

Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DB&PJLAF)

Draft minutes of meeting Friday 21st October 2011

Date: 21 October 2011
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Committee Room 1 County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester

Present:-

Patrick Woodford (Vice-Chairman - in the Chair)

Dorset County Council
 Alex Brenton

Independent Members
 Geraldine Hobson, Jocelyn Jenkins, Gill Reese, Carol Shapman, Chris Slade,
 Paul Tomlinson, Hilary Tutte, Linley Venters and Rod Webb

Officers
Dorset County Council
 Tara Hansford (Access Project Development Officer – Forum Coordinator)
 Carmel Wilkinson (Countryside Access Manager)
 Vanessa Penny (Senior Rights of Way Officer)
 Su Powner (Coastal Access Officer)
 Dave Northover (Democratic Services Officer).

Observers/Contributors
 Robin Hicken - Project Manager, Treadlightly
 Geoff Nurcombe - Network Rail
 Mirella Fox - Speech to Text Facilitator
 Sarah Manchester - New Forest Local Access Forum
 Brian Panton - Dorset Ramblers' Association

A	Preliminary Matters	Action
A1&2	<p>The Forum were informed that whereas usually the election of the Chairman and the appointment of Vice-Chairman was undertaken at this meeting, given that the usual annual appointments had not taken place this year, pending the establishment of the part which Bournemouth and Poole were playing in the continuation of the Forum had only recently been resolved, this would be held in abeyance until the first meeting in 2012.</p> <p>In these circumstances, the Vice-Chairman, Patrick Woodford, took the Chair for the meeting. As the previous Chairman, Mike Beams, had now stood down from the Forum, Mr Woodford took the</p>	Patrick Woodford (Vice-Chair) to continue to Chair Forum meetings until further notice

	<p>opportunity to thank him for his contribution to the work of the Forum over the years in his capacity as Vice-Chairman and, latterly, as being Chairman. Forum members warmly endorsed those sentiments</p>	
A3	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Oliver Chamberlain, David Green and Jill Mahler (Independent Members).</p>	
A4	<p>Rod Webb declared a personal interest in minute B1, as a member of Wool Parish Council, who had objected to the Network Rail proposal to close the pedestrian level crossing at Wool.</p>	
A5	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2011 were confirmed and signed, subject to minute 22.2 being amended to read:- "A member suggested that of the 13 comments/suggestions submitted by the working group to the initial consultation only one had been implemented, but the Coastal Officer explained she did not think this was correct and would update the Forum fully at the next meeting".</p>	Action LAF Secretary
A6a (B3)	<p>ROWIP The Senior Plan Development Officer informed the Forum that the RoWIP had finally been approved by the Roads and Rights of Way Committee and that the document was now with Dorset Design prior to being published shortly. Members would be provided with an electronic link to the RoWIP with hard copies available if necessary.</p>	Forum Co-ordinator
A6b	<p>POUNDBURY The Senior Plan Development Officer reported that a consultation exercise on the Poundbury Development had been undertaken by West Dorset District Council. However, the markedly short timescale involved in responding had precluded the Forum from having any meaningful opportunity to submit their views. This issue had been raised with the District Council by correspondence. Members of the Forum had been encouraged to submit individual responses to the consultation if they so wished, but it was made clear to the District Council that these were not necessarily the view of the Forum as a collective.</p> <p>Clarification was provided on the detail of the access arrangements and how far this extended. Members were pleased to see that the northern underpass had been included, together with the hedgerow. This detail would be e-mailed to all members together with confirmation of where the process of implementation now stood, what the next stages would be, at what stage the Forum might become involved in the detail and the Forum's response to the inadequate consultation timescale.</p>	Forum Co-ordinator

A6c	<p>DOG CONTROL ORDERS The Senior Plan Development Officer agreed to follow this up with the Dave Green and Councillor Jane Kelly to ascertain the latest position and e-mail members the detail.</p>	<p>LAF members Dave Green CJane Kelly (LAF Coordinator)</p>
A6d	<p><u>Consultation: Coastal Access appeals against works notices, exclusions or restrictions of access and dedication of land.</u> Confirmed - Chairman (Mike Beams) had responded to the consultation on behalf of the Forum</p>	
A6e	<p><u>Consultation: Coastal Access Portland to Lulworth</u> See A5.</p>	
A6f	<p><u>Consultation: Improving Communication between Local Access Forums and Government</u> Confirmed - The Forum Coordinator had responded to the consultation on behalf of the Chairman and the Forum</p>	
A6g	<p><u>Forestry Estate</u> Confirmed - Chairman, Mike Beams, had written to the Independent Panel on Forestry highlighting inadequate representation in its membership.</p>	
A6h	<p><u>Proposed Termination of joint agreement between Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole</u> Confirmed - Chairman, Mike Beams, had written to all 3 authorities on behalf of LAF expressing members concerns with going ahead with the proposal from Bournemouth & Poole.</p> <p>The Forum coordinator confirmed that the Chief Executive for Dorset County Council, Mr David Jenkins, had acknowledged the LAFs concerns on behalf of Dorset County Council but that the LAF had not received any acknowledgment from Bournemouth and Poole.</p> <p>The Forum Coordinator explained that she had contacted Bournemouth and Poole and was informed that they were considering the matter. On 14 October the Forum Coordinator had received confirmation from Bournemouth and Poole of the decision NOT to go ahead with the proposed termination of agreement. The Forum would therefore remain as the Joint Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Local Access Forum.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed the future arrangements for</p>	

	<p>the Local Access Forum with the recent notification that the Boroughs of Bournemouth and Poole had decided to now maintain their participation.</p> <p>However, they had asked that a more urban focus be considered in future. Members were informed that items for inclusion on the agenda were always encouraged from the Borough Councils and their participation in and hosting of meetings was always welcomed.</p>	<p>LAF coordinator to meet with B&P Officers</p>
A6i	<p><u>Dorset Local Access Forum Recruitment 2011 - Bournemouth and Poole</u></p> <p>The Forum Coordinator informed members that due to the matter of the proposed termination of joint agreement reaching a conclusion recruitment could now go ahead. Members were asked to consider their network of contacts and provide the coordinator with suggestions for groups/people to contact to effectively advertise recruitment.</p> <p>Forum Members would be emailed the final list for members to check for gaps.</p>	<p>Forum Members</p> <p>LAF Coordinator</p>
A7	<p>Public representations</p> <p>The Forum was informed that no public representations had been received.</p>	
Speaker	<p>Robin Hicken Treadlightly</p> <p>The Forum heard from Robin Hicken, Project Manager of Treadlightly, an organisation which specialised in providing an interface between motorised users, user groups, local and national authorities and the private sector to collaborate in protecting and improving the trail network primarily for the benefit of motorised recreation but also other users.</p> <p>He explained that Treadlightly accepted the part motorised use of the countryside played and was committed to ensuring that this use was managed in such a way that it complemented other activities in a responsible and sustainable way. Ways in which this was being achieved included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education • information • enforcement • improved signage and information • volunteer projects • provision. <p>Treadlightly Trust was a charity and relied on donations, volunteers and local authority funding. The Forum was informed how its workforce operated,</p>	

	<p>with an emphasis being on the management of the countryside.</p> <p>The objective was to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide good practice guides • website development showing which routes could be used • joint agency/partnership with repairs and maintenance • recruit and training ambassadors. <p>Of particular importance to Treadlightly was the part they played in the maintenance of routes so that they remained sustainable and usable.</p> <p>Points of particular interest raised were avoiding use of road planing due to leachate – alternatively using “hardcore” spoil from road improvement programmes – and – signage illustrating the range of legitimate user.</p> <p>In considering what Local Access Forums might contribute towards the work of Treadlightly, it was suggested they might promote the benefits of the use of white arrows for permissive routes and black arrows for public roads UCRs, neither of which were currently were being endorsed by Natural England.</p> <p>Whilst members considered that it was a good idea to mark this route in such a way, there would be a need to publicise these extensively to raise awareness.</p> <p>The Forum were informed that funding towards the project had been received from Worcestershire and Warwickshire County Councils as well as Countryside Recreational Access Group, Green Lane Project and Trail Riders' Fellowship. They were also hoping to access landfill grants/Heritage Lottery Funding in future for this purpose.</p> <p>One member suggested that Treadlightly might wish to contact the “Poole Bike” meets to inform them of what they were trying to achieve. Mr Hicken considered this to be worthwhile, albeit Dorset unfortunately had no ambassadors. The engagement of the British Horse Society as Trustee was also considered a possibility.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Mr Hicken for his informative presentation and considered the work Treadlightly were doing, and what they were trying to achieve, to be most creditable. Leaflets were distributed and the powerpoint presentation would be available to</p>	<p>LAF Secretary/coordinator</p>
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B	Main Business	Action
B1	<p>Railway Crossings Railway Crossings The Forum considered a paper by the Countryside Access Manager which updated members on Network Rail's proposed level crossings closures in Dorset. Of the 10 affected crossings, it was proposed to close the pedestrian crossing at Wool. Given this, the Forum wished to discuss that particular closure in more detail.</p> <p>The Forum welcomed Geoff Nurcombe from Network Rail who joined the meeting to explain the company's rationale behind the closures.</p> <p>He explained that, as part of a national safety initiative undertaken by Network Rail, the 10 sites which had been identified had been deemed to be unsafe, these having been assessed as having "deficient sighting" i.e. the time taken to cross the railway was greater than the available sighting time of approaching trains.</p> <p>In such circumstances the appropriate legal procedures and processes had been, or were being, put in place to ensure that safety was not compromised and to regulate the use of those crossings affected.</p> <p>Discussions had taken place between Network Rail and the Countryside Access Team as to the most appropriate diversions and alternative routes available in all these cases, with the resulting proposals being considered to be reasonable, practical and convenient. Accordingly these had met with a measure of support from the Dorset Ramblers' Association, who had also been consulted on the proposals.</p> <p>The Forum was informed that, currently, these were only proposals and would require consultation with, and the consent of, landowners for them to be progressed. It was largely considered that most of these were acceptable, with the exception being the proposal for Wool.</p> <p>In that particular case, the speed with which Weymouth bound trains were passing through Wool Station provided insufficient time for the safe traverse of the line.</p> <p>The Forum heard that there was no prospect of moving the crossing further west as housing</p>	

development precluded this. Similarly the prospect of flashing warning lights at the crossing was dispelled as their cost would be prohibitive and could not be observed from the Wool Station junction box. Indeed, there were proposals that Wool Station was no longer to be manned, with the nearest this would occur being Basingstoke.

Similarly CCTV coverage of the line only extended from the junction box to the road level crossing and did not reach as far as the footpath crossing, so this could not be used as an alternative. Additionally, there was also no provision for the moving of the whistleboard in this instance.

Therefore, in the circumstances, Network Rail had concluded that the only safe alternative was for the road level crossing further east to be used as an alternative.

To mitigate against these diversionary measures, Network Rail had offered to fund a footway improvement scheme along East Burton Road, on the northern side of the track.

The Forum observed that the problem being experienced at Wool had only recently become an issue given the increased frequency of trains on that south western route and particularly those through trains which were not now always timetabled to stop at Wool Station. These operated largely by virtue of Government subsidy and were provided essentially for the benefit of the Olympic Games, to augment the provision of efficient transport to the region.

As a means of resolving the issue, consideration had been given to an extension of the lower speed limit applied to trains travelling through the station so that this might also apply to the crossing. However, Mr Nurcombe confirmed that any change in the speed limit would have to be endorsed by the train operators themselves.

In the circumstances, Network Rail advised the Forum that preliminary indications were that the train operators would not be supportive of the extension of such a limitation as they considered that this would adversely impact on their timetable scheduling. They consequently considered such proposals to be therefore unacceptable.

Having heard the views expressed by Network Rail on how the train operators' might react to the suggestion that the speed limit be lowered, the Forum considered that such an extension would have

	<p>only a minimal effect on their timetabling and be of no significant consequence whatsoever on the length of time the journey took.</p> <p>Members were concerned that whatever decision was taken had to be carefully balanced against the detrimental effect which the extinguishment of the crossing facility would have. It was fair to say that if the extinguishment was confirmed, there would be little prospect for it to be reinstated.</p> <p>However, the Forum considered that as this was essentially a transient issue which would only be in effect for the purposes of the Olympic Games period and which would then, no doubt, subsequently revert to previous arrangements, the suggested solution, of extending the 60 mph limit, should receive further consideration.</p> <p>The Forum was then provided with an illustration of how it might be possible to achieve the retention of the crossing. Members were informed that if the 60mph limit through the station was to be extended to include the footpath crossing, resulting in the overall average speeds marginally reducing, then this would allow sufficient time for the track to be crossed safely.</p> <p>The Forum considered that this illustration should be presented to the relevant bodies concerned ie train operators, Network Rail, the Office of Rail Regulation and Dorset County Council for them to take into account in their considerations.</p> <p>Additionally the Forum considered that a letter should be written to Network Rail, with a copy to the Office of Rail Regulation and the County Council, expressing their grave concerns at the proposal as it stood for Wool.</p> <p>The Countryside Access Manager explained the part the County Council played in the Order making process to restrict the use of crossings, this being based on safety advice received from Network Rail.</p> <p>The Forum agreed that it should lend its support to opposing any Order made. Mr Nurcombe explained that he was aware that tests needed to be met before an application for diversion or permanent extinguishment was made and that stage had not as yet been reached and issues were still being assessed.</p> <p>In answer to one member's question he explained</p>	<p>LAF Chairman (to write letter to all concerned)</p> <p>JDBPLAF Chairman/Members</p>
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	<p>that a temporary closure for 6 months could be extended indefinitely if necessary by the County Council applying to the Secretary of State. It was hoped that this would not be the case in this instance though.</p> <p>The Forum asked for clarification as to what part they might play in influencing the decisions taken and what opportunity they would be given to contribute to the process.</p> <p>They were advised by Mr Nurcombe that, as it stood, the process was in its infancy and that there was still a need for the proposals to be prioritised. Landowners had not, as yet, been consulted on the proposals and their consent was required to proceed further. Given this, it would be appropriate for the Forum to be involved at the earliest opportunity after this had taken place. Officers agreed to provide the Forum with the opportunity to contribute to the process</p> <p>The Forum thanked Mr Nurcombe for his presentation and for attending to answer the questions the Forum raised.</p>	<p>Countryside Access Team</p>
<p>B2</p>	<p>Dorset Countryside Volunteer Service</p> <p>The Forum were provided with an update report on progress with the Dorset Countryside Volunteer Service and how this project might be promoted further by way of the various contacts Forum members had.</p> <p>The main achievements and forthcoming priorities of the Service were set out in four aims, these being:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim 1 Develop a Co-ordinated and Integrated Service. • Aim 2 Establish a programme of opportunities, training and appraisal. • Aim 3 Encourage and empower individuals and local communities. • Aim 4 Safeguard, enhance and increase awareness of Dorset's unique natural environment. <p>The Forum was encouraged to play their part in these processes and were asked to take responsibility for overseeing and developing projects.</p> <p>Members who wished to be more involved were encouraged to participate and attend training on Saturday 29 October on Health Safety and the Law.</p>	<p>Forum Member</p>

	Jocelyn Jenkins agreed to represent the Forum in this area of work and to feedback to the Forum on what she had learnt.	Jocelyn Jenkins Future Agenda
B3	Dorset RoWIP Covered A6a	
B4	<p>Coastal Access The Forum received a report by Su Powner which updated members on Coastal Access arrangements, which included feedback and further information relating to consultation with the Forum and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 Coastal Access Implementation - Weymouth Bay (Rufus Castle to Lulworth Cove).</p> <p>She explained that Natural England was taking any comments which they received into account and it was important to hear what the Forum were saying on such matters.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Coastal Access Working Groups had access to maps which were available online. A link to this would be e-mailed to members for their information.</p>	Coastal Officer/ Forum Coordinator
B5	<p>Highways and Transport Review The Countryside and Access Manager informed the Forum of the recent changes to the Countryside Team and its new structure.</p> <p>The maintenance teams had been split between Highways Grounds Maintenance and the North Dorset Rangers Service, piloting a new approach to maintenance.</p> <p>The remit of the Rights of Way Operation Teams had now changed and would enable officers to work more closely with parishes/communities. once the new approach to maintenance was running smoothly. The structure of the Definitive Map Team remained unchanged.</p> <p>Forum Member, Paul Tomlinson, suggested that the Forum review the rural bus service at a future meeting. This received overall support by members.</p>	Paul Tomlinson Future Agenda (Chairman Forum Coordinator)
B6	<p>Joint Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Local Access Forum Annual Report and future work programme</p> <p>The Forum Coordinator highlighted to members that the LAF had now been running for 10 years and that the work load had escalated from that of implementation of Open Access Land and developing</p>	

B7	Poundbury Covered A6b	
B8	<p>Local Nature Partnership The Forum considered a report by the LAF Co-ordinator on Dorset's bid in respect of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area.</p> <p>In respect of the bid for DEFRA funds for LNP this had unfortunately been unsuccessful. However, encouraging feedback had been received so there was the prospect of this being resubmitted with some adjustments. LNP status would provide a forum for partner engagement and strategic action planning for environmental projects.</p> <p>The Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area was designed to develop such areas to provide for their better access.</p> <p>Whilst the principles of these were welcomed, the Forum considered that some caution should be given to encouraging too much tourism and visitor accessibility to wild areas such as these. A balance needed to be struck when managing such a proposal to ensure the needs of all were met.</p> <p>Whilst understanding this concern, the aim was to link habitats to improve their natural environment and it was considered that this initiative would go a long way to achieving this.</p> <p>LAF agreed that they would like to contribute to the work of the LNP. Notify LNP</p>	LAF Coordinator
B9	<p>Natural England "Huddle" The Forum received an oral update by the LAF Co-ordinator on the proposed Natural England "Huddle" and what this was designed to achieve.</p> <p>Essentially, in the wake of Regional Co-ordinators' roles being dissolved, the "Huddle" was a means for the Region to share information and exchange views and thoughts and could be used as a communication tool to highlight issues particular to Dorset and to see what issues other regional LAF's had.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it was hoped that the South West Region would be able to retain Hilary Winter as the Forum considered her role to be invaluable.</p> <p>The Forum considered that it would be useful to have a powerpoint presentation on the benefits of the "Huddle" at their next meeting.</p>	Forum Coordinator Future Agenda Item

B10	<p>Natural England LAF Event The Forum's attention was drawn to training events for LAF members in February/March 2012. The LAF Co-ordinator suggested that the Chairman and one other member might attend these and feedback to the Forum what they had learnt. Any interest in this was welcomed.</p>	<p>Forum Coordinator, Chairman, LAF member</p>
C	<p>Ratification</p> <p>The Forum were asked for their ratification of a series of consultations, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRoW Access Restriction Case 2006070038 - Ball Bottom Copse and Watcombe Bottom. • CRoW Access Restriction Case 2006080051 - Barcombe Down and Nettlecombe. • CRoW Access Restriction Case 2006080097 - Barcombe Down and Nettlecombe. • Draft National Planning Policy Framework. • Coastal Access Weymouth Bay - Ringstead to White Nothe. • Coastal Access Weymouth Bay - White Nothe to Lulworth Cove. • Coastal Access Weymouth Bay - Portland Gas. <p>Whilst members had been provided with the opportunity to comment on all of these, minimal feedback had been received.</p> <p>Nevertheless, all comments received had been submitted to the various bodies with these being clearly expressed as individual comments rather than a Forum collective response.</p> <p>The LAF Co-ordinator reported that she had received positive feedback from Natural England to the comments received and that these were valued. She reassured the Forum that their responses to such consultations played an important part in influencing and shaping decisions taken and therefore members were encouraged to continue to do so wherever and whenever possible.</p> <p>She asked that even if members had no comment to make on a particular consultation, it would be helpful for her to know that so that she might take this into account.</p>	<p>All Members</p>

