

LEEDS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

17th JANUARY 2006

PRESENT Mr M Willison in the Chair
Mr M Dyer, Ms S Goodall, Mr P Maude,
Mr F Hirst, Mrs D Metcalf and Councillor Fox

IN ATTENDANCE Joanne Smyth – Public Rights of Way,
Countryside & Access
Manager
Roger Brookes – Public Rights of Way,
Countryside & Access
Douglas Louis – Technical Manager, Parks &
Countryside Division
John Grieve Legal and Democratic
Services

24 Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

25 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harington and Doreen Lawson

26 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair identified 2 minor corrections to the minutes, Item No 14 the word landowners should be substituted with the word Farmers. Minute No17 delete the phrase SSI and replace with SSSI

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of the minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2005 be agreed as a true and correct record

27 Matters arising

- (i) Outstanding Owners and Occupiers vacancy on the LLAFF (Minute No.14 refers) - Further to minute 14 of the meeting held on 20th October 2005, Joanne Smyth updated the forum on progress in respect of filling the outstanding Owners and Occupiers vacancy on the LLAFF. Following the unsuccessful recruitment exercise it was now planned to send a flyer to the NFU, Young Farmers and the

CLA and ask for applications by invitation. The closing date for receipt of applications is 3rd February 2006.

- (ii) Annual Report of the Leeds Local Access Forum (Minute No.15 refers) – The Chair said the report, as far as he could see, had not yet been published on the Council's Web site. Before it was the front page needed altering in order to show that it was from the LLAFF and not Leeds City council. The Chair suggested the Chair and Secretary progress the matter.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the course of action been taken to fill the current vacancy
- (ii) To authorise the Chair and Secretary to re-visit the format of the LLAFF Annual Report with a view to implementing the suggested corrections

28 Kirkstall Valley Project –Update

Members received an update from Martin Sellens, Area Planning Manager, West Area Team, Development Department on the Kirkstall Valley project.

Mr Sellens acknowledged the receipt of the LLAFF's comments on the scheme. This particular application was a very long and complex process.

Mr Sellens said that Transport/Highway issues and possible flooding to the site continue to be unresolved. There are significant highway concerns in respect of the A65. On 27th January 2006 the application will be put before Plans Panel (West) for consideration. Officers will submit a substantial report providing a comprehensive overview. Panel Members will undertake a site visit prior to this meeting taking place.

It was reported that discussions had taken place with Network Rail and Metro to achieve a Railway Station at the Kirkstall Forge site, it is hoped that the station may be delivered as part of a substantial Transport benefit. It was noted that the developer is prepared to commit £4m towards a station at the site.

There has been very little progress made on the Public Rights of Way issues. The Railway Station is the key to crossing the line of the railway to achieve a link with the Rights of Way in Bramley Fall Woods. There are to be two traffic-controlled crossings of the A65, one at each end of the site, which will allow safe access to the Rights of Way in Hawksworth Wood. Discussions are taking place with the developer as to the status of the footpaths within the site and the phasing of the development. It is hoped to

achieve at an early stage a link along the riverside to Kirkstall Abbey but there are health and safety issues to be overcome. These links require establishing earlier on within the planning process.

Councillor Fox referred to the possible plans to provide a Railway Station at Apperley Bridge. In responding Mr Sellens said he was aware of such issues, two stations was not possible, the Kirkstall Forge site was the preferred Park & Ride site.

Mr Sellens reported that through negotiation a number of contentious elements had now been removed from the scheme (Office Development along the Kirkstall Road frontage). Further discussions continue to be ongoing with off site links being pursued through a Section 106 Agreement.

Mr Maude re-emphasised the comments made earlier that it was very important to get footpath provision in at the very early stages of the planning process.

The Chair thanked Mr Sellens for his attendance and presentation

29 West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways

Members received a presentation from Mr Douglas Louis, Technical Manager, Parks & Countryside Division, Department of Learning and Leisure on the West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways objectives

Mr Louis advised Members that the aim of the initiative was to develop the West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways ensuring suitable and sustainable greenspace availability, quality recreational areas, diverse wildlife habitats and a strong community involvement. To achieve this goal the following objectives had been produced:

Short Term Objectives

- Examine the feasibility of extending the Country Park and Green Gateways area to include greenspace around the south of New Farnley and in towards Beeston Royds
- Explore potential routes from Beeston Royd, Post Hill and/ or Silver Royd Hill to Armley and the City Centre to create a complete circular route. Route to use existing green corridors and/ or greenspaces as “stepping stones”
- Once the route is affirmed produce a standard interpretation board for the Country Park and Gateways Scheme. Suggest compartmentalise the Park due to its size so the interpretation boards within each compartment contain a simple generic map of

the Park along with a more detailed map for the compartment in question

- Produce a general leaflet about the Country Park and the Green Gateways. Supplement this with specific leaflets for each compartment within the Park
- Establish a framework with Bradford so cross-border issues can be discussed and acted upon. This will have particular relevance to the various Public Rights of Way that cross the boundary and in the development of mini circular trails
- Way mark key routes through the site and spur paths to sites of interest and ensure these are included in the leaflets
- Set up a consultative forum that will include key stakeholders to discuss issues relating to the development of the Country Park and Green Gateways
- Organise a number of guided walks through the proposed area using the Countryside Rangers and Volunteers

Medium Term Objectives

- Organise a number of bigger events with the emphasis on promoting health in all its guises. Orienteering, horse riding, cross-country running, walking, mountain bike rides and conservation work
- Improve key Public Rights of Way within the site and develop a West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways Trail for walkers, horse riders and mountain bike riders
- Select sites within the Country Park and Green Gateways that would benefit from conservation works e.g. pond construction, wild flower meadows establishment or restoration, hedge planting, tree plantations, fencing and dry stone walling
- Formal framework with the various stakeholders to implement improvements in the greenspace areas
- Seek grants to improve or provide facilities to the various greenspaces. For example the installation of seats, picnic tables, steps, ramps and directional signage. Also to include removal of fly-tipped waste and general litter besides installing appropriate barriers to prevent unauthorised access
- Look at creating mini circular trails within the Country Park & Green Gateways area
- Develop a management plan for the initiative that encompasses the various sites, links, consultation and objectives

Long Term Objectives

- Resolve outstanding ownership of various greenspace that lie within the area of the proposed Country Park and Green Gateways

- Where appropriate open up new public rights of way or permissive ways to provide links between various existing public rights of way and thereby develop continuity in routes through the proposed Country Park and Green Gateways
- Develop and expand access to new areas of greenspace within the urban and countryside areas that will positively contribute to the initiative

When questioned by Members about funding to maintain the park, Mr Louis responded by saying that appropriate funding was available to maintain the park area

Referring to the short term objectives and the establishing of consultative forums, Mr Louis suggested that a forum was being held on 20th March 2006 and representative from the LLAf would be welcome

Both Diddy Metcalf and the Chair expressed an interest in attending the forum

RESOLVED –

- (i) That Mr Louis be thanked for his attendance and his informative presentation
- (ii) That Diddy Metcalf and the Chair be contacted in the first instance concerning attendance at the West Leeds Country Park Forum to be held on 20th March 2006

30 The ROW Improvement Plan Update

Roger Brookes provided Members with an update on the ROW Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Referring to the Leeds ROWIP – User Survey, Mr Brookes said that some preliminary results had been obtained using the first 100 questionnaires processed. Various graphs were circulated to illustrate the number of users and the use type. The outstanding questionnaires were still being processed and it was hoped that this work would be completed by the end of summer

Speaking on other areas of the ROWIP, Mr Brookes said that Bridleway connections were ongoing, the definitive map process was very complicated and time consuming with all footpath applications going to Public Inquiry. It is important to determine where the prior areas are, and this can be achieved through the results of the users survey

In passing comment Phil Maude said he was aware that up to 12 public footpaths were currently obstructed, was the Council considering taken any kind of action

In response Joanne Smyth said prosecutions were only done as a last resort

RESOLVED – That the progress made be noted

31 Feedback from the LAF Event in September 2005

Members received a summary report following the staging of a Yorkshire and Humber Local Access Forum event which was held in York on 16th September 2005

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

32 Summary of Jim Knight's Speech to the Local Access Forums in the North West

Members received a summary of a speech given by Jim Knight, Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity to a gathering of representatives from Local Access Forums in the North West of England

RESOLVED – That the contents of the speech be noted

33 Further Discussion on the Way Ahead for the LLAFF

In opening up the discussion the Chair suggested that the LLAFF should concentrate on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the Kirkstall Forge Scheme, West Leeds Country Park and possibly the former St Aidan's Opencast Coal Site.

In passing comment Phil Maude suggested that the LLAFF had the greatest influence in making schemes more accessible to the general public. Looking at things at a strategic level was very important, for example the West Yorkshire Transport Plan was a good example of how the LLAFF could provide influence. Dialogue with other Local Authorities, "tapping" into corporate projects and Statutory Forums has a lot of influence in strategic terms.

Joanne Smyth commented that a great deal of officer time was spent investigating diversions/upgrades to the Public Right of Way network. Referring to the Parlington Area of the City, she said that entering into consultation with all interested parties had been a major problem, specific issues at specific paths. It was necessary to hold surgeries twice a year separate to the ROWIP process

Roger Brookes suggested the LLAF's efforts should be concentrated on ROWIP and not so many Kirkstall Forge Projects

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the LLAF be the subject of a site visit to the Parlington Flyline

34 Open Access

Joanne Smyth reported that work was currently being undertaken to look at all Open Access Land. Site surveys would be carried out to establish means of entry and exit, the work would take some time given the very large area to cover. It was reported that the work was currently being done by a temporary appointment however, funding was being sought to secure a permanent post

RESOLVED – That a further update be provided at a future meeting

35 Bulletin

Members received a copy of BULLETIN, (Issue No. 6). Published by the Countryside Agency the newsletter provides an update on the Access Management Grant Scheme

RESOLVED – That the contents of the Bulletin newsletter be noted

36 Items for the next meeting

With reference to minute 33 above, and the decision to visit the Parlington Flyline. Members requested to receive documentation which would be of assistance during the course of their visit

37 Date of Future Meetings

RESOLVED – That meeting's of the Leeds Local Access Forum be arranged as follows:

- (i) Tuesday 6th June 2006 (Site visit to Parlington Flyline, assemble 5.30pm at Parks & Countryside Offices, Redhall, Estate)
- (ii) Tuesday 19th September 2006 at 6.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds preceded by informal gathering at 6.00pm.

