

# North east Regional Local Access Forum Chairs and Vice Chairs

7<sup>th</sup> November 2013-11-11 10:00 – 12:30

Dolphin Centre, Darlington

## Minutes

Present: Ivor Crowther (north east Chief Executive of Heritage Lottery Fund), Robin Daniels (Regional Chair), Geoff Hughes (Regional Vice Chair), George Astbury (Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum, Jim Milner (Natural England), Victor Cadaxa (Observer), Beryl Bird.

Apologies; Gill Featonby (Chair Northumberland Joint), John Sugden (Chair Redcar and Cleveland), Rob Brown (Vice Chair Tees Valley).

1. RD welcomed everyone to the meeting and all introduced themselves.
2. RD welcomed Ivor Crowther to the meeting, Ivor began by describing the background to the present Heritage Lottery Fund, detailing its regionalisation in 2002 with a Development Team to support applications. At present there are 11 staff; all are specialists and are able to support applications. The projects first began in 1994 with the Parks Programme and in 1998 Landscape scale projects began with the Mineral Valleys. Landscape Partnership Schemes number 69 nationally awarding £108M, there are presently 8 in the north east region attracting funding of £14M. Partnership funding has increased this by a further £10M.

In April 2013 a 5 year north east Strategic Plan was introduced, this was complemented by a north east Strategic Framework, which in turn has developed into the Heritage People and Communities which is able to broaden the width of the outcomes.

The Board of Trustees meets monthly and has increased grants from £100K to £3m for Landscape Partnership bids as there is an understanding the scale of these large projects simply cost more, accordingly the area size can be between 20 square kilometres to 200 square kilometres or higher if the area is of significance.

The key is the role of the partners meeting 9 main outcomes, including better management, recorded information for the future, developed skills, volunteer time; the opportunity to learn more about local heritage/habitats/landscapes, the opportunity to improve the area as a better place to live and work, the need to reduce any environmental impact and the requirement to include as wide a range of people as possible.

Ivor described the north east schemes in some detail; these include the Mineral Valleys, Living North Pennines, Limestone Landscapes, Heart of Teasdale, Peregrini in Lindisfarne, River Tees Re-discovered, Allen Valleys and the recently approved

Land of Oak and Iron in the Derwent Valley. This latest project includes mature woodland, brick ovens, an unprotected landscape with a fear of potential opencast. Partners include the Three Rivers LNP.

Ivor had a list of points to consider when making an application and these included:

1. Not creating artificial areas – local character assessments would need to be included
2. The project must be valued by local people, who need to be on the board or management team
3. Natural partnerships should emerge, for example at Lindisfarne the RSPB were active partners.
4. The project could be open to over 200 square kilometres – if it is determined by the character of the landscape.
5. The partners must deliver for the lifetime of the project – this could be 3-5 years.

The Heritage Lottery won't fund:

1. Construction of new buildings
2. Heavy weighting given to one single project,
3. Must be for the public benefit – not agricultural or commercial use
4. Don't fund civil engineering – they don't build bridges, new roads, or prevent flooding.

GH outlined the need for long term sustainability; IC described the requirement for legacy planning at the beginning of each project, as volunteers are often required to manage habitats or buildings. The Trustees are interested in taper funding; the Heritage Lottery do not want 'to be a dependant revenue funder'.

GH asked about the type of agreements that could be put in place to ensure the longer term viability of the project once complete, IC described the maintenance agreement for Throston Engine House which may last 25 years. At present some local authorities do have financial commitment issues; however volunteer time can often ease negotiations.

JM wondered if LAFs could add value to these projects - dedicated routes for example would make a project more sustainable. JM said P4C links would not have happened without links being made to Local Partnerships bids.

GH hoped Oak and Iron could be supported by the three LAFs involved; Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear with further links with Local Nature Partnerships.

*Action: BB to invite the Project Manager of Oak and Iron to the May meeting*

RD described the Access Audit for River Tees Re-discovered which had been completed by the TVLAF and his concerns that the Teesdale Way would be subsumed into both projects, when it deserves to stand alone. IC thought that the two projects should be working together and offered to assist.

Two more examples followed – Limestone Landscapes (and the Tyne and Wear LAF) and higher rights on the Durham coastal path – RD thought the Landscape Partnership bids must demonstrate their links with LAFs and their local communities to support bids and work with the Heritage Lottery, IC further thought these links should have been made at the beginning with Limestone Landscapes.

To conclude Ivor described heritage environment tourism; he quoted a report by Adonis who cited Northumberland, for example, which would be left with an unsustainable economy if heritage tourism was removed from the local economy.

RD thanked Ivor for his very interesting presentation and the meeting resumed.

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting

- a. Defra response to the political deficit was discussed, it was agreed to continue raising the issue when appropriate. *Action: RD to respond, BB/RD to draft.*
- b. Regional Co-ordinators – *RD/BB to draft clarification request from Natural England.*
- c. Printed papers – GH requested copies. *BB to post.*
- d. Flood damage – *RD/BB to draft.*
- e. MENE – *JM suggested joint approach with Durham LAF MENE Champion Chris Wiltshire where together they could attempt to interpret data to demonstrate potential use.*
- f. Regional Action Plan – *JM to draft short list of defined priorities for next meeting*
- g. Environment Agency – *RD/BB to draft policy request on access*

#### 2. Natural England Update

Jim described the P4C data, £2M budget allocated amongst 42 projects, with 4 in the north east. Yorkshire have the greatest number of projects, Defra have begun a 12 month evaluation into the national P4C picture.

Any future funding depended in Pillar 2 and the CAP consultation presently underway. Any future funding for 2014 is likely to come via the Leader programme as any permissive access was unlikely to be in the agri-environment schemes. Ted Liddle, from Northumberland JLAF had expressed an interest in attending the Defra Workshop in Hexham ; would he attend on behalf of the Regional group? *BB to request.*

JM outlined the revised regional structure at Natural England; the new Area Manager (appointed 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) would have a greater role and a north east budget.

*It was agreed to invite the new post holder to the May 2014 meeting- BB*

The national newsletter was gaining momentum, contributions were improving.

### 3. Regional Roundup

- a. TVLAF – The River Tees Re-discovered Access Audit was completed, together with a list of circular trails. RD re-iterated his concern about the Teesdale Way and thought a joint meeting with the ROW Officers involved was a way forward.
- b. Durham – GH described the problem of landowner membership, and further land dedication. Following a recent meeting, 'sustaining the Commons' at Durham, GH invited DCC to raise the profile of the local Commons for access and their local communities. Durham were also discussing higher rights with Redcar and Cleveland LAF as regards higher rights on the coastal path. Durham LAF has also asked the DCC if they could be included in the sale of any future land where access was of interest.
- c. Northumberland – GA described poor communication between appointing authority departments and complaints about the Definitive Map and wondered if other LAFs had similar experiences. The LAF is involved in the Sills Project and the Dukesfield sites; both projects using Heritage grants. Motorbikes in the Cheviots are causing problems and the LAF is working alongside the Police.
- d. Tyne and Wear – VC had attended as an Observer and described the current position of the Tyne and Wear LAF. The joint appointing authorities are advertising for new members and it is envisaged that the new Tyne and Wear LAF will be up and running in the spring.

### 4. National Conference – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in Durham

Workshop subjects could include: MENE Use (public health person), Environment Agency policy on Access, LEPS/LNPs, LAF recruitment – best practice and national picture, National Lottery (IC)/funding sources, Commons (Newcastle University).

*Action: probable regional meeting required to manage Northern Conference in Jan/Feb.*

*BB to call.*

