

Dorset Local Access Forum

Notes of the meeting held at The United Reform Church Hall,
The Street, Charmouth on 17 June 2011

Present:-

Mike Beams (Chairman)

Dorset County Council

Alex Brenton

Bournemouth Borough Council

Jane Kelly

Independent Members

Oliver Chamberlain, David Green, Geraldine Hobson, Jocelyn Jenkins, Jill Mahler, Gill Reese, Carol Shoopman, Chris Slade, Paul Tomlinson, Rod Webb and William Williamson.

Officers

Dorset County Council

Tara Hansford (Senior Plan Development Officer), Su Powner (Coastal Access Officer) and Kerry Smyth (Democratic Services Officer).

Observers/Contributors

Mirella Fox – Speech to text facilitator

Martin Gilcrest – Natural England

Apologies for Absence

15. Apologies for absence were received from Hilary Tutte (Independent Member), Linley Venters (Independent Member) and Patrick Woodford (Independent Member).

Code of Conduct

16. There were no declarations by members of any personal or prejudicial interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

17. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2011 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

18.1 The Senior Plan Development Officer informed members that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan was due to be presented to the Roads and Rights of Way Committee on 4 July 2011, it would then be presented to a meeting of the Cabinet (possibly in September). She explained that it was ready to be implemented following formal approval. Members of the Forum agreed that it would be useful to be provided with regular updates on the Plan's implementation and progress, particularly to support the Forum's role in its monitoring.

Update on Poundbury Phase 3 and 4 Planning Application

18.2 The Democratic Services Officer provided an update on the Poundbury Phase 3 and 4 Planning Application. She explained that Andrew Martin, the Development

Services Team Leader at West Dorset District Council had explained that the application had been delayed due to an objection from Natural England but it was hoped that this objection had now been resolved and that the application could be progressed over the next month. Members agreed that it would be useful to have a further update at the next Forum meeting.

Progress of the Highways and Transportation Review

18.3 The Senior Plan Development Officer explained that it was not possible to provide members of the Forum with a structure chart for Highways and Transportation until the new structures and teams were in place – it was hoped that this information could be provided at the next meeting.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

18.4 The Senior Plan Development Officer explained that she would email members with the grid reference for the rural lane in Kimmeridge where the site visit was held.

Public Representations

19. No public representations were received.

Ratification of Decisions

20.1 Members of the Forum confirmed that they were satisfied with the response written by the Chairman on behalf of the Forum to the Review of Statutory Duties Consultation.

20.2 Members of the Forum confirmed that they were satisfied with the response submitted on behalf of the Forum to the Bournemouth Dog Control Orders Consultation, however members agreed that a number of issues had arisen since responding to the consultation.

Dog Control Orders

21.1 The Forum received a presentation by David Green, Independent Member on Dog Control Orders and how they were used to address access by dogs to public and open access land and problems with dog fouling.

21.2 Mr Green explained that he had emailed the officer at Bournemouth Borough Council in response to the recent consultation and had asked whether there was any available data on how livestock and wildlife was affected by dogs and whether there had been any prosecutions for letting dogs off the lead in protected areas. He explained that he had not received a response to his request. Councillor Jane Kelly agreed to make enquiries.

21.3 Martin Gilcrest from Natural England informed members that he could access information on Natural England's database and would be able to investigate this further and report back his findings. Members of the Forum agreed that this would be extremely useful.

21.4 The Coastal Access Officer explained that a large role of the Dorset Dogs initiative was to try and influence dog owners on access issues and provide information on areas where dogs could be let of the lead to exercise.

21.35 Members of the Forum agreed that there was a need for dog owners to be better educated and it was noted that any future consultations relating to dog control orders needed to be looked at carefully.

Consultation: Coastal Access

22.1 The Forum received a report on a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) coastal access public consultation which sought members' views on proposed regulations for appeals against works notices, exclusions or restrictions of access and dedication of land. Members agreed that the reduction in notice periods was too great and that if the reduction was to meet the requirements for the Olympics deadline on the Lulworth to Portland stretch, then this should not influence the remainder of the implementation. The Chairman agreed to respond the consultation on behalf of the Forum.

22.2 Officers also provided an update on the Coastal Access Portland to Lulworth Coast Path consultation. Members were informed that of the 13 comments/suggestions submitted by the working group to the initial consultation only one had been implemented. However, the Coastal Access Officer explained that she would update the Forum fully at a later date as she was restricted in what she could say at this time.

22.3 When enquiring about provision for people with disabilities and surfacing, members were advised that the condition of the path in certain areas would be taken into consideration and would be looked at in the establishment works. Members agreed that it was disappointing that Natural England had not taken into consideration more of their suggestions, especially those from within the Portland area. Officers advised that until the route was approved no establishment work could be carried out, with the exception of the existing South West Coast Path.

22.4 Officers explained that in total the consultation had received 42 representations and 14 objections, 8 of which were for one area. Natural England had sent the objections to DEFRA which would then be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate to consider whether the objections were admissible.

22.5 In response to a question, officers confirmed that the public rights over the land would only be in place once the necessary works had been carried out on the ground.

22.6 In response to questions concerning the implementation of the entire coast path members were informed that its ambition and time scale had been reduced, but it was still Government funded. Officers explained that Natural England were working with the relevant Local Authorities to implement the path in five other areas, but that a timetable for the whole coast was unknown.

Consultation: Improving Communication between Local Access Forums and Government, Richard Benyon, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries

23.1 The Forum received a report on a Defra consultation which sought members' views on a variety of proposals aimed at improving the information flow between LAFs and the Government.

23.2 Martin Gilcrest from Natural England explained that due to a reduction in Government funding it was likely that more cuts would be made, especially for those posts funded outside of Natural England. He advised members that if they valued the support of Hilary Winter, the Regional Co-Ordinator, this should be made known, particularly as the post was only funded until April 2012.

23.3 Whilst the Forum supported the proposed memorandum of understanding agreement between Local Access Forums, Natural England and Defra, the Chairman of the Forum suggested that it would be useful to discuss the consultation further with the Regional Co-Ordinator in order to discuss the most effective way of taking this forward with regards to regional LAF representation.

South West Local Access Forum Region: Chairmen's Meeting

24.1 The Chairman presented the notes of the last South West Local Access Forum Region Chairmen's meeting that was held on 15 March 2011.

24.2 The Senior Plan Development Officer agreed to circulate to members a link to the Defra website which provided a summary document of the Environment White Paper (as referred to by the Stakeholder Working Group).

Forestry Estate

25.1 The Forum received a report which provided details of the Independent Panel on Forestry that had been set up to advise the Secretary of State, Carline Spelman, on the future direction of the Forestry and Woodland Policy in England and the role of the Forestry Commission in implementing the Policy.

25.2 Members identified that the membership of the Panel did not include representatives for equestrians, cyclists or motorised vehicles and it was agreed that there was a need to ensure that the interests of these user groups were considered. It was also noted that there were no representatives with any involvement in disabilities. The matter of isolated 'island' sites was also raised.

25.3 Members agreed that the membership of the Independent Panel was inadequate in covering all representatives and that a letter should be written to the Panel advising them of the Forum's concerns and asking them to take into consideration their views. It was agreed that this letter should also be copied to the Secretary of State.

Update Report – Open Access Project Development Officer

26. The Forum received an update report on the Open Access Project Development Officer post, the Access Management Grant Scheme and the work of the Dorset Dogs initiative over the past 12 months.

Dangerous Animals on Public Rights of Way

27.1 Members of the Forum discussed dangerous animals on public rights of way. Gill Reese, Independent Member, provided details of an incident that had occurred in May 2011. She explained that her daughter had been walking along the Cerne Valley Trail with her dogs and had encountered some dangerous livestock preventing her from continuing along the route and forcing her to take refuge in the nearby stream.

27.2 She explained that the incident had been reported to Dorset County Council's Rights of Way Section and expressed concern that dangerous animals were allowed to be sited near public rights of way.

27.3 The Senior Plan Development Officer explained that once reported the incident had been logged on to the Council's database and had been recorded as a priority one/two. She explained that the relevant Rights of Way Access Officer had since visited the landowner and asked the owner to remove the livestock and that the landowner agreed to do so. Members were advised that if they were to witness or be party to similar incidents then they should report them straight away.

Dorset Local Access Forum Recruitment 2011 – Bournemouth and Poole

28.1 The Senior Plan Development Officer advised members that it was understood that Bournemouth Borough Council and the Borough of Poole proposed to withdraw from the joint Dorset Local Access Forum and there was uncertainty on how best to proceed with the recruitment programme for 2011. She explained that this would be considered in conjunction with legislation and she would update members accordingly. Members agreed to help promote the Forum and publicise the recruitment of new members.

28.2 Members were informed that any decision of Bournemouth and Poole to withdraw from the Forum would result in the available LAF budget being reduced and changes made to the arrangement of future meetings. Where possible, meetings would continue to be themed and appropriate site visits would be arranged.

28.3 The Chairman of the Forum expressed his opinion that if Bournemouth Borough Council and the Borough of Poole wished to withdraw from the Forum he did not feel that members should object strongly, however he was not convinced that the decision to leave for financial reasons was entirely justified. Members of the Forum agreed that a joint forum was cost effective and necessary in dealing with both national and local access matters.

28.4 Members agreed that if Bournemouth and Poole Council Officers had of, and would, engage more with the Forum then the need for a specialist urban local access forum would not be necessary.

28.5 The Chairman agreed to report the Forum's view back to the Chief Executives of the three local authorities – Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

29.1 The Forum received a report by Katharine Wright, Dorset AONB Support Officer on progress and projects within the **Dorset AONB** since the last meeting including:-

- The Osmington White Horse
- Waterborne Transport Study
- Smuggler's Trail at National Trust Countryside Property Stonebarrow
- The Hardy Country Project
- Norden Park and Ride Site
- Photo Trails Training Day.

and were pleased to see the progress being made.

29.2 The Forum then considered a report from Linda Nunn, AONB Manager on progress within the **Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB** since the last meeting including:-

- Vehicle loggers: analysis of results from logger installed in Whitsbury
- Work on developing a community based, sustainable 'tourism' strategy/plan for the AONB.

29.3 Geraldine Hobson, Independent Member, provided members with an update on the recent work of the Access and Rural Economy Group, Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. She explained that a great deal of work had been carried out on how to participate in the local economy and ideas such as B&B and horse grazing, horse and cycling safaris, and a AONB mini bus tour to bring people in were being explored.

Any Other Business

30.1 One member of the Forum asked when Dorset County Council had last carried out a coherent review of its publicity relating to rights of way. The Senior Plan Development Officer explained that this was very much a resource issue and that the gradient and ease of access of the routes were currently being carried out and recorded as part of the Definitive Map Review.

30.2 One member of the Forum asked if the 'Adopt a Path' Scheme was still in existence. The Senior Plan Development Officer explained that the scheme was still running but was subject to limited resources. She confirmed that this was due to be looked at further in September 2011.

Site Visit

31. Following the business meeting, members of the Forum attended a site visit by John Hayes, Senior Ranger (Coastal Team) to the new bridge at Charmouth. Members discussed the challenges of coastal erosion and coastal issues in light of phase one of the coastal access rights in the run up to the Olympics.