

# Leeds Local Access Forum

Minutes of Meeting

**Tuesday 23 November 2010 6.30pm at Leeds Civic Hall**

**Present:** Mr. J Pearlman (Chair), Mr. S Wood, Councillor C Fox,

## **In Attendance:**

Mr. R. Buckenham, Public Rights of Way Manager  
Mr. Glen Gorner, Natural Environment Manager  
Mr. Brent Brady, Neighbourhoods and Housing  
Mr. Ken Bell, Legal and Democratic Services  
Mr. James Lamb, Natural England access advisor  
Ms. R Hersey, Transport Policy & Planning/ WYLTP

## **1. Chairs Opening Remarks**

The Leeds Local Access Forum Chair, Dr. Mike Willison, is away at the moment so Jerry Pearlman has agreed to chair this meeting. Glen Gorner was then invited to introduce himself as the Council's new Natural Environment Manager which covers Forestry, Nature Conservation and Public Rights of Way.

## **2. Apologies for absence**

These had been received from Mike Willison, Philip Maude, Councillor Illingworth and Linda Boadle.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

None were made.

## **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting dated 14 September 2010 were accepted as a true record subject to the following amendments made by Mr. J Pearlman:- at 27(a) 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph delete the line "Mr. Pearlman stated that it was very unlikely that further works would be carried out from now until the cut off date of 2026"; also in the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph it was actually the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan consultation that the Chair attended on 4 October and not the Regional Access Forum as stated.

## **5. Matters Arising**

At point 22 (b) Councillor Fox said that he and Councillor Illingworth were still working on the issue of how the LLAF is to obtain funding from Leeds City Council.

At point 25 Mr. J. Pearlman is to check with Dr. M Willison whether the response to Natural England on the discussion document "An Invitation to Shape the Nature Of England" was made.

Mr. S Wood raised the issue of funding for Public Rights of Way and the Local Access Forum in the light of proposed Government funding cuts for Councils.

Mr. J Pearlman then reported on a meeting he had attended, with Dr. M Willison and Councillor Fox and Councillor Illingworth of the LLAF, with Joanne Clough, Glen Gorner and Bob Buckenham about the arrangements for running the LLAF, now that Governance Services had withdrawn their support. At the meeting it had been agreed that Public Rights of Way would now provide the secretariat for the LLAF but that it had been suggested by Joanne Clough that only 2 meetings of the LLAF should be held each year.

Mr. J Pearlman stated that the regulations stipulate a minimum of 2 meetings per year but that in any case it was for the LLAF, as an independent body, to determine how many meetings it should hold. After a discussion it was felt that 6 months between meetings was too long and that at least 3 meetings per year should be held. Councillor Fox suggested that quarterly meetings should be held.

Mr. Gorner said that whilst Parks and Countryside would be happy to provide the secretariat for LLAF meetings, this would inevitably have an impact on the limited staff resources of the Public Rights of Way section. Secondly, that Government funding to Leeds City Council for the LLAF was not ring-fenced and had not been identified as a budget which Parks and Countryside could use; and, thirdly that concern had been expressed about the length of time gating orders were taking up during LLAF meetings which were often of little relevance to Public Rights of Way or Access issues.

Mr. J Pearlman understood that Dr. M Willison had previously requested Mr. B. Brady to continue to attend LLAF meetings so that he was available to answer questions on particular gating orders. However, consideration had to be given to ways in which the meeting time taken up by Gating Orders could be reduced. Mr. J Pearlman therefore asked for Neighbourhoods and Housing and Parks and Countryside officers to prepare a joint report for the next meeting.

Mr. S Wood said that he would be willing to consider ways in which the running of the LLAF could be streamlined to save money. However, after a discussion it was concluded that the LLAF did not cost very much in financial terms to run, except for the time commitment of officers in providing the secretariat function. Councillor Fox commented that whilst this role was now being met by the Public Rights of Way section this was not ideal.

**RESOLVED** – That the status quo be maintained regarding meetings with the liberty to vary these in the future.

#### **6. Gating Order Review – Leasowe Close to Leasowe Garth**

Mr. B Brady briefly went through the report and stated that burglary in the area had gone down but that some reported crime including anti-social behaviour had gone up. However, of the 33 households consulted nearly 50% had responded and all 14 were in favour of keeping the locked gates in place, as were the Police and local Councillors. The report's recommendation was to keep the gates for a further 12 months.

**RESOLVED:** To agree to the continuation of the gating order here.

Mr. B. Brady also referred to an alternative approach recently taken on a path at Miles Hill Road, Meanwood which had been subject to anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, assaults and a murder. Here, the path was widened out to improve the

sightlines, vegetation trimmed and fencing at the back of properties replaced with specially strengthened metal, palisade fencing. Photographs of the situation before and after the work were supplied for members to view at the meeting.

Mr. J Pearlman briefly referred to a report in the Manchester Evening News about the need for Gating Orders there being reduced owing to a general reduction in crime. He asked Mr. B. Brady if information on the overall crime situation in Leeds could also be reported at the next meeting?

Finally, in the interests in reducing the time future gating order reviews take up at the LLAFF meeting, Mr. S. Wood asked if the reports could be made briefer?

## **7. West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (WYLTP)**

This report was presented by Ms. Rebecca Hersey of Leeds City Council Transport Policy and Planning, though it is West Yorkshire Metro who are taking the lead on the project, being the Integrated Transport Authority for West Yorkshire.

It is a 15 year plan (2011-2026) but will have shorter, 3 year Implementation Plans. The draft strategy is out for consultation now until 17 December with the first Implementation Plan consultation due in January 2011. The WYLTP will be adopted on 1 April 2011 to take over where LTP2 finishes.

The 'My Journey' strategy has 28 proposals around 4 main themes (i) Asset Management; (ii) Travel Choices; (iii) Connectivity; (iv) Enhancements.

There are also 6 'Big Ideas' as listed below:-

- (1) Enhanced Travel Information
- (2) Integrated Ticketing
- (3) Low Carbon Travel
- (4) A new Approach to Buses
- (5) Stronger Demand Management
- (6) Improved Network Management

There are also 3 cross cutting themes – 'Hierarchy of Routes and Users; 'A new approach to budgeting'; seeking new finance opportunities.

Councillor C. Fox asked about funding as there were no figures in the document. This was partly deliberate in order to focus on ideas first but also because the actual figures will not be known from the Government until December. However, it is expected that the LTP budget will be cut by a minimum of 50%.

Mr. J. Pearlman noted that there was no mention of Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP's) in the document itself, only in the glossary. Members of the LLAFF were concerned that there was no mention of how ROWIP's were to be integrated into the WYLTP. There were few, or no, specific references to the use of rights of way for walking and cycling, and nothing about horse-riding. In conclusion, it was felt that the WYLTP had not integrated the Leeds ROWIP, nor any other West Yorkshire Local Council's ROWIP into the document as Government Guidance requires.

**RESOLVED:** Mr. J Pearlman and Dr. M. Willison will submit a consultation response on behalf of the LLAFF to West Yorkshire Metro.

## **8. (a) Regional Local Access Forum**

Mr. J Pearlman reported that he had attended the Regional Access Forum on behalf of LLAf. He mentioned briefly that East Riding Council had declined to participate in the pilot project for the new Coastal Access regulations.

Regarding the draft letter for LAF's about possible local council funding cuts to access and rights of way services (**item 8 b**), Mr. S. Wood expressed his concern regarding the possibility of a national reduction in funding for rights of way work as well as in Leeds.

**RESOLVED:** The LLAf requests a commitment from Leeds City Council that it will be consulted beforehand on any changes to staffing levels or funding for rights of way and access work in Leeds.

## **9. St. Aidan's Country Park Update**

Mr. B. Buckenham reported that, unfortunately, the opening of the St. Aidan's Country Park had now been put back until Autumn 2011 by the site operators UK Coal. Most of the path network has now been provided on the ground and an application has been made for the Public Path Extinguishment and Creation Orders.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> round of informal consultation is now being undertaken until 3 December 2010 and the LLAf chair has recently been sent this information for comment. In addition a Magistrates Court order under section 116 of the Highways Act, 1980 is being progressed for a short length of redundant vehicular highway at 'old' Astley Lane on the northern boundary of the site. Mr. B Buckenham has also written directly to, former local resident and rights of way activist, Mr. Colin Seymour to try and address his particular concerns.

The section 106 Planning Agreement for restoration of the former opencast coal mining site requires that a network of footpaths and bridleways be provided and this is an identified Leeds ROWIP project too.

**RESOLVED:** The LLAf supports the proposed path changes here as it is an overall improvement on the old path network. The Chair is to write in support.

## **10. Rights of Way Improvement Plan Update.**

Mr. R. Brookes briefly reported on a few of the improvement plan projects that were progressing as follows:-

SKELTON LAKE – Negotiations with Evans of Leeds Property company are still ongoing via their agents Aecom but look promising regarding the extinguishment of historic paths and creation of a new network of footpaths and bridleways, similar to the St. Aidan's project above but on a smaller scale. Also, the Minerals Planning Officer and Legal Services are pursuing the Coal Authority for outstanding funding for a new footbridge over the River Aire and Aire-Calder Canal which is also required by the Planning Agreement.

BREARY MARSH BRIDLEWAY – The horse ford has recently been reconstructed as a pitched stone ford and the footbridge moved across slightly, widened and re-decked in non-slip boards suitable for pushchair and wheelchair use.

PUDSEY BECK IMPROVEMENTS – As part of the Council's Water Safety programme, a number of footpath surfacing and minor path realignment projects are to be carried out next to Pudsey Beck, including sections of the Leeds Country Way.

A647 PEGASUS CROSSING – Unfortunately, the cost of providing this proposed parallel 'Toucan' (for walkers and cyclists) and 'Pegasus' (for horse-riders) signalled crossing of the main Leeds to Bradford Road has proved too expensive for Leeds Highways to approve. The scheme therefore cannot now proceed and the bridleways to the north and south of this busy road will remain impossible to connect for the foreseeable future, thus effectively preventing the 'Pudsey Link' from being made.

## **11. Any other Business**

- (a) England Access Forum – Mr. J Pearlman suggested that a letter be sent to Pam Warhurst to get some support for the England Access Forum.
- (b) Access Newsletter No. 47 – This had been circulated for information.
- (c) Walk 4 life – An information sheet had been circulated. Mr. R. Brookes informed the meeting that he was due to attend a presentation the following day, so should be able to report more on this at the next meeting.

James Lamb, a regional access advisor for Natural England gave a short update on the work of Natural England (NE) as follows:-

Natural England's primary objectives are to protect the natural environment and promote opportunities to enjoy it. After the Government's spending review, a funding reduction of 30% is anticipated. So, the potential way forward for NE is to work in partnership with others, but in a reduced form. The following programmes are being looked at:-

- (1) National Nature Reserves – Looking at options for others to manage these.
- (2) Outreach Programme (children & special needs groups) – other organisations to help deliver.
- (3) Big Wildlife Garden website – Private sector help being sought.
- (4) Cub and Scout Naturalists badge – Private sector sponsorship.
- (5) Walking for Health – Local delivery sought from 2011-12 by charities, Local Authorities etc.
- (6) Volunteering – hand over to other providers.
- (7) Statutory Access & New Access Infrastructure – CROW Act Open Access and Coastal Access responsibilities to remain with NE for now at least. National Trails – NE is looking for a more financially sustainable way of managing these.

It should also be noted that DEFRA's Higher Level Stewardship payments for improved access including Permissive Paths is no longer available. Existing agreements will continue but as these come to an end, so will the funding. James Lamb agreed to supply details of all of the existing HLS permissive path agreements in Leeds, so the LLAF could be made aware of where valuable local path links could be under threat.

## **12. Date and time of Next meeting**

**RESOLVED:** That the next meeting of the Leeds Local Access Forum be arranged for Tuesday 22 February 2011, 6.30pm at Leeds Civic Hall.