

Minutes of the First Meeting of the Devon Local Access Forum held on Tuesday, 22nd April 2003, 6.00 p.m. at County Hall, Exeter

Present:

Forum Members:

Mareth Adams, Terence Ayre, Michael Bickell, Charles Fane Trefusis, Terry Faull, Tim Felton, Bob Harvey, Christine Ingram, Gretta Madigan, Jenny Parsons, John Skinner, Sarah Slade, George Whitfield

Observers/Visitors

Hilary Winter, Forum Secretary

Heidi Cruickshank, Devon County Council - Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer

Michael Ellingham

Jeff Haynes, Dartmoor National Park Authority

Michael Jenkins, Devon County Council – Rights of Way Manager

Charlie Plowden, East Devon District Council

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Mrs. Mary Turner (Forum Member) and Richard Phillips (Plymouth City Council).

1. Welcome

Cllr. Mrs. Gretta Madigan, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Those members not present at the Training Meeting were asked to introduce themselves and give details of their background and interest in access issues.

2. Election of Chairman

Cllr. Mrs. Gretta Madigan reminded members that, as Devon County Councillors, neither she nor Cllr. Mrs. Mary Turner were eligible to stand for Chair.

There were two candidates and after a secret ballot, Bob Harvey was duly elected and took the Chair.

3. Election of Vice Chairman

Mr Terry Faull was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

4. Location, dates and times of future meetings:

It was agreed that meetings for the remainder of the year should take place at County Hall on the following dates. These would be publicised and open to the public: -

Friday, 30th May 10.30 a.m.

Friday, 11th July 10.30 a.m.

Tuesday, 28th October 10.30 a.m.

5. Forum Quorum

It was recommended and agreed by members that the quorum for each meeting should be seven members, provided there were two members from both user and land management groups and one from amongst the other group representatives and the two County Councillors.

6. Public Representation.

Members were asked to consider and agree proposals that members of the public should apply to speak in writing 10 days before a meeting, for a limit of three minutes, and at the discretion of the Chairman. Members were of the opinion that this proposal would limit the opportunity for the public to get involved in questions and debate. Members discussed an amendment to the proposal and it was agreed that the wording should be as follows:

Notice of questions from the public and other non-Forum members should be in writing to the Local Access Forum Secretary, three days before a meeting of the Forum. Those raising questions should normally speak for no longer than three minutes. However, at the Chairman's discretion, speakers may be able to speak for a longer period of time or may be able to speak without prior notification in writing.

7. Letterheads:

Members considered three letterheads and webpage designs that had been drawn up by the County Council. It was agreed that Mareth Adams would discuss some alternatives with Devon County Council staff and produce some preliminary drafts for the next meeting. Particular consideration in the design would be given to multi-use access issues, including cycling and riding, and to the agricultural aspects of landscape.

Action: Mareth Adams

8. Guidance given by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for Local Access Forums under section 94 (6)(c) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

A number of issues were discussed arising from the Guidance.

a) It was agreed that the terms of office for the Chairman and Vice Chairman should be

as in the Devon County Council Draft Terms of Reference Section 3.7. This states that they shall be appointed by the Forum and shall hold office for one year. Subject to their continuing membership of the Forum, they shall be eligible for re-election annually thereafter.

b) It was agreed that the terms of office for individual members as outlined in Devon County Council's Draft Terms of Reference 3.4 would be discussed at a future meeting. It was anticipated that a third of members would stand for one year, one third for two years and the remaining third for three years in order to provide continuity. The County Council had a reserve list whilst applications were being decided but this might not be appropriate in the event of any resignations and should be reassessed. All appointments remained the responsibility of the County Council.

c) It was agreed links with other Fora should be actively pursued and the mechanism for doing this would be discussed by the Chairman and Secretary and reported back.

Action: Chairman/Secretary

9. Presentation by Mr Tom Lewis of the Countryside Agency on the draft access maps

(For information refer to www.countryside.gov.uk/access/mapping)

Mr Lewis gave a presentation to members on the process of consultation on the draft access maps, due to be published on 13th May. He outlined how areas had been selected; the sources that had been drawn on to define new access areas and how these would be shown on the new maps. He discussed the consultation process, which would involve roadshows and availability of maps at libraries, council offices and through Parish Councils. Parish Council map sets would be confined to the parish area. The provisional maps would be published 6-8 months after the draft maps were issued.

The South West was the sixth area to be mapped and Mr Lewis, in response to questions, stated that several thousand comments had been received in other areas, leading to hundreds of Planning Appeals. 60% of comments were being made by landowners and 40% by other members of the public. Land could be added to or removed from maps during the consultation process for the Draft Map, but only landowners or people with an interest in the land are able to comment at the Provisional Map stage.

It could take several years before the OS maps were issued, following consent for the new rights of access. The Countryside Agency was working closely with the Ordnance Survey and using Mastermap, an OS product.

It was agreed that the Secretary would explore the different methods of response adopted by different Local Access Fora and report back.

Action: Secretary

It was agreed that the Secretary would arrange to make the maps belonging to the Devon Local Access Forum available to members at County Hall. A group of members living close to each other may be able to borrow the maps for a limited period.

Members suggested that they might attend roadshows and talk to the public about their reaction. It was agreed to discuss this again when roadshow dates were known.

The Vice Chairman thanked Mr Lewis for his presentation.

10. Any other business

It was agreed that the consultation process on the Draft Access Maps would dominate the work of the next two meetings. There was a need to draw up a work plan, with objectives and dates, so that issues such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan could be discussed as soon as possible. It was agreed that a draft work plan would be drawn up at the next meeting.

Action: Chairman/Secretary

11. Next meeting Friday, 30th May 10.30 a.m. at County Hall.