

# **Tees Valley Local Access Forum**

## **AGM Minutes**

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017, 10:00am  
Summerhill Country Park, Hartlepool

**Attending:** Rob Brown (Vice Chair), Mike Roff (Vice Chair), Yvonne Ramage (Chair), Councillor Carson, Paul Harman, Mike Cherrett.

Officers Attending: Rob Morrow, Chris Scaife, Malcolm Thompson, Beryl Bird,

**Apologies:** Councillor Rooney, Deborah Jefferson, Robin Daniels, Fiona Campbell, Judith Underwood, Stewart Williams, David Reed, Christine Corbett, Robin Daniels, Graham Clingan.

### **1. Introduction and Welcome**

Yvonne Ramage welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Chris Scaife for hosting.

### **2. Apologies**

As above.

### **3. Minutes of Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

MR proposed they were an accurate representation and RB seconded.

### **4. Matters Arising**

#### **4.1 Letter to Hartlepool Mail**

YR described the background for the letter to the Hartlepool Mail objecting to the volume of dog waste, necessitating collection by Hartlepool Countryside Volunteers and Brownies at Seaton Dunes, a SSSI. The letter was published in October 2016 with no responses from readers.

*Action: BB to get a verbal update from DJ to see if there had been any improvement on site.*

### **5. Chairs Report**

5.1 YR thanked the Officers for their updates and the members for their responses to all the consultations discussed over the previous 12 months.

5.2 Although there had been no further regional meeting, YR hoped the papers developed for use by the Planning teams describing access priorities would be widely used.

5.3 We have been advised that the national conference had been postponed. We had not yet established who would attend and what matters we wished discussed before notification arrived of its postponement.

5.4 The Teesdale Way website would be discussed in more detail later, but it was clear that one was required to promote the positive work underway.

5.5. The Future – YR asked members to consider recruiting friends or colleagues who would make a positive contribution to the work of the Forum, as much work was being undertaken by the same members.

YR handed the meeting to CS to manage the AGM.

6. **AGM**

CS introduced the AGM:

Yvonne Ramage had agreed to stand again as Chair – proposed by MC and seconded by Councillor Carson.

Rob Brown agreed to stand as Vice Chair, proposed by Councillor Carson and seconded by Yvonne Ramage.

Mike Roff agreed to stand as Vice Chair proposed by YR and seconded by PH.

CS closed the meeting and handed back to YR.

AGM Closed

YR welcomed Andrew Best, ECP Senior Access Advisor for Natural England.  
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1. **England Coast Path Update**

Andrew Best outlined the background to the work, and then moved on to discuss the latest stages, which include the publication on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017 of two stretches - Skegness to Bridlington and Amble to South Bents. A copy of his presentation has been circulated.

Questions included; PH described his recent walk to Crimdon Dene and how tedious it is following the path in and out and wondered if there should be a clearly indicated straight line path? CS thought he and the other Officers would promote the route in their authorities using linked routes. AB described the question as a matter of balance, as Natural England does not want a huge amount of spreading room. This led to a discussion about signage, abbreviating the signs to read ECP was now not recommended by Natural England and the signage must in future include the famous national Trail acorn in its design.

RB hoped there would be signage at the Transporter Bridge even though he understood that using the Transporter was not the route. AB described a bid designed to link Middlesbrough to Saltholme using the Transporter Bridge, CS thought signage would be included to complement the offer.

PH wondered if conversations had taken place with the bus companies. AB described their initial plans which included subsidies available to the bus companies, but since then the funding had been pared back. The East Riding section had included bus stops; AB agreed to make enquiries of the national group agreeing with MR that it would generate business as the routes would be promoted.

YR thanked Andrew for his detailed presentation, and in particular the Officers: Rob, Chris and Stewart who had been involved from the beginning and had played an enormous part in the success of the route developed on the north east coast.

2. **North Brierton Dog Control Project**

YR described to the meeting the background as to the need for the project, and Rob Brown outlined its introduction to his farm. He firstly thanked Chris and Beryl for

their work in getting the project off the ground which had resulted in the installation of the signage on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2017.

One sign in particular seems to have attracted a lot of abuse; it has been removed twice now, so Chris and Rob agreed that a new sign erected at the entrance to the path in Dalton Piercy would be appropriate.

Rob's overall impression was that fewer people were walking the route, and all but two had put their dogs on leads.

Rob recommended members access the website "Sheepwatch", <http://www.terena.co.uk/sheepwatch-uk.html> a project set up and managed by Terena Plowright whose aim was to record all attacks on sheep, so an accurate picture could emerge of the damage to animals and businesses.

CS thought the project was in early days, but hoped if successful it could be rolled out to other farmers who were in a similar situation.

PH wondered if the route couldn't be diverted and was this process expensive?

MT outlined the requirement to offer a permissive path (which would be provided by in this case a neighbour) whilst the original path was still available. The costs are around £2500, but would reduce if the Deregulation Act came into force. Rob's neighbours were reluctant to host such a path crossing onto and through their land.

MR thought a route accessing busy farmyards was an H&S risk; CS described the present legal position, which cannot take safety into account as part of the legal procedure to divert.

RB describing attending a recent H&S event where the H&S Executive rep believed farmyards should be treated the same as construction sites as they were so dangerous. The members agreed a change in the law was required to reflect the need to accommodate safety in any route through a farmyard and acknowledge the changing use and introduction of large machinery.

*Action: RB agreed to keep the meeting up-to-date with developments.*

### **3. Members Activities**

#### **3.1 Teesdale Way website development**

YR described the latest stage of the website development. Whilst Durham and North Yorkshire LAFs were on-board with the proposals, Tom Watson had contacted YR describing the Teesdale Way as requiring further thought. He described a brand, a marketing plan and a management team of four, led by YR.

YR had been dismayed at this suggestion as she was unavailable for this level of management and had hoped to be able to share the news that a skeletal site was developed. This was not the case. Tom Watson had (he hoped) gained funding for the development of the website, and would know this in early March.

PH introduced the idea of using Facebook amongst the members to build a library of material that could be accessed by RTR when the time came for the site to be built. The Facebook pages would also act as an interest group, pulling in those other

parties with an interest in developing the site. The Facebook page would also begin a framework of what would work once the site was being developed.

A discussion developed on how this page would be managed and how access would be administered.

*Action: Both YR and CS thought they had something to take to a further meeting with Tom Watson. This to be arranged as quickly as possible.*

### **3.2 RTR Update**

CC would update when available.

*Action: Update circulated 7.3.17*

### **3.3 Friends**

CS introduced the latest news regarding the development of the Friends Group.

Deborah Jefferson, as Chair was hoping to retire from her role with HBC, and whilst we hoped she would continue as a volunteer, the group needed to welcome new members from the parent group in the Forum.

The Friends have had some success in accessing funding and supporting bids had been made by Stockton on Tees and Hartlepool Borough Council, the duties were not onerous and meetings were only called when there was a matter requiring support. PH volunteered to join the Friends group.

## **4. Issues to be raised**

### **4.1 Farmers Weekly Editorial**

RB drew the meetings attention to the editorial which described Section 31/6 of the Highways Act. As CS explained, until recently farmers and landowners had been able to submit a map of their property to their Local Authority outlining the present status with regards to RoW and been widely used to demonstrate that no access after the date of submission was available. This service had been free, now however, there will be a charge levied by the Local Authorities to hold this information, in Hartlepool's case this is likely to be £300.00.

### **4.2 Malcolm Thompson Retiring**

YR led a very warm thanks to Malcolm Thompson, Countryside Access Officer from Darlington Borough Council who is retiring at the end of March 2017.

Amongst some happy stories, one of which included a tube of araldite. YR concluded that Malcolm's level headed and calm approach would be missed by the Highways Team at Darlington.

MT thanked everyone for their kind words, and outlined that his post is being replaced, with interviews held shortly.

## **5. AOB**

**5.1** CS outlined the development of a new safe cycle route under construction on the A689 from Queens Meadow to Truro Drive, funded via the Local Growth Fund.

**5.2** The proposed date of the next meeting was 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 in Stockton on Tees, but may be subject to review.

Meeting closed at 12:30.