

Tees Valley Local Access Forum

Minutes

30th June 2015, 4:30-6:30pm

Darlington Borough Council, Allington Way, Darlington

Present: Robin Daniels (Chair), Chris Scaife, Yvonne Ramage, Malcolm Thompson, Mike Roff, Mike Cherrett, Rob Brown (Vice Chair), Beryl Bird, James Perkins (Route Level Crossing Manager Network Rail), David Shorrocks (Network Rail Liabilities).

Apologies: Rob Morrow, Fiona Campbell, Judith Underwood, David Reed, Stewart Williams, Graham Clingan, Christine Corbett.

1. Introductions and Welcome

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

2. Apologies – as above.

3. Ratification of AGM held 24th March 2015

The AGM in March 2015 had not been quorate and as a consequence the election of the Chair and Vice Chair could not be ratified at that time. It was agreed to use the June meeting to ratify the election.

The Development Officer agreed this meeting was quorate and MR proposed to agree the appointments of Chair and Vice Chair and YR seconded. Robin Daniels and Rob Brown were confirmed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

4. Matters arising

The TVLAF paper, 'The Future' will be reflected as Standing Items on the agenda until further notice.

The Glossary of Terms is underway and into its third draft. *Action: BB.*

5. Chairman's Report and Regional Roundup

RD described the recent Regional Access Strategy paper (now re-named Regional Access Priorities,) as a key document to support regional transport and structural strategies. Jim Milner's position at Natural England now also included the position of Regional Co-ordinator.

RD had agreed to gauge interest within the north east to a networking event, with local guest speakers sharing expertise. Vegetation cutting/invasive species was discussed and included a suggestion to invite the Environment Agency who could share their access strategy with the LAFs. It was also agreed to invite Network Rail to this event in order to share the latest structural and operational changes with the LAF membership. *Action: RD.*

6. James Perkins, Network Rail

James described his role of Route Level Crossing Manager for the North area (the Borders to Selby), working with the LAs and Public Utilities. David Shorrocks was introduced as a Lawyer leading the Liabilities team within Network Rail.

The TVLAF geographical area has 24 public crossings of railway lines, 10 on public highways and 14 on footpath/bridleways, with an additional 40 crossings on private property.

All level crossings carry risk scores (described on their website), and all are managed by local Level Crossing Managers. The risk is assessed either annually or every 3 years depending on the routes risk severity.

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/transparency/level-crossings/>

James described the pertinence of local information as it assists with risk assessment.

There are 34 level crossing types on the network and these fall into four main types:

Manual controlled,

Auto half-barrier,

User-worked and

Pedestrian.

The manual controlled types are the safest and some include radar crossings which scan the immediate area to make sure there is no vehicle/person stranded in the middle.

User-worked are a mixture of telephone, lights or simply looking right and left. This type of crossing can include Network Rail personnel if requested, during periods of heavy, repeated use - for example fun runs, races or harvesting.

The pedestrian type is for non-vehicle use, and includes cyclists and horse riders using telephones, lights, stop/look/listen and whistle boards as the train approaches. This type has the highest number of near misses (96% of this risk is user misuse and abuse) and accounts for 42% of the total railway safety risk at level crossings.

James went on to describe the responsibilities of:

Network Rail – operating the crossing and maintenance

Highway Authorities – upkeep of the road approach and signage,

Planning Authorities – processing applications that may affect traffic volume and type,

British Transport Police – offenders who abuse at or on the crossings, and the

Home Office Police Force – police either side of the crossing.

Offenders are offered either a Level Crossing Awareness course and/or 3 points on their licence.

Network Rail have recently set up Level Crossing Managers in order to reduce risk; they want to collaborate with users, Local Authorities and Utility Companies in order to close, divert or upgrade to improve safety. James posed the query, 'If we cannot close it, what can we do to improve it?' and described shared objectives.

The Level Crossing Managers role includes managing the risk portfolio in their area, working with LAs sharing their maintenance responsibilities, improving safety, assessing possible upgrades.

The financial implications were also shared with the members;

Upgrade to full barriers £1.6M

Close and fence £0.3M

Close and provide footbridge £0.8-1.2M

Close and divert highway £1-5M

Road bridge replacement £5-12M

Underpass £12-20M

They are a statutory consultee for large planning projects, often taking 4-5 years to process.

David Shorrocks - Head of Liabilities Network Rail

David outlined the role of his department providing legal advice on all Network Rail's assets, assessing status, responsibility and negotiation with planners. The Office of the Rail Regulator had told them to reduce risk by 25%, this is a Fatality Weighted Index, and this has involved targeting the closure of mainly private crossings.

Continuing to manage the risk includes removing paths from railways by liaising with stakeholders via diversion schemes or 'enhancing'; examples included diverting to nearby underpasses.

MC queried the status of the crossing at Urray Nook; David was able to confirm its renewal as one of only 3 wheeled gated crossings in the country. MC also expressed concern of the ramp at Eaglescliffe station as being 'not wheelchair friendly', David described the Access for All funding (for a possible lift installation) as based on passenger numbers and advised contacting the Rail Operator (as it was a leased station) in the first instance.

RD thanked James and David for their very interesting presentations and hoped they would be willing to attend a Regional meeting.

7. Members Activities

7.1 Co-ordinate LAF Activity – on track.

7.2 Coastal Access – CS described the latest stage from North Gare car park in Hartlepool to Port Clarence in Middlesbrough via the Transporter bridge. Plans have been designed to establish the level of funding required with contributions already in place from Natural England and River Tees Re-discovered; Hartlepool and Middlesbrough Council are approaching the Local Growth Fund for financial assistance with the project. The plans have confirmed there is sufficient physical width in place to accommodate cyclists.

7.3 RoWIP Overview – CS described the legal requirement for a review every 10 years, Durham County Council are already out to consultation, and Hartlepool plan to review in 2016-17. Darlington have no plans at present to review.

7.4 Huddle – BB regularly checks the site for the latest news and shares anything of interest with the members.

7.5 Web site – the new web site is up and running with the latest information available both locally and regionally. New maps and photographs have been included describing the Tees Valley Nature Reserves and up-to-date links are in place to our partners.

www.teesvalleylocalaccessforum.co.uk

7.6 Regional LAF Liaison – see Chairman's Update above.

7.7 Cycling Strategy – YR had been supplied with a copy of the Regional response to the DfT winter roadshow in 2014. The national response from the DfT had been circulated to the members this spring.

7.8 River Tees re-discovered – Christine Corbett had brought the Forum up-to-date at the last meeting.

7.9 Tees Valley LNP – RB confirmed there was no progress to date, since the departure of Dr Antrobus, and all agreed to contact Jeremy Garside to establish the status of the partnership. *Action: BB/RD.*

7.10 Government Consultations – none to report.

- 7.11 Limestone Landscapes – CS described concurrent extinguishments, creations and diversions of paths within Hartlepool, partly funded by the project. A book describing the early days of the project is due out in September, and Tony Devos who leads on LL, is presently tracking other funding sources in order to extend the life of this initiative.
- 7.12 Three Rivers LNP – MT described the status of the bid, now submitted at the close of May, with good news hoped for at the end of October 2015. If successful the development phase would commence in January 2016, with second round submission by July 2017. The HLF Board are expected to attend a site visit at the end of July 2015.
- 7.13 Friends of TVLAF - RD briefly discussed the need for the work of the Friends to resume, and would address it at the September meeting.
- 7.14 Appointing Authority Planning – BB had circulated the response to the Hartlepool Rural Plan consultation in advance of the closing date, with a request to the Chair to forward, once agreed. Members had been circulated with the response to Stockton on Tees BC as regards the latest development at Wynyard.
- 7.15 Development of Training Presentations – CS agreed to further develop the present set by developing a short presentation on volunteering. *Action: CS/BB.*
- 7.16 Annual Review – described as a Natural England requirement, the Annual Review had been completed by both the Chair and the Development Officer.
- 7.17 Annual Report – this document had been sent into each Appointing Authority; to the CE's, senior Councillors and named Officers.
- 7.18 Review of structure and membership – RD thought all the members should say if they believed this new structure needed further refining.

8. Rights of Way Officers Reports

Please see papers already circulated.

9. Issues raised

- 9.1 Dogs in the Countryside – RB outlined to the meeting the issue of sheep worrying, as he has been affected by it several times since last winter, with the most recent incident in May leaving 6 dead sheep. The HBC had been supportive as did the Cleveland Police, however the attacks are occurring along a RoW; with no legal recourse, he is unable to protect his animals. After some discussion, it was agreed to bring to the attention of the regional meeting and Defra. Network Rail agreed they were in a similar position with regard to dog walkers, would enhanced signage be appropriate? Certainly the RoW Officers need to discuss the matter. *Action: RD/BB/CS*
- 9.2 Countryside Stewardship – access continues to be unavailable within Countryside Stewardship and RB would be leaving the present scheme.
- 9.3 RD requested a letter be sent to AA's reminding them of their obligations with regard to vegetation cutting and the control of alien species. *Action: BB/RD*

10. AOB

None reported.

11. Date of next meeting

September 2015 in Stockton on Tees, BB to liaise with Rob Morrow to agree date and venue.

Action: BB/RM

Meeting closed at 6:20pm