

TEES VALLEY

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

17 July 2019 2pm

Summerhill Country Park Visitors Centre – Hartlepool

Attending: Yvonne Ramage (YR), Mike Cherrett (MC), Stewart Williams (SW), Steve Petch (SP), Paul Harman(PH), Mike Roff(MR), Rob Brown(RB), Leanne Thompson(LT), Chris Scaife(CS).

Apologies: Christine Corbett, Graham Clingan, David Reed, Rob Morrow, Councillor B Jones

Introduction and Welcome

Yvonne welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chairs Report

YR read her annual report, explained that it had been a strange year for the LAF, following the departure of Beryl Bird. YR thanked everyone involved in the LAF including the officers and volunteers.

YR explained her intention was to step down as chair.

AGM – Election of chair/vice chair

CS introduced the AGM. He asked for nominations for the new Chair.

MR stated that he felt he was 'unqualified' to be chair and that his knowledge of Local Government was lacking. He also feels that the LAF needs a younger demographic but agreed he would stand as Chair for one year. CS explained that in order to be chair you do not need a vast amount of knowledge and can rely on the members and officers for guidance. CS agreed that we need to revitalise membership.

Proposed by MC and seconded by YR.

CS went on to ask if anyone was interested in being a Vice Chair, he explained that it is not an onerous task, and a Vice Chair is only required to chair meetings/attend events in the absence of the chair. RB confirmed he was happy to remain as Vice Chair for one more year. PH said he would consider being a Vice Chair – Proposed by MR and seconded by YR. CS explained that expenses can be submitted and paid from the LAF budget.

CS closed the AGM.

General Meeting Minutes

CS invited MR to Chair the meeting.

Minutes of Meeting Sept 2018

MR asked for comments as the minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting – no comments raised.

No other matters arising.

Local Authority Access Officers Updates

Darlington – Steve Petch

The council had elections 3-4 months ago and the approach to planning and housing is likely to affect Public Rights of Way. The Teesdale Way will be inspected 2 x yearly and a risk approach will be used for other paths meaning they will be inspected every 3-4 years. SP advised that Parish Councils often report issues to paths and hopefully they can help with path inspections. SP to attend a meeting next week so will report back to the next LAF meeting.

SP explained that he currently has 5-6 path diversion orders due to major developments within the borough. He also explained that he has 3 'lost ways' – the Horse Society are wanting to make bridleways out of 3 footpaths – this remains ongoing.

SP discussed the 'Sculpture trail' along the Teesdale Way – this will see 5 different sculptures at various points. CS explained that the Heritage Lottery Fund has funded, through River Tees Rediscovered Landscape Partnership 5 artists to make 5 sculptures. Each Local Authority will receive a sculpture from each artist (each LA will get 5 sculptures in total to be located on Heritage Trails, England Coast Path and Teesdale Way).

Action - LT to email out the location of the sculptures in each Local Authority.

SP explained that the 2025 Celebration of the 200year anniversary of the Stockton to Darlington Railway proposes a walking and cycling route – this is currently out with consultants to formulate a plan.

MR invited SW to provide an update on Middlesbrough

The council has a new independent mayor and many new independent councillors – this may create issues from a development point of view. SW has met with the new mayor who seems supportive of open spaces. A development proposed to create a new country park and PRoW is now uncertain.

SW explained that he also deals with Flooding and highway work within the Local Authority and his workload has increased significantly, he highlighted the support he gets from a couple of volunteers. He explained that he currently oversees approx. 38km of PRoW but this is likely to increase to 120km over the next few years with no increase in funding.

SW explained that 'Grey Towers' is a new development in the area, a PRoW route goes through the middle and he is currently negotiating gaining a bridleway in exchange for small part of the footpath.

LT provided a summary of Stockton's update in the absence of RM – The highlight for Stockton was that it was ranked 3rd for 'Rights of Way' and 6th for 'cycle Routes' out of 112 authorities as part of the National Highways Transport Annually Public Satisfaction Survey 2018/19. Stockton have published their 2nd Rights of Way Improvement Plan – this has been approved as a 5 year plan (2018-

2023). RM supplied copies of the ROWIP and 'walking and cycling in Stockton-On-Tees map' for members to take away with them.

MR asked CS to provide an Update on Hartlepool

A temporary closure/diversion remains in place at 'Old Cemetery Road'. Permanent diversion has been approved - not yet certified until Persimmon finalise their work.

A temporary closure is in place at English Martyrs School whilst building work is carried out.

A DMMO is likely to go ahead – Greatham have put forward a claim on an unrecorded path to make it recorded along Thorn Tree Lane.

Tees Valley Combined Authority Local Growth Fund has provided funds for 800m of surface to be upgraded – Meryl Gardens to Brenda Road (Seaton 5 public footpath).

Greatham – Cowpen Bewley public byway has been repaired and resurfaced and is now complete.

New funding has been secured through the Local Growth Fund for the existing cycle path/walkways at Bishop Cuthbert to be fully surfaced.

Members Activities

England Coast Path (ECP) update

CS advised that the official opening date for Tees Valley part of the ECP is 18th September. North Gare – Newport bridge. Resurfacing work is almost complete from the Power Station to Port Clarence, and streams have been bridged. CS has already completed vegetation clearance along the new boardwalk section and confirmed that people are already using this stretch – mainly employees from the various businesses in that area. Discussion held regarding the need for the ECP to officially go via Newport Bridge and not the Transporter Bridge – due to it not being a permanent structure and not always working or open 24hours/365 days per year.

CS confirmed that invites will be sent in due course to the Rights of Way Officers, Chair and Vice Chairs for the official opening celebration which will be held at Saltholme.

Tees Nature Conference

CS attended the Tees Nature Conference at Teesside University/MIMA last month. It was a very well attended and well organised event. Discussions held around habitat banking/biodiversity banking. Project on going with the environment agency to improve the bankside of Newport Bridge. Conference has been held for the past three years and CS advised it would be beneficial for the other RoWO's to attend next year.

Relaunch of the TVLAF

LT explained that it may be a good time to 'relaunch' the LAF given she is new to post and we are looking to set up a new website/Facebook group and looking to gain more members. Discussed that we need to look for members who are 'Access Users' not 'pressure groups'. Discussed that Facebook can be used as a tool to advertise and gain new members by 'liking/adding' other groups. SW suggested the Water Sports Group at the Tees Barrage may be a good contact. PH suggested DOVES Darlington.

SW raised a point about hearing less updates from RoWO's at the meetings and getting more ideas from the LAF members. SW agreed that the LAF needs to increase its membership and suggested that the main LAF holds a couple of meetings per year and then smaller meetings in each of the

Local Authorities for more specific/relevant issues to be discussed as this may help to increase members.

Everyone agreed that linking in with Parish Councils may be a great way to increase membership, it was questioned whether the Parish Councils know about the LAF. Discussed whether members of the LAF could attend Parish Council meetings or members of the Parish Council could be invited to the LAF meetings.

Action - LT to make a promotional poster to advertise the LAF – this can be used on Facebook and sent to Parish Councils.

Updated Website/Facebook

LT handed out screenshots of three possible website designs for member's to view.

Discussion held regarding the current email address – TVLAF@hartlepool.gov.uk – it was felt that this looks as though it is only associated with Hartlepool and maybe better if it was something like @Teesvalley.co.uk / walkridebike@teesvalley.co.uk.

New logo was discussed – SW was happy for some of the budget to be used on a new logo to go along with the 'relaunch/rebrand'. PH did not feel it was necessary to have a new logo – Discussion then led to whether the LAF could be renamed.

Action – Members to email LT with suggestions regarding new email address/logo or feedback at the next meeting.

SW advised that the LAF has poor promotion, it is not mentioned/directly linked on the Middlesbrough Council website.

PH advised that the Teesdale Way Facebook group had not been updated in the last year. All agreed that the Facebook page and website would need to be updated regularly. PH agreed to be an 'admin' on the Facebook page to assist with monitoring posts.

Any other business

SW felt it would be useful for the Officers to meet outside of the LAF – this was done previously but due to increased workloads it was stopped. MR agreed that it would be beneficial to reinstate officers meeting up regularly outside of the LAF meetings.

PH described a recent holiday in Cornwall – Explained the public transport was linked to the coastal path so that walks did not need to be circular and a greater distance could be achieved as you could easily get a bus back to where you started. Discussed that promoting our PRoW and public Transport may be a good project to work on to help encourage more people to walk. Discussed that Saltholme is free if you use public transport/walk/cycle to get there. Bus stops are already in situ along the new stretch of the England Coastal Path but this may need to be promoted more.

RB advised that the Traffic Lights for Dog's project continues to go well and people walking through comment that it is a brilliant idea. SW suggested that as this had been such a positive project that we have regular updates on our website/Facebook page. It was also suggested that a similar approach could be used with Cattle in the Middlesbrough area.

PH raised a point about 'Wildlife corridors' – Suggested local authorities should consider widening footpaths to improve biodiversity and to make walks more attractive. It was suggested that funding may become available as biodiversity becomes more of an issue to the government. RB advised that

the Farm Policy 'Providing Public Goods' may provide financial incentives in the future for 'wildlife corridors' next to PRow.

SW advised that Middlesbrough currently have a proposal along the side of the A19 for a 'wild corridor' with a path running through the middle.

SW suggested that members of the LAF walk a percentage of PRow in each area from a BVPI view and provide honest views to the officers.

It was agreed that projects discussed may help to promote the LAF and encourage new members.

Date/Venue of next meeting.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held in Middlesbrough (location to be confirmed) 17th September so that Fran Manancourt can provide an update.

Meeting closed 4pm