

DEVON LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the Third Public Meeting of the Devon Local Access Forum (Devon LAF)
held at the Drivers' Centre, Westpoint, Exeter from 10.30 a.m. to 1.20 p.m. on
Friday 11 July 2003

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Forum Members:

Bob Harvey (Chairman)
Terence Ayre
Charles Fane Trefusis
Tim Felton
Gretta Madigan
John Skinner
Mary Turner

Mareth Adams
Michael Bickell
Terry Faull (Vice Chairman)
Christine Ingram
Jenny Parsons
Sarah Slade
George Whitfield

1.2 Devon County Council (DCC) officers:

Hilary Winter, Local Access Forum Secretary
Mike Jenkins
Heidi Cruickshank

Peter Chamberlain
Rosalind Mills

1.3 Observers/visitors

Richard Phillips, Plymouth City Council
David Durrant, Devon Green Lanes
Ron Hale
Jean Mills, Devon Area Ramblers' Association

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2003 were signed as correct.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Logo and WebPage

It was agreed the letterhead design, previously circulated, would be printed. The webpage had been set up but the webpage banner was on hold whilst Devon County Council (DCC) set up a new transactional website. The Secretary would ascertain how frequently the webpage was accessed.

Action: Secretary.

3.2 Feedback by members from other meetings

Bob Harvey had attended the Totnes roadshow and Terry Faull, Christine Ingram and Michael Bickell had attended the one at Okehampton. Michael Bickell had also attended the one at Launceston. There had been a steady flow of people to examine the maps and the Countryside Agency (CA) had been pleased with the response. The main areas of concern appeared to be liability and insurance implications and dogs worrying livestock. The CROW Act made clear that farmers would not be liable. Some landowners felt access land would be devalued without compensation and others felt that land could be exempt if it was fenced.

Detailed regulations on voluntary dedications under Section 16 of the CROW Act had not yet been published but were expected shortly. These would come into force before open access.

3.3 Letter to Parish Councils

A letter had been sent to Parish Councils, of whom six contacted the Secretary to say that they had not received the initial pack of information and parish map from the CA.

3.4 Draft Access Maps notes

Notes had been taken from the discussion groups at the previous meeting and these had been incorporated in the draft submission to the CA on the draft access maps.

3.5 Presentation Pack

A pack consisting of a PowerPoint presentation, handouts and overhead slides was virtually complete. The Devon LAF logo would be incorporated. **Action: Secretary**

3.5 Website

The possibility of an interactive website was being explored but again this would be best implemented once DCC had completed their transactional website. Consideration would need to be given to managing the site, time and cost implications and effective monitoring.

Action: Secretary

3.6 Media publicity

Bob Harvey had contacted Spotlight who were interested in a dramatic story on access issues. Bob Harvey had compiled an article for the Western Morning News. Tim Felton was helping on a publication for the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management entitled 'Guidelines for Access to Land' which would assist those doing ecological assessments.

3.7 Devon LAF budget

Mike Jenkins confirmed that the Devon LAF budget was £10,000, including the secretariat and all costs, and a separate cost code had been established. Members requested sight of the budget breakdown. **Action: Mike Jenkins**

4. CORRESPONDENCE

4.1 Sustrans

A pack of information from Sustrans about cycle routes and shared use of paths had been received. This would be passed to George Whitfield who had agreed to represent cyclists. **It was agreed** it would be helpful for all members to have a copy. **Action: Secretary.**

4.2 English Nature

A letter had been received from Tom Sunderland, South West Access Project Officer for English Nature (EN) explaining the work of EN and its role in managing access to conservation sites, facilitating greater understanding of the new access rights and reducing the need for statutory restrictions and exclusions. EN wished to be kept informed on the work of the Devon LAF and offered to make a presentation on its work and the relationship between access and nature conservation. **It was agreed** this would be helpful at an early stage. **Action: Secretary**
Forest Enterprise was mentioned as another useful agency to contact.

4.3 Land between the Moors Conference

The Secretary had received an invitation to 'The Land Between the Moors Conference' on Saturday, 19 July at Tiverton. The conference would be seeking to develop a framework for reconnecting landscape, economy and community in mid and north-west Devon and north-east Cornwall. Anyone else wishing to attend should speak to the Secretary. **Action: Members**

4.4 Dartmoor Local Access Forum

A copy letter from Dartmoor LAF to the Ordnance Survey on June 21 had been received which expressed dismay at the decision of the OS to delete reference to the boundaries of the National Parks from the new series of Explorer maps. The OS had subsequently made some concessions and offered to put in some form of dotted line though this would not be as clear as previously. **It was agreed** that the Devon LAF should write to the OS supporting the views of Dartmoor Local Access Forum and, in addition, asking that parish boundaries and those of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be shown. **Action: Secretary/Chairman**

4.5 East Devon Cycle paths

Correspondence had been received from Ron Hale concerning the use of the railway in East Devon as a cycle track.

At the request of the Chairman, Christine Ingram emphasised that funding was the key issue for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and it was imperative that it should not end up solely as a

discussion document. Multi-use represented the best way of delivering improvements in the fairest way, maximising the potential of one facility and offering good value seasonally. Durham and Derbyshire had wide experience of multi-use over many years in areas of high population and a speaker from one of these areas would be useful. Cornwall CC had now allowed access onto the Camel Trail and it was important to consider all uses at an early stage rather than later on. (Members were given a list of recent publications that included the DCC National Cycle Network report: www.devon.gov.uk/dcc/committee/reports/ed03148hq.html)

4.6 Government Reply on the CROW Act 2000. Fifth Special Report.

House of Commons, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee HC748. 10 June 2003

This raised some interesting issues on delays in the mapping process, the imposition of restrictions, LAFs, liabilities, access to property and resources for implementation of the Act.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmenvfru/748/74802.htm>

5. TERM OF OFFICE for Devon LAF members

Members were asked to return slips indicating their preference for term of office which would be decided on and confirmed by DCC, as the appointing authority. Options were either one, two or three years with the one-year option offering the possibility of extension for a further three years. A balance of interests would be maintained for each option. **Action: Members/Secretary**

6. DEFRA CONSULTATION

“Protocol for restrictions on public rights of way and access to open country, in the event of an outbreak of Foot and Mouth or similar animal diseases.”

This document had been produced in the hope that any future outbreak could be dealt with more efficiently and that access should not be limited unless there were good scientific reasons. Members were generally in agreement with the detailed response sent by DCC. There was a wide-ranging discussion by members personally affected by closures during the F & M outbreak and consensus that it was a highly complex issue with far reaching implications for both landowners and access users. Points raised included the need to ensure both landowners and access users came under the same restrictions within the 3 kilometre Protection Zone and that measures to expedite the time taken by vets to verify disease should be explored. A contingency plan was required and the DEFRA proposals did address many of the issues. [Devon County Council Response](#).

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/default.asp>

7. DRAFT ACCESS MAPS

The Chairman welcomed Peter Chamberlain, County Ecologist at DCC. Peter Chamberlain drew attention to inconsistencies on the maps that he felt had to be resolved and highlighted several of interest to members. He felt definitions would either have to be broadened or confined to resolve these issues. The Devon LAF was interested in the consultation process and particular problems on the access maps. After the draft map stage the CA may not divulge details of comments but after the provisional map stage the CA is obliged to let those that made representation aware of appeals. DCC figures showed that in the Devon area (excluding the National Parks) there were 120 Registered Commons (4855 ha), 574 parcels of open country (2638 ha) and 50 small areas of open country that ‘would serve no useful purpose’ (117 ha). Attention was drawn to the interrelationship with agri-environment schemes and, in addition, funding issues associated with implementation of open access. **It was agreed** each point made by the Devon LAF should be backed up a couple of examples. A further draft would be circulated for comment before the final submission was sent to the CA. **Action: Secretary/Members**

8. WORK PLAN

Heidi Cruickshank, Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer for Devon County Council, requested that Roland Pyle, Local Transport Plan Officer DCC be asked to speak at the next meeting about the interrelationship between the Transport Plan and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. She asked whether the Devon LAF might consider running a panel hearing to hear the views

of a disabled/limited sighted person and a cyclist as these groups were not so well represented on the Devon LAF. This would inform the ROWIP process, giving depth to its consultation, and would be helpful to members. **This was agreed. Action: Secretary.**

Heidi Cruickshank informed members that a questionnaire on access issues, based on the Best Value Process, would be going out to the public at the agricultural shows and would provide trend data. Consultation with representative bodies, based on the ROWIP exemplar plans carried out by the Countryside Agency, was being adopted. The 'DCC User Group' had been asked to test a questionnaire as part of this consultation process. Members were also asked to complete and comment on the questionnaire and return it by 31 July. The Devon LAF would be circulated with a list of user groups consulted. **Action: Members.**

Members considered the draft work plan. **It was agreed** amendments to the layout would be made following these suggestions. Additional columns relating to responsibility and date of completion would be added. **It was agreed** different members should undertake to liaise and obtain feedback from relevant organisations and a list would be compiled. **Action: Secretary/Members.**

At the next meeting the ROWIP timetable would be known and meetings next year could be scheduled to coincide with different stages. It was important to avoid duplication and meet different needs.

It was suggested funding could be made available out of the Devon LAF budget for a small project.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Funding

It was agreed a letter should be sent at this stage requesting additional funding for the ROWIP, possibly in association with neighbouring LAFS. **Action: Secretary/Chairman.**

9.2 Vixen Tor

In this well publicised case, access rights had been withdrawn from Vixen Tor even though there were no insurance implications. DNP had decided not to make an access order as the site was shown on the open access maps. **It was agreed** to write to the DNP in support of negotiations to restore public access. **Action: Secretary/Chairman.**

9.3 Agricultural Shows

Tim Felton said he could represent the Devon LAF at the Mid Devon Show. Rosalind Mills would let the Secretary have dates of other shows if anyone else would like to go. **Action: Rosalind Mills**

9.4 Ramblers' Association comments

John Skinner would let the Secretary have the RA comments on the draft access maps.

Action: John Skinner

10. NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the Drivers' Centre would be a convenient place for the next meeting on Tuesday, 28 October from 10.00 until 1.00.

(The Driver's Centre was already booked for that date and an alternative venue will be advised)