



LOCAL ACCESS FORUM County Durham

County Durham Local Access Forum

Date **Monday 22 April 2024**
Time **5.00 pm**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall (Hybrid)**

Business

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 January 2024 (Pages 3 - 8)
4. Matters Arising
5. Bright Water Landscape Project
Presentation by Paul Black, Programme Manager Bright Water
6. Lost Ways
Presentation by Rights of Way Team
7. National/Regional Issues
 - a) A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project
To receive update
 - b) Environmental Land Management Schemes
To receive update
8. Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)
Mike Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader
9. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 4 2024-2034
To endorse the Rights of Way Improvement Plan ([RoWIP4](#)).
10. Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes
To receive update – Mike Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader
11. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)
To receive update.

12. Northern Saints Trails
To receive update – Mike Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader
13. Public Access to Council-owned Land
To receive update.
14. North Pennines National Landscape
To receive feedback from the meeting of the Access and Recreation and Pennine National Trails Northern Working Groups held on 17 April 2024.
15. Health
To receive update on the Healthy Weight Alliance Group meeting held on 5 February 2024
16. Notification of Open Access Restrictions
To note Notifications received under Section 22 and 23(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
 - i) [2024030114 - Sand Edge Common](#)
 - ii) [2024020154 – Birk Hatt Moor](#)
 - iii) [2024040153 – Cotherstone Moor](#)
17. Member Training
18. Work Programme (Pages 9 - 12)
To consider and update the Work Programme.
19. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting
Monday 22 July 2024, time to be confirmed, Crook Hall, Durham (site visit to take place prior to meeting).
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 April 2024

To: The Members of County Durham Local Access Forum

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in on **Monday 22 January 2024 at 5.00 pm**

Pat Holding (Chair)

LAF Members: T Bolton, B Hodgson, G Hughes, M Knipe, A Marshall, N Sharpe, J Stephenson, and P Westgarth.

Officers:

M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader

H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer

L Gladders, Senior Committee Services Officer and LAF Secretary

P Anderson, Strategic Highways Manager

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from A Johnson, D Pott, J Welch, E Wilton and Councillors E Scott and J Shuttleworth.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 October 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October were confirmed as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 David Butler - Talk on Turnpike Roads

The Chair welcomed D Butler, who was in attendance to provide a presentation on the history of Turnpike Roads in County Durham.

The detailed presentation provided information relating to turnpikes which were a legally defined stretch of road, administered by trustees, on which users were charged tolls, which funded the maintenance and improvement of the road.

The presentation provided historical images alongside information regarding their historical road use, road maintenance, turnpike trusts, opposition, trustees, tolls, infrastructure, capital expenditure, administration and what followed at the end of use of turnpikes.

The Chair on behalf of the LAF thanked Mr Butler for his very interesting presentation and for taking time to attend the meeting.

6 National/Regional Issues

a A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project

It was noted that a decision had been postponed on this and no further update was available.

7 Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)

The Local Access Forum received an update from H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer who noted recent work undertaken / ongoing and included an update on Lost Ways which advised the Forum that the team were continuing to work through outstanding applications of which there were around 350. H Barber noted challenges to applications access to records and archives and the impact that this had on progressing work. She further noted that the team had been working with the police in a recent enforcement case which had been time-consuming.

G Hughes noted that the assessment of Lost Ways was a time-consuming process and he queried whether the LAF had a view whether priority should be given to the assessment of community routes as a strategic importance. M Ogden explained that this was happening to some extent already as value to the public was an important factor to consider. He added that a number of other factors were also considered including public benefit, when the application was received and where landowners could be grouped or applications connected with others.

Confirmation was also provided that the deadline for applications to be received was 2031 which was an extension to the previous deadline of 2026.

Registers were available online [here](#).

AGREED that the content of the update be noted.

8 Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 4

The Local Access Forum received an update in relation to the RoWIP(4) noting that notes of the most recent Steering Group meeting held on 8 November were included in the papers pack for information.

It was noted that following the conclusion of the consultation period, the plan was to be considered by Cabinet on 14 February 2024 and if agreed would be adopted by the Council.

G Hughes asked whether the LAF should also formally adopt the ROWIP (4) once agreed by Cabinet along with other organisations / statutory bodies.

T Bolton further asked whether the council's overview and scrutiny committees had had the opportunity to input into the process. M Ogden confirmed that the plan had not been considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

M Ogden noted the points raised by G Hughes in relation to the Forum's formal adoption of the plan and noted that this would be followed up with a view to placing on the next meeting's agenda for either endorsement or approval whichever was appropriate in line with the Forum's Terms of Reference.

AGREED that the update be noted and that the item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

9 Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes

The Local Access Forum received an update from M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader which noted that work was till progressing well on the project, noting recent land acquisitions, physical works and those acquisitions nearing the end of negotiations. More work was expected to progress in the next few months and a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

AGREED that the update be noted.

10 Public Access to Council-owned Land

The Local Access Forum noted that a formal response had yet to be received in relation to the outstanding queries raised by the Forum.

G Hughes expressed his dissatisfaction with how he felt the LAF was regarded and that a response should be sought without further delay. P Anderson, Strategic Highways Manager who was in attendance agreed that he would take this matter up as a priority with the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change who had attended the previous meeting and was aware of the issue.

AGREED that should a response not be forthcoming a further letter would be sent on behalf of the LAF requesting a formal written response.

11 National Trust – Crook Hall Gardens

The Local Access Forum received an update from M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader in relation to progress following the recent acquisition of Crook Hall Gardens by the National Trust. He went on to explain that the site which lay within Durham Green Corridor was accessed by many recorded and non-recorded walking routes. A National Trust Officer had indicated that they would gladly welcome the LAF to the site during the Summer to provide an update on the work taking place and to provide a site visit.

AGREED: that the July meeting be held at Crook Hall Gardens.

12 Northern Saints Trails

The Local Access Forum received an update on progress which included details around maintenance and progress against meeting developmental milestones including a proposed Walking Festival.

Details were also reported regarding longer-term maintenance work with reference to Chester-Le-Street and riverside routes.

AGREED that the update be noted.

13 Bright Water Landscape Project

The Local Access Forum received an update from T Bolton on the Bright Water project noting progress against various aspects of the project and areas involved. A further Board meeting was expected to be held on 7 February and further information would be shared at the next LAF meeting scheduled to be held in April 2024.

G Hughes raised a number of queries, including asking for clarification regarding Holdsworth Bridge to Fishburn and whether this was to be designated Bridleway. He further asked for information relating to Bishops Fen and how that was planned to be improved going forward.

T Bolton noted the comments and agreed to raise with Paul Black ahead of the next Board meeting.

AGREED that the update be noted.

14 North Pennines Protected Landscape

The Local Access Forum noted feedback from the last meeting of the Working Group which had been held on 6 December. Notes of the meeting had been sent to the LAF ahead of the meeting for information.

15 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

An update from the Senior Active Travel Officer had been provided to the LAF Secretary prior to the meeting which advised that:

Delivery was now taking place on LCWIP routes in Bishop Auckland through the Stronger Towns Fund and Durham City through the Transforming Cities Fund.

Design works for LCWIP priority routes were also underway for:

Spennymoor
Peterlee
Crook
Bishop Auckland
Seaham
Stanley
Consett

2 x Cycle Super Routes

16 Membership Update

AGREED to note the resignation of D Maughan.

17 Member Training

M Knipe expressed interest in receiving some further information / training around Lost Ways. M Ogden, Rights of Way Team Leader agreed to make arrangements for the Forum to receive a presentation on this topic.

18 Work Programme

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

19 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

Monday 22 April 2024, 5.00 p.m. Venue to be confirmed

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County Durham Local Access Forum
Work Programme April 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 – final stages of delivery
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 Working Group	Represent the LAF	Jim Welch Mike Knipe	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report 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	Liaise 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	Project End - removed from agenda April 2024 onwards
Tees-Swale Project	Point of Contact			
Heritage 100 Walks	Point of contact	Jim Welch		

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

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