

Leeds Local Access Forum

Tuesday, 17th July, 2007

PRESENT: Mike Willison in the Chair

Councillors C Fox

IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Bowers – Principal Legal Officer
Brent Brady – Alleygating Officer
Roger Brookes – PROW Development Officer
Laura Pilgrim – Governance Services Officer
Joanne Smyth – Countryside Access Manager

42 APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Doreen Lawson, Phillip Maude, Didy Metcalfe and Steven Wood.

43 CHAIRS OPENING REMARKS

The Chair noted that the meeting was quorate but was missing a number of Members. Those present agreed to continue with the meeting and that any matter which Members who were absent wished to discuss could be done so at a future meeting.

The Chair also welcomed officers from the Leeds Community Safety Team who were attending in response to some recent correspondence regarding Gating Orders.

44 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Leeds Local Access Forum held on Tuesday 15th May 2007 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Minute 34 – Change Joanne Smyth's job title to 'Countryside Access Manager'.
- Minute 32 (i) – replace 'creation orders' to 'creation agreements'.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be approved.

45 MATTERS ARISING

- i. Minute 34 – The amended terms of reference had been circulated to all members of the Forum prior to the meeting for their information.
- ii. Minute 36 – the Countryside Access Manager advised the Forum that the Annual Report was in the process of being revised and that copies would be distributed to Members once finalised. The document would also be available online on the Leeds Local Access Forum website.

46 CORRESPONDENCE

The Forum received all correspondence which had been received by the Secretary since the last meeting. The first letter related to a number of questions the Forum had raised when they had considered Gating Orders at the last meeting. A copy of the letter outlining the concerns of the Forum which had been sent to the Alleygating Officer was enclosed in the paperwork for Members information.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his response and the Forum noted the comments in his letter. The Alleygating Officer advised the Forum that there were financial and time constraints which restricted the number of Gating Orders that were issued. Officers not only had to take into consideration the cost of installing the alleygates but also the cost of repairing the gates in the event that they were damaged (this had happened in a number of sites where alleygates had been installed). The Forum noted that the Officers were also restricted in the amount of resources they could commit to dealing with Gating Orders and were looking at creative ways to increase the funding to provide more staff and finances. One area Officers were looking at as a source of additional funding was to receive funding through money obtained through section 106 Agreements. However this was in the early stages and Members would be updated in the future of any developments

The Forum was reminded that the Gating Orders were a temporary measure to decrease crime in a particular area. Gating Orders would be reviewed annually and would be removed if crime had reduced in the area. There were some Local Authorities who had seemed to have made their Gating Order permanent however, this was not allowed under the legislation and these authorities may see the Orders challenged.

The Forum also received copies of letters sent between Duncan Graham, Chair of Cumbria Local Access Forum, and Dr. Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England regarding the future of the National Countryside Access Forum for their information. The letters provided an update on the on going correspondence with LAF Chairs and Natural England.

RESOLVED: That the correspondence be noted.

47 WEST LEEDS COUNTRY PARK AND GREEN GATEWAYS MANAGEMENT PLAN

An update was provided to the Forum on the progress of the West Leeds Park and Green Gateways Management Plan. Didy Metcalf provided an update on the last meeting of the Working Group. A copy of the minutes of the meeting was included in the agenda.

The Forum then went on to consider a consultation document on the draft Management Plan. The Forum noted the development of the plan and the on going issues of funding the propose improvements. Members of the Forum noted that the area appeared to be slightly disjointed with a large number of residential and commercial sites throughout the area. The Plan did aim to raise awareness of local amenities to residents and would hopefully improve the access to these areas. The Plan was still in its draft stage and there were still a number of items which were yet to be included including information from the Rights Of Way Improvements Plan. The Forum was advised that Elaine Hill would attend the next meeting of the Forum and could provide further information to the Panel on any queries which they had.

Members requested that they be provided with the pamphlets which had been developed in relation to West Leeds Country Park.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Update provided by Didy Metcalf be noted.
- b) That Members receive copies of the pamphlets relating to the West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways Management Plan.

48 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Countryside Access Manager presented to the Forum the draft version of the 'Rights of Way Improvements Plan' for comment and considerations. The Forum noted that the document would shortly be circulated to the general public through libraries and the internet etc. for consultation. Members were advised that there were still a small number of areas which required further attention but mostly the document was complete. The Countryside Access Manager noted comments regarding the misspelling of place names and that perhaps all Councillors should be consulted about the document prior to its distribution as they could provide some valuable feedback. The Officer agreed to look into this but reminded Members that there was a limited time frame to approve the document.

It was agreed that The Secretary to the Forum would write to all Members of the Forum with a copy of the tabled Draft Consultation document and request that Members forward their comments to the Countryside Access Manager as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the Consultation Document be approved subject to the consideration of feedback from Members.

49 CONSULTATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO APPLY FOR ORDERS TO EXTINGUISH AND DIVERT PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND ASSOCIATED RIGHTS OF APPEAL

The Forum considered a consultation document from Defra regarding Public Right of Way and the implementation of the right to apply for orders to extinguish and divert public rights of way.

Members of the Forum discussed the items relevant to Local Access Forums and proposed to respond to the following question which related to the Forum's proposed ability to respond to the above orders and associated appeals.

Q. 35 Do you consider that (a) authorities should be required to notify their local access forum of each application received, and/or (b) that the Secretary of State should be required to notify the relevant forum of each appeal made.

The Forum felt that they had an excellent working relationship with Officers who were able to keep them up to date with any significant applications or issues which arose. The Forum also felt that as most LAFs only met four times a year option (a) would dramatically increase the workload of the Forums which was already significant. Option (a) could also possibly divert a forum's attention away from its strategic and advisory role and involve the forum in political decisions.

Officers supported the decision of the Forum and agreed that any significant developments would be reported to the Forum as they arise.

RESOLVED – That the Secretary advise the Defra of the Leeds Local Access Forum's decision.

50 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Secretary advised the Forum that there would be a presentation on the Local Development Framework (LDF) at the next meeting of the Forum. The Forum would also be involved in a consultation on the LDF. The Secretary intended to work with Joanne Smyth and other officers to recruit new members over the Summer period and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

The following items were suggested as issues for future meetings of the Forum:

- Extend an Invitation the Defra to provided a presentation on Public Rights of Way
- Local Development Framework presentation
- Open Access

- West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways Management Plan
- Gating Orders.
- Membership Update

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

51 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Leeds Local Access Forum would be held on Tuesday 9th October 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

(Note: The meeting opened at 18:45 And closed at 20:20)