

# Tees Valley Local Access Forum AGM

24<sup>th</sup> March 2015

St Margaret's Church Hall, Middlesbrough

**Present:** Robin Daniels (Chair), Chris Scaife, Yvonne Ramage, Malcolm Thompson, Christine Corbett, Austin Cairns (Observer and Chair Friends of Blue Bell Beck), Stewart Williams, Mike Roff, Mike Cherrett, Beryl Bird.

**Apologies:** Rob Brown (Vice Chair), Rob Morrow, Councillor Charles Rooney, Fiona Campbell, Judith Underwood, Deborah Jefferson, David Reed.

## 1. Introductions and Welcome

Robin (RD) welcomed everyone to the meeting all introduced themselves.

2. **Apologies** – as above.

3. **Minutes of meeting held November 2014** – all agreed.

4. **Matters arising** – there were no matters arising.

## 5. Chairman's Report

RD described the present position of the DO now back in post, and the re-structuring work proposed for the TVLAF. Also described was the recent work undertaken regionally in conjunction with Natural England. Rob Aubrook, Area Manager for the north east of England had attended and endorsed the production of a Scoping Report giving a context for access in the north east. The financial support for Regional Co-ordination is being withdrawn and the sustainability of the regional group is now under question. SW queried whether a north east regional Access Strategy would supercede RoWIPs, RD thought that it wouldn't, that it was more generic and would mean that the Tees Valley whilst not playing a part in a Regional Transport Plan would have a document that could be used to define access priorities.

SW asked if the regional group would be able to lobby Local Authorities to continue to employ Countryside Access Officers, could they be reminded of their legal responsibilities? Chris Scaife (CS) thought it would be beneficial to have this expertise available. RD was content to recommend this to the Regional Chairs. Mike Cherrett (MC) reminded the meeting that Stockton on Tees Borough Council only has half an Officer available. This section of the meeting was closed and the Chair stood down.

## 6. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

CS described the meeting as inquorate and that the election could be formally confirmed at the next meeting in June 2015. There were two nominations, Robin Daniels for Chair and Rob Brown for Vice Chair. Both were willing to stand again.

AGM Closed

## **1. TVLAF The Future**

RD and BB described the work undertaken to re-invigorate and engage the membership, a series of informal meetings with some members and elected members had taken place and the document 'The Future' was a result of this. Mike Roff (MR) requested that 'experience' be added to the list of qualities shared by the membership.

Yvonne Ramage (YR) asked to be involved in Cycling Consultations as opposed to LNPs, BB clarified that member's names had only been pencilled in to roles within the Work Programme and that it was entirely flexible.

MR asked about the health of the Friends Group. CS outlined the paid work undertaken by the Friends on the Teesdale Way which enabled matched funding to be made. RD described the arms length approach to the setting up of FoG, and hoped that once members became involved in work in the TVLAF it would assist the development of FoG. The TVLAF FoG was the first in the country to be set up, without support nationally, and now it was encouraged as a way forward by NE/Defra. SW described the support given by the Veolia Trust to the Friends of Blue Bell Beck and the work of MBC's Wellbeing Fund.

BB informed the meeting that all members had re-newed membership with the exception of Deborah Jefferson and that membership was for two years.

## **2. River Tees Re-Discovered Update**

RD welcomed Christine Corbett, Community and Access Officer of the Landscape Partnership to the meeting. She outlined 13 of the 20 projects she is involved in, together with the partners in the project.

These include Tees Alien Invaders with the Tees River Trust looking at invasive species, the Guided Walks Programme (looking for further Walk Leader volunteers), the Green Activities Project which seeks small scale improvements, for example, at the Tees Barrage and at Snipe Pond in Darlington in conjunction with Cummins Engines.

Honey Pot Wood Educational Spaces group is looking at the wildlife there, the North Tees Trail is being improved between Port Clarence and North Gare.

Christine is a keen walker and has walked most of the Teesdale Way recently with one remaining stretch to go! She is working with each of the LA partners on the Teesdale Way; Rob Morrow is installing kissing gates, Redcar & Cleveland and Tata Steel are involved in developing both linear and circular walks off the Teesdale Way, and R&C are also working on the Green Shoots Walk. Six Apprentices skills are being developed across a range of access improvement works.

Community links are very high on Christine's agenda and she attends regular Community Launches, they always generate good feedback and increase the momentum of the work being undertaken.

RD thanked Christine for her update.

## **3. Skerne Landscape Partnership Update**

Malcolm Thompson (MT) described the Bright Water Landscape Partnership bid, north of Darlington to Hurworth Burn (where the Skerne rises) in Durham. It is a 200km project area and partners include Durham Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Durham and Tees Valley LAF. Durham LAF has asked if the Skerne Valley Way could be opened, MR thought the route took users a long way from the river but wondered if the route could be opened to Coatham Mundeville or Bishop Middleham as at these locations public transport was available.

#### **4. Local Nature Partnership Update**

Rob Brown had let the meeting know that there had been no further meetings on the work of the Local Nature Partnership this quarter. He would update as detail was available.

#### **5. Coastal Access**

CS set the scene for the latest stage in the Tees Valley of the England Coastal Path from North Gare to Filey Brigg. The majority of the route was in place, using the Cleveland Way at Newport Bridge. The southern section of the proposed route will be out for consultation later this week.

However, the difficulty for Natural England lay in the northern section of the route from Hartlepool to Port Clarence.

After consultation with partners, including the LAF, it was agreed to attempt the installation of a RoW to an area without an historic RoW network. Much liaison work has been undertaken with partners, including the Environment Agency, the North Tees Natural Network, and SBC/HBC Officers which has secured the consent of the industrial owners of sites along the proposed route.

SEMCOR have allowed access over pipelines and gantry, SAVIC suggesting a boardwalk access alongside the lagoon to Saltholme and the RSPB, and new access behind CalorGas; and whilst the report has not been submitted to the SoS it is 'looking do-able'.

Natural England now have template for approaching access on similar routes nationally. RD thought Natural England should be congratulated for the work they have undertaken to secure the northern section, following encouragement from the TVLAF to commence this work.

#### **6. RoW Officers Updates**

##### **Darlington**

MT outlined the recent work undertaken by the Authority, Darlington notes are attached.

##### **Hartlepool**

CS outlined a series of works undertaken in the last quarter, Hartlepool notes are attached.

##### **Stockton on Tees**

Rob Morrow was unable to attend the meeting, and Stockton on Tees notes are attached.

##### **Middlesbrough**

SW detailed works to paths, furniture installation, and the continued success of Friends Groups, Middlesbrough notes are attached to these Minutes.

Some discussion took place about identifying 'lost' routes between the Officers. SW has requested Management Companies within new developments manage RoW.

*Action: RD thought a glossary of terms should be available to the membership. BB to liaise with Officers to produce.*

#### **7. AOB**

The next meeting in Darlington would need to be towards the close of June 2015 to accommodate holidays.

*Action: BB to liaise with MT.*

Meeting closed at 7:45pm