geoff Hughes / Mike Ogden
9. Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes
To receive update Mike Ogden
10. Public Access to Council-owned Land
To receive update
Pat Holding/Tom Bolton/Angela Johnson/Geoff Hughes
11. National Trust - Crookhall Gardens
To receive update Mike Ogden

12. Northern Saints Trails
To receive update Mike Ogden
13. Bright Water Landscape Project
To receive update Tom Bolton
14. North Pennines Protected Landscape
To receive feedback from the Working Group held on 6 December
Mike Ogden
15. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)
To receive update on LCWIPs
16. Membership Update
(i) To note the resignation of Mr David Maughan.
17. Member Training
18. Work Programme (Pages 15 - 18)
To consider and update Work Programme
19. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting
Monday 22 April 2024, 5.00 p.m.
20. Any other business of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration
(subject to the Chair's approval).

Lucy Gladders
Secretary
County Durham Local Access Forum
16 January 2024

To: The Members of County Durham Local Access Forum

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 23 October 2023 at 5.00 pm**

Present:

Pat Holding (Chair)

LAF Members:

T Bolton, A Johnson (Vice-Chair), M Knipe, A Marshall, N Sharpe, J Stephenson, J Welch and P Westgarth.

Councillor E Scott

Officers:

M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader

H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer

L Gladders, Senior Committee Services Officer and LAF Secretary

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

The Chair extended a warm welcome to the recently appointed LAF Members and both V Lloyd-Gent and K Rose who were in attendance to provide presentations to the Forum.

In addition, the Chair was pleased to welcome A Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change who went on to provide an overview of the areas of work covered by the service and its priorities.

Apologies for absence were received from G Hughes, D Maughan, D Pott, E Wilton and Councillor J Shuttleworth.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 Update following Chair and Vice-Chairs meeting with Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

The Forum received a joint update from the Chair and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided a summary of discussion at their most recent meeting. A Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change added that he had found the meeting to be very useful and allowed for a greater understanding as to where the forum sat, its purpose and role.

The next Chair and Vice-Chairs meeting would be held in March and a further update would be reported after the following Forum meeting in April 2024.

6 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

The Local Access Forum received a verbal update from V Lloyd-Gent, Senior Active Travel Officer who outlined that LCWIPs were used to help identify improvements that can be made to encourage everyday journeys to be carried out on foot or by cycle.

She advised that the Government recommends that all local authorities prepare LCWIPs (Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, 2017) and are prioritising funding for those authorities which have developed such plans. She advised that eleven live plans had been adopted for the areas of Bishop Auckland, Chester le Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor, Shildon and Stanley. The LCWIPs for those towns whilst listed on the website were available on request.

Further details were reported in respect of other schemes being prepared for example in Bishop Auckland which would be the first LCWIP Lite town, with its plan including proposals better suited to the rural nature of the area.

M Knipe asked whether any of the schemes were completed. In response V Lloyd-Gent explained that there was an expected lag between design and funding however went on to note some of the improvements which had already been made for example linking Rivergreen to Newton Hall including the installation of lighting.

Further discussion ensued relating to joining villages and towns and it was noted that areas identified were considered depending upon interest and appetite for what was required in that area. Following a further question regarding the surfacing of the paths, the V Lloyd-Gent advised that they were mostly surfaced with tarmac with some exceptions where planings and dust were used. In commenting further, J Welch noted that he was aware that a lot of car parks used gravel, which for wheelchair users was not easy. He

asked whether consideration could also be given to the car parking areas which provide access onto the routes.

In referencing the A177 in Durham, A Johnson noted that the road markings for cyclists were somewhat confusing and in her opinion, ineffective as the road was too narrow to pass in a vehicle without encroaching into the cycle space / over the line.

V Lloyd-Gent noted that the green dashed lines were advisory and were in place to make motorists aware of cyclists and to provide a level of comfort to those cyclists.

J Welch asked whether there was any monitoring of walkways undertaken to gauge how frequently they were being used and by which types of users. Further to that the Rights of Way Team Leader asked whether the team were aware of any issues or misuse of the improved routes.

In response V Lloyd-Gent advised that assessments on the use of some of the routes was undertaken which helped inform on numbers and types of users, although noted that the project had a strong focus on walking and wheeling. In addition, she noted that the newly upgraded sites did often discourage misuse, however as with many areas scramblers and quad bikes could cause nuisance, however this was ultimately a police enforcement issue and public reporting of these types of anti-social behaviour was key.

AGREED that the update be noted.

7 Moving Together Strategy and Action Plan

The Local Access Forum received a presentation from Kelly Rose including a brief introduction as to her role in leading on healthy weight and movement in County Durham.

The detailed presentation provided information on the Moving Together Strategy focusing on:

- Building blocks of good health
- Barriers to physical activity
- Benefits for the community including, social cohesion and reduced social isolation, healthy growth and development, improved cognitive health, enhanced thinking, learning and judgement skills
- Priority action areas and categorised network mapping
- Trialling social network analysis mapping to help partners see where agenda align and where they can go for funding / resources.

Councillor Scott asked as an individual outside of the council how would they be impacted by the strategy. In response K Rose advised that the strategy

was there to support partners to share their work, encourage engagement, tackling of root problems and restructuring the environment to make it easier to walk, wheel and cycle. She further noted that the next stage was implementation and a lot of work was going on around this to ensure there was an even spread of related activity across the county.

Further discussion took place regarding wider partners and contributors, and ways in which physical activity could be encouraged in more rural areas of county council and on land where public access was de facto.

In conclusion K Rose thanked for Forum for their suggestions and comments and noted that any further input was welcomed.

AGREED that the content of the presentation and update be noted.

8 National/Regional Issues

i) Agriculture Bill – Environmental Land Management Schemes

There was no update available on this item.

ii) Natural England – Sharepoint site for Local Access Forums

M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader advised the Forum that Natural England had recently created and shared with the LAF Secretary a link to a shared resource which would be a tool for Forum's to share information. The site was still in development and when more information was available, the link along with user details would be shared.

9 Update from Rights of Way Team

The Local Access Forum received an update from H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer who noted recent work within the team including;

- Providing support to the ROWIP to inform its delivery.
- Enforcement action at Trimdon and issues with another site at Castle Eden.
- Lost Ways – team continuing to work through outstanding applications of which there were around 350.

N Sharpe, asked whether there was list available of all Lost Ways and further to that R Evans (observer) asked whether there was an order to how the applications were assessed. In response M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader advised that applications were being assessed roughly in the order that they had been received and where possible, grouping into areas and landowners. However, there were some exceptions to this for example where user evidence was relied upon and it was important that this was gathered at the earliest opportunity. In relation to details of Lost Ways, M Ogden advised

that there is a public register of all the applications at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/6427/Public-Rights-of-Way-and-Village-Green-Landowner-Deposits?s=§ion=53B>.

AGREED that the content of the update be noted.

10 Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP 4)

The Local Access Forum received an update in respect of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan noting that consultation had concluded with responses now being analysed. M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader advised that the next step would be for the plan to be considered by Cabinet in February 2024 and a further update would be provided to the Forum when possible.

AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

11 Public Access to Council-owned Land

The Local Access Forum noted that no response had yet been received in relation to the additional areas of land identified by the LAF. A Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change advised that whilst he had also not yet received a response was aware of the workload pressures faced by that team, however, would seek to follow up and report back when an update was available.

AGREED that the update be noted.

12 Northern Saints Trails

The Local Access Forum received an update from M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader who explained that some feedback on the trail was now being received which had prompted some tweaks to signage, where there had been some reported confusion over the route.

In addition, he explained that there was significant interest in expanding the route from the wider region, however this would be dependent upon the resources available in those areas to fund any such expansion.

He further noted that counters were to be used on the routes and it was hoped that with increased publicity and wider knowledge of the routes available, increased use would start to be seen.

AGREED that the update be noted.

13 Stockton & Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes

The Local Access Forum received an update from M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader which outlined progress in respect of the project. He advised that almost all land purchases had now been completed and work was ongoing on improving existing and building new routes between now and March 2024.

P Westgarth asked whether the routes would join up with other existing railway paths. In response M Ogden advised that they would not.

J Welch asked what condition and gradient the strips of land which were being purchased were in and in response M Ogden advised that the land was being purchased in whatever state it was in, however noted that as the land formed part of the historic line, it followed the same inclines, however, was being improved to a standard suitable for all users.

AGREED that the update be noted.

14 Bright Water Landscape Project

The County Durham Local Access Forum received an update on the Bright Water Landscape Project and Programme Managers' Report for September – October 2023.

T Bolton provided a summary of the key areas of work and their progress, noting some of the issues which had caused delays to the acquisition of some fen land.

Further details were reported in respect of 'Great North Fen' of which Ricknall Carrs and Bishop's Fen would form the first phase.

Further information was provided around historical data capture, funding and evaluation and T Bolton advised that whilst it was disappointing that there was now to be no planned Board meetings this year, the last meeting would take place in February 2024. A final celebration event, including visits to the wetlands would be held in Summer 2024.

AGREED that the content of the update and Programme Managers report be noted.

15 North Pennines AONB Partnership

AGREED That the minutes of the last of AONB working group held on 9 August 2023 be received and noted.

16 Membership Update

The Local Access Forum noted the recent resignation of J Kirtley and asked that the Forums thanks and appreciation for her role on the Forum be forwarded to her.

17 Member Training

The Chair asked that any Forum member who has any training requirements or needs forward those to the LAF Secretary for further consideration.

Discussion ensued regarding potential topics of training and it was noted that First Aid for Walk Leaders and basic Rights of Way Training could potentially be of benefit.

AGREED That any training needs be sent to the LAF Secretary for review ahead of the next meeting.

18 Work Programme

The County Durham Local Access Forum reviewed the work programme noting that several areas of work remained unallocated. The Chair therefore suggested that should any member have any interest in any of the topics listed that they make those known to the LAF Secretary following the meeting.

M Knipe commented that he would be interested in representing the LAF on the North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group alongside J Welch.

J Stephenson further added that he had a particular interest in Lost Ways and would like to form part of the sub-group looking at this area of work.

AGREED that any further expressions of interest be identified prior to the next meeting.

19 Dates of Meetings for 2023

AGREED That the dates for the next cycle of meetings be as follows, all meeting to be held at 5.00 p.m.

Monday 22 January 2024
Monday 22 April 2024
Monday 22 July 2024
Monday 21 October 2024

This page is intentionally left blank

ROWIP4 Steering Group Meeting 8th November 2023 – Meeting Minutes:

Action List:

- To discuss the commitment to the auditing of signage and whether Highways can get involved with Mark Readman at meeting on Friday 10th November – KGP/PO/MO.
- Amend text in draft to include *at least or minimum of 10 accessible routes* - KGP.
- To set up a meeting with Deborah and Kelly to discuss place-based approaches - KGP.
- To think about contacting partner organisations to encourage the adoption of ROWIP4 – KGP/PO/MO.
- Reference the need for balance between access and user security when using Public Rights of Way or build on current wording - KGP.
- To see whether Health Impact Assessments can be adapted and use in terms of Public Rights of Way – KGP/PO.
- To see whether a What3Words style function could be incorporated on prospective app to enable public to easily monitor PROW – KGP/PO/MO.

General Comments:

The Moving Together should be referenced as a Shared countywide Moving Together Strategy; it is not simply the Council's Plan. ROWIP should adopt the same approach as it has been developed through extensive stakeholder involvement and feedback.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 1:

The countywide auditing of signposts will be not included in the Delivery Plan. We recognise the importance of a countywide auditing process, but this is not included in the Delivery Plan because it is an existing statutory of the Rights of Way Team. The Delivery Plan is aiming to deliver new projects with secured investment.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 2:

Commitment to the auditing of signage should be in the lifetime of the Plan. Signage is important and is currently not in a good state with faded signage across the county, which creates an inaccessible network.

ACTIONS:

- To discuss the commitment to the auditing of signage and whether Highways can get involved with Mark Readman at meeting on Friday 10th November.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 3:

Can 'new' be put into the title of Policy 3? Argument is that this is not entirely true, and that the Policy aims to build on the current network.

Steering Group members highlighted that investment in existing network can be more important due to the existing desire lines than creating new routes from scratch. It is the availability of the route that is new rather than an actual PROW being built from scratch, with a greater capacity of these accessible routes being achieved.

ACTIONS:

- Amend text in draft to include *at least or minimum of 10 accessible routes* to reflect that if we develop 10 accessible routes, we won't stop there and will aim to continue the provision of accessible routes.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 4:

Moving Together in Peterlee, a Sport England funded approach – wide range of partners; delivery of Moving Together Strategy in a place-based approach with discussions of volunteers and ambassadors. This works well with ROWIP4 in terms of understanding how we can work on the ground and deliver pragmatic change.

ACTIONS:

- To set up a meeting with Deborah and Kelly to discuss place-based approaches and how ROWIP4 can build on community involvement as seen with the Moving Together Strategy.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 5:

It is important that the publicity campaign looks at wider communications and other documents produced by partners. For example, the Moving Together Strategy is sharing aligned messages with partners; the strategy aims to launch with partners to see how actions will be met and how the communications with partners and the public can be achieved.

With regard to comments on the ROWIP4 consultation around GP social prescribing link workers – Kelly outlined that updated healthy weight stats and publicly accessible mapping is on Durham Insights. Strategies can also be placed on Durham Insights for the public to access.

There were also discussions around encouraging others to adopt/endorse ROWIP4 and other documents at the same time – Feb 2024 is a good date as hopefully ROWIP4 will be adopted. Is there a potential to incorporate other logos on the document?

The Moving Together Strategy is measuring the growth of people involved and becoming a Moving Together champion to see who's moving across the county – social movement and everyone is encouraged to get involved.

ACTIONS:

- How can we encourage everybody – partners and the community – to see it as their plan rather than simply a council strategy?
- To get inspiration and work in partnership with Public Health and the Moving Together Strategy.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 6:

Emma and Mike are currently filming about Public Rights of Way and discussing the importance of the Countryside Code; this is actually happening which is so great to see due to it being a key part of ROWIP4 Policy 6!

It is important to note that Countryside Team and Police work together across the County, as does the Rights of Way Team. Reference to the fact there's balance between access and user security. 'share with care' is an approach the Countryside Team are taking by installing posts/structures which state clearly 'share with care'.

ACTIONS:

- Reference the need for balance between access and user security when using Public Rights of Way or build on current wording.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 7:

Is there scope for developer contribution to be part of the Delivery Plan? No PO thinks the delivery plan can be a reference point for developers, local community and council officers when negotiating public benefits.

Discussions around Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and access (in terms of public access to Public Rights of Way and Railway Paths etc), with questions on whether we could work closely with Ecology whilst delivering ROWIP4 and the Delivery Plan. Mike and Darryl argued that access is usually seen as a hinderance and therefore commonly conflicts with BNG and Ecologists, since access near new developments in areas required for BNG conflicts with protecting the environment. On reflection, PO agreed we need to keep BNG separate from new PROW due to the tensions with local habitat creation.

Suggestion that when developing one of the 10 in 10 routes and a developer is looking for funding, developers could potentially contribute to the development of any projects in the delivery plan, and this could enable them to meet their s106 obligations. Need to check whether the s106 system would allow this.

Health Impact Assessments as part of the Moving Together Strategy are linked to Housing Developments of 100+ (standard threshold) - can this be adapted to Public Rights of Way?

ACTIONS:

- To see whether Health Impact Assessments can be adapted and use in terms of Public Rights of Way.

General comments on ROWIP4 Policy 8:

It is unclear to the public how issues on the Public Right of Way network can be reported and which teams' information can be passed to. The current system is a one-size-fits-all approach, and there may be potential for this to be improved. There is no perfect solution for this. Having several options for people may be the best approach and aim for internal teams to get better at filtering appropriate comments and responding.

ACTIONS:

- Emma suggested a potential idea for reporting issues that this could be incorporated onto the app with a What3Words style function that allows you to pin point where the issue is and maybe take a picture which could be delivered directly to appropriate place/team. This is definitely something to consider.

General comments on ROWIP4:

With farmyards, maintaining the diversion is crucial.

Whether an annual monitoring report could be produced or even better tied the Moving together Monitoring Framework.

Next meeting yet to be arranged.

This page is intentionally left blank

County Durham Local Access Forum
Work Programme January 2024

Topic	Role	Member (Lead) and Group	Task	Target Date
Co-ordinate LAF Activity	Prepare agendas, chair meetings, coordinate links with other bodies	(Chair)/ Vice-Chair	Prepare agendas for quarterly meetings. Liaise with secretariat. Chair meetings, prepare minutes with secretariat	1-2 weeks prior to mtgs.
DCC Consultations	To respond to consultation documents	Chair/all		
Bright Water Landscape Project	Member of Board of Partnership	T Bolton	Ensure successful delivery of access elements	4 year programme commenced July 2018 – last Board meeting to take place October 2023.
Coast Path Partnership	Represent the LAF at meetings and respond to consultations	(A Johnson)		To note that this group has not yet formally established.
Public Access to Council owned land	To consider sites for permissive access	(P Holding) T Bolton G Hughes A Johnson S Robinson (Head of Corporate Property and Land)		
Regional LAF Liaison	Represent the LAF at regional meetings with other LAFs and Natural England	Chair/Vice-Chair	Attend meetings as and when required	
DCC Liaison	To meet with a Senior Officer twice yearly to discuss current LAF business	All		
ROWIP 4	Support Officers to deliver ROWIP	(G Hughes) Pat Holding Angela Johnson Tom Bolton		
County Durham's Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan	Coordinate LAF involvement			
North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation	Represent the LAF	Jim Welch Mike Knipe	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report	

Working Group			back on issues as and when necessary	
Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group	Represent the LAF	Jim Welch (1 vacancy)	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report back on issues as and when necessary	
Government Consultations	Respond on behalf of the LAF	(Chair)/all	As required	
Annual Report	Completion of Draft LAF Annual Report	A Johnson	Co-ordinate updates from members on individual work streams	
Working with Public Health	Represent the LAF at local meetings and lead on any consultation	J Welch	Attend quarterly meetings of the Healthy Weight Alliance Group	
Common Land	Liase with DCC on issues around the protection of Common Land and respond to consultation on applications for deregistration	(T Bolton)/J Welch		
2026 – Lost Ways	To explore ‘lost ways’	Sub-Group:- (A Johnson) P Holding G Hughes J Stephenson		
A66 North Trans-Pennine Route Project	To represent LAF at meetings of the non-motorised user workshop and stakeholder reference group	Angela Johnson		
Durham Woodland Revival	Point of Contact	Geoff Hughes	Await information on success of funding application	
Tees-Swale Project	Point of Contact			
Heritage 100	Point of contact	Jim Welch		

Walks				
Darlington and Stockton Railway – Walking and Cycling Opportunities				
Campaign for Temporary Footpath Diversions – Walker Safety				
Slow Ways	Await developments	Geoff Hughes		

This page is intentionally left blank