



Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF)

for Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire

JLAF 27

Draft Minutes of meeting, Friday 6th July 2012

Date: Friday, 6th July, 2012

Time: 2:00pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Riverside Offices, Temple Street, Keynsham. BRISTOL. BS31 1LE

Present: JLAF Members:

Chris Barrable, Chris Bloor, Cllr Nicholas Coombes (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Dale Dennehy, Ann Fay, Cllr Howard Gawler (South Gloucestershire Council), Peter Gould, Robert Killen (JLAF Vice Chairman), Bernadette Macey, Sarah Peacock, Christopher Simpson, Sheena Stephenson, David Waterstone (JLAF Chairman)

Also in attendance:

Chris Hogg (JLAF Secretary), Dot Isgrove (Natural England), Mary Knight (Bristol City Council), Sarah Slade (Speaker, CLA), Graeme Stark (Bath & North East Somerset Council), David Willis (South Gloucestershire Council).

Members of the public, including:

Rennie Dickins, David Howard, Robin Winfield

Action

A	INTRODUCTIONS	Action
A1	<p>Introductions The Chairman introduced those present, including new members Dale Dennehy and Sarah Peacock. Dot Isgrove was attending, representing Natural England.</p> <p>Bill Dawson, Andy Short and Adam Stratton have now stepped down or retired from the JLAF, and the Chairman expressed his gratitude for their hard work and effort.</p> <p>The Chairman passed on farewell and thanks to Stu Ballard, who has retired after 13 years as a Public Rights of Way officer in Bath & North East Somerset Council.</p>	
A2	<p>Apologies JLAF Members: John Gunnery, Rachael Whitlock, Michael Youé, Sophy Baynton-Coward</p> <p>Other apologies: Nicola Chidley (South Gloucestershire Council), Anita Robertson (South Gloucestershire Council), Duncan Venison (Bristol City Council)</p>	
A3	<p>Declarations of interest No declarations were made.</p>	
A4	<p>Minutes of the last meeting on 4th November 2011. The minutes were <u>agreed</u> as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following alterations: Page 1: Add Ann Fay and Sheena Stephenson to the attendees. Page 3: The claimed equestrian route <i>near</i> Wickwar is <i>in</i> Hawkesbury Upton parish.</p>	

A6	<p>Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda</p> <p>B3 on page 3. Chris Hogg gave an update. John Grimshaw, founder and previously Chief Executive of Sustrans, is carrying out a feasibility report for South Glos and B&NES Councils considering cycling/ walking and bridleway links from Bristol along the riverside via Hanham Lock to Keynsham, considering the Somerdale site, links to the Bristol to Bath Railway Path at Bitton and links into Keynsham town centre. Chris will pass on a request to consider past, current and prospective equestrian use of paths along the river.</p>	JLAF Secretary
B	MAIN BUSINESS	
B1	<p>The CLA: Proposals for improving public rights of way Presentation by Sarah Slade, National Access Adviser, CLA.</p> <p>Sarah Slade thanked the JLAF for their invitation. She introduced the Country Land & Business Association (CLA) and their policy proposal document entitled: 'The Right Way Forward: The CLA's common sense approach to access in the countryside', which was published in February 2012.</p> <p>A copy of Sarah's presentation will be published on the JLAF website at www.jlaf.org.uk/meetings</p> <p>A concern had been addressed that the CLA had published these proposals outside of a consensus process that started with the PROW Stakeholders Working Group (SWG) in October 2008, continued with the SWG 'Stepping Forward' report published in March 2010, which prompted Defra's proposals 'Improvements to the policy and legal framework for public rights of way' published for consultation in May 2012.</p> <p>Sarah addressed this by saying that there was a two year delay after publication of the CWG proposals, until the CLA proposals were published in February 2012, and Defra published their report after this date.</p> <p>The CLA still maintains their support of the SWG 'Stepping Forward' report and largely agrees with the Defra proposals currently under consultation, which are based on 'Stepping Forward'. The CLA has three outstanding issues with the current Defra proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CLA generally supports as sensible, the extension of proposals from Definitive Map Orders (in Stepping Forward) to Public Path Orders (not considered in Stepping Forward) • Defra's 'Cost of Recovery' proposals need more clarification, but the CLA generally agree, stating that an appeal procedure is important. • The CLA thinks that Defra's proposals do not deliver the recommendations of the Penfold review of planning processes. <p>The CLA's document 'The Right Way Forward' is published at: www.cla.org.uk/Policy_Work/Policy_Reports/ And Defra's consultation on improving rights of way is at: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/05/14/improve-rights-of-way/</p> <p>The Chairman of the JLAF thanked Sarah for addressing the JLAF.</p>	Secretary
B2	<p>News from the Public Rights of Way (PROW) teams</p> <p>South Gloucestershire Council</p> <p>This item was submitted as a written report from Nicola Chidley in advance of the meeting:</p>	

The South Glos PROW team has seen a great deal of change over the last few months. We have been merged into a new structure within Streetcare within the newly merged department now called Environment and Community Services. We form part of a large team called Asset and Engineering. We have a newly placed Engineering Manager Mark Parry. Mark has been in traffic management for a number of years with a particular interest in cycling.

We have seen our Ranger moved to Design and Operations; our Technical Officer post moved to Technical support; our field officers have been renamed PROW Engineers and Senior Engineer. All in all with the loss of two posts last year and the restructure it has been a busy time. We have and are going to review the processes we use to ensure that we are working more efficiently.

Our budget allocation has been interesting with a generous capital settlement of 125k and with limited budget left for some smaller revenue items.

The situation for the materials and tools storage is equally unsettled as the Broad Lane depot is currently being developed for absorbing the folks, machinery, gritters and salt barn from Almondsbury depot. This reduction in available space has meant the PROW Ranger tool container and materials storage are being moved within the site.

It is very much business as usual for the maintenance and enforcement side and a few notable successes.

The South Glos PROW Liaison Group met last on 18th April 2012. They are due to meet next first week September. Issues raising from LG summary:-

- Riding horses on the ring road, following discussions and a meeting of the various parties involved in South Glos, it has been agreed to produce a map of paths suitable for horse riding near the ring road. This information has been requested for over a year from BHS and horse riders. The Map will show routes that are available for horse riding and will be initially set out for 6 months with a review of any problems after the initial six month period. This will allow riding on some of the ring road cycle paths as requested.*
- Round Avon Rides leaflet being updated*
- A discussion was held regarding future terms of reference of the LG and how it would best complement the JLAF. The drafted Terms of Reference to be discussed at the September meeting.*
- Rambler Work Parties, so far 4 have taken place in South Glos with more planned by Southwold and Kingswood Groups. They are enthusiastic and willing to have a go at several different tasks so well done.*
- Seeking Path Wardens to assist surveying paths in their areas.*
- Dogs and dog walkers highlighted as a major problem. To be discussed by JLAF in November.*

Safer Cycle and horse riding route at Frampton Cotterell. We have been discussing internally with Engineering management the proposed multiuser route at Frampton Cotterell and there appears to be political support for a multiuse path on the grass verge to the south but major works would be required. A meeting is planned with Engineering manager and drainage to push this idea forward.

There have been no gating order applications.

Cllr Howard Gawler added that bridges on public rights of way were now being looked after as highways structures, so with the same inspection and replacement programme as other bridges on the highway network.

South Glos PROW Liaison Group meetings are now to be held three times a year, after JLAF meetings. The next meeting is on the 5th September.

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Graeme Stark addressed this item.

Stuart Ballard has retired from the PROW team. His work will be temporarily covered until the end of 2012 by Sheila Petherbridge (for the area south of Bath including Wellow) and Cheryl Hannan (for the Bath to Keynsham area). Any queries to the public rights of way team will be directed to the correct person.

An external consultant is carrying out a service review, including the highways maintenance and engineering sections and public rights of way. There are £40k of savings still to be found within the 2012/13 budget.

A Diversion Order has been completed on a public footpath BA5/23 in Upper Charlcombe. The Council is about to make a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on Burledge Lane, CL24/41 near Bishop Sutton, a Byway Open to All Traffic, to prevent further damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Council, at the Regulatory (Access) Committee meeting on 30th May 2012, resolved that a Definitive Map Modification Order should be made to remove from the Definitive Map and Statement, a section of Bridleway CL15/11 at Norton Malreward. This prompted queries about the resulting situation of a cul-de-sac bridleway, which had an alternative route on a public footpath (also the Three Peaks Walk and the Community Forest Path promoted routes) but not for bridleway users. The Committee had instructed officers to investigate whether there is evidence for an alternative bridleway near that site.

The Avon Ramblers' Voluntary Wardens have been operating successfully in Bath & North East Somerset, including work clearing and installing kissing gates on public footpath BA26/10 by Horse World at Whitchurch, and cutting vegetation along promoted routes. Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Mendip Ramblers Volunteers also carry out work in the Bath & North East Somerset area.

There have been no gating order applications.

There has not been a recent PROW Liaison Group in Bath & North East Somerset, and the Chairman will talk to Graeme Stark to see if there is a need for such a group. Specific queries can be submitted directly to the council and strategic matters can be considered by the JLAF.

Bristol City Council

Mary Knight addressed this item.

There has been no change within the team's structure, but highways engineers are now organised into the Neighbourhood Partnership areas, of which there are 14 across the city. These engineers carry out maintenance and enforcement work on public rights of way.

Following last year's 80% cut to the PROW revenue budget, there has been an increase in the operational budget and £50k for capital works in 2012/13.

The Severn Way, including the Severn Way Link from Severn Beach into Bristol, is currently being re-walked by the author of the original guide, with the intention to republish a guide in 2013.

Peter Gould raised a specific query about the remedying of a section of the Severn Way link at Sea Mills. This path runs under a railway bridge and is not a public right of way, but there is a recognised need to resolve drainage problems. The path is inundated during spring high tides though for most of the year in normal conditions the path is above tide so a solution should be possible.

	<p>Any Gating Orders currently being considered in Bristol are not on public rights of way.</p> <p>The most recent Bristol PROW Liaison Group meeting was on the 14th June and the minutes will shortly be published on the web at http://www.bristol.gov.uk/node/8157</p>	
B3	<p>JLAF Business Plan 2012-13 To plan the JLAF's work for the coming year</p> <p>The Government Guidance suggests LAF Business Plans, so this prompted the Chairman to suggest a JLAF Business Plan at the March JLAF meeting with the JLAF supporting. Suggestions of subjects to go in a draft Business Plan are in the background papers.</p> <p>The Business Plan will identify areas of work for the JLAF to take on, making the most of the specialisms and interests of JLAF members – and to help coordinate work that other groups they are involved in may be doing. For example, the Avon Ramblers' Voluntary Wardens scheme, the potential of which was raised during JLAF consultation for the ROWIP and established using funds identified at the JLAF, is now up and running.</p> <p>Ann Fay had been working with Rachael Whitlock and other horse riding interests to compile her suggestions for safe horse riding routes with opportunities such as identifying road verges for cutting, inside hedge paths, upgrading of footpaths, promoting particular paths as tourist attractions. Examples were given for these. There is potential to work with other equestrians, cyclists, the councils, Natural England and others to deliver these. On the basis of this, 'Bridleway improvements' would be a major item at the March 2013 meeting, and Ann Fay and other interests will work up their proposals for that meeting.</p> <p>Chris Bloor will consider the subject of unrecorded public rights of way, following the presentation by Sarah Slade and the current government consultation on changes to public rights of way legislation and processes. Cllr Howard Gawler suggested that Chris Bloor contact parish councils (e.g. Downend) in South Gloucestershire Council who are considering this subject locally.</p> <p>Robert Killen will prepare for an item on Dogs at the next JLAF meeting in November.</p> <p>Chris Barrable will consider the subject of the interests of motorised vehicle users.</p> <p>Other members should contact the Chairman David Waterstone or the Secretary Chris Hogg if they have subjects or projects they want to be considered for the business plan and the Chairman and Secretary will update the Business Plan accordingly.</p> <p>The Business Plan will be a standing item on the JLAF Agenda.</p>	<p>Ann Fay</p> <p>Chris Bloor</p> <p>Robert Killen</p> <p>Chris Barrable</p> <p>Chairman, Secretary</p>
C	<u>ITEMS TO REPORT / FOR INFORMATION</u>	
C1	<p>Update on Castle Bridleway Group item at JLAF26</p> <p>Nicola Chidley submitted a written response to this item:</p> <p><i>"The Bridleways Group have had the forms for submitting a DMMO application for some time now, but so far no application has been submitted. The Common is managed by SGC Community Spaces who have been in significant correspondence with Mr Howard of the Castle BW Group. Here is the view taken by the Commons Manager:</i></p>	

	<p><i>"This commons unit (which includes four named commons) is regulated by a scheme of management (Commons Act 1899) and byelaws have been made in accordance with that scheme. Following on from various local government reorganisations, the management of the common is now vested in this Council. Byelaws have been made under the scheme and these byelaws state "A person shall not without lawful authority exercise or break in any horse on the Commons.". A copy of the legal opinion to which reference has been made has not been seen, however, the Council view is that horse riding generally over any area of the common which is the subject of the above mentioned scheme is not lawful. I should also point out that certain areas of this common (Unit CL38) which formed highways were omitted from final registration as common land following a decision by the Commons Commissioner. This was as a consequence of an objection submitted by the County Surveyor (objection 92). Those highways included some vehicular highways and some public rights of way including public footpath LHA40."</i></p> <p><i>Should an application under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 be submitted then an in depth investigation of whether any use of the route was as of right or by right and what documentary evidence supported the bridleway would be undertaken in order to determine the matter. For this reason it is still advised that the group submit a Definitive Map Modification Order application."</i></p> <p>The Castle Bridleway group are continuing to prepare their submission for this route.</p>	
C2	<p>Lower Severn Vale Levels Project Dave Villis outlined the project that had been submitted for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund: details are in the background papers. The project would involve improving public access and awareness of the landscape along the River Severn, particularly linking Lawrence Weston to sites such as Hallen Marsh. Dave will return to the JLAF when he is ready to ask for help, specifically in seeking the JLAF's advice on improving outdoors access in the area. Chris Bloor and Ann Fay volunteered to help with this work.</p> <p>Cllr Howard Gawler invited Dave Villis to brief the Public Rights and Greens Committee of South Gloucestershire Council. The JLAF wished Dave Villis luck with the application.</p>	<p>Dave Villis Chris Bloor Ann Fay</p>
C3	<p>Avon Ramblers' Voluntary Wardens This had been covered under other items: the Voluntary Wardens are up and running and successfully completing practical works on the ground.</p>	
C4	<p>OutdoorsWest, website, content and publicity Chris Hogg reported that he was working on the review of mapping and the routes database, delayed because of illness. Once this is done the work of JLAF volunteers can be uploaded to the website and published – and surveying of routes can continue. Chris thanked the volunteers and Chris Bloor for their help and patience.</p> <p>The website currently gets about 150 unique visits a week (visits from separate computers) and between January and June there were 2845 unique visitors. The Twitter account has 281 followers: people who read tweets as they are sent from OutdoorsWest – with prompts related to weather, events interesting news or ideas to get out and about.</p>	<p>Chris Hogg</p>

C5	<p>Improvements to the policy and legal framework for public rights of way – Defra Consultation. Deadline 6th August 2012.</p> <p>This was introduced by Sarah Slade in her presentation, and Graeme Stark gave a more specific brief. Defra are consulting on a package of measures to change some of the legislation and policy on legal changes to public rights of way. This was based on the consensus ‘Stepping Forward’ report of the PROW Stakeholders Working Group (SWG) published in March 2010. The proposals tinker and evolve processes and legislation, rather than overhaul it. In some proposals (such as on Public Path Order processes) this consultation goes further than the recommendations of the Stepping Forward report.</p> <p>Given that Defra’s deadline is the 6th August, it was agreed that members would send any comments they wished to be considered for the JLAF response to the JLAF Chairman David Waterstone by the 20th July who would compile a JLAF response, which would be reported at the next JLAF meeting. Any member could choose to also send their own response with their personal views or views of groups they may represent.</p>	<p>All Members</p> <p>Chairman</p>
D	<p><u>ITEMS FOR RATIFICATION</u></p> <p>These items were considered together.</p> <p>Regarding Item D3, Ann Fay observed that the Local Nature Partnership letter of support could have more strongly emphasised the importance of outdoors access. The secretary explained that the JLAF had a place on the ‘Momentum Group’ of the partnership, and that organisations who attended a conference to plan for a partnership were particularly keen to include access representation.</p> <p>Regarding Item D5, Robin Winfield, attending the meeting, briefed as follows:</p> <p><i>“On Wednesday 4th July, Alison Sherwin of Bath & North East Somerset Council met with Patric Bulmer of Bristol Water and they have agreed that subject to improving the security of the new entrance to the Bristol Water premises by the cafe that the work can commence. It is planned that this work will take place in about January 2013 (within this financial year), which should both secure and use the funds for this year, but also make the very important step of starting the route, which should mean funding can be applied for in the future. They also discussed signage and discussion will take place regarding this, possibly with a view to overall improvement and tourism in mind.”</i></p> <p>The Chairman thanked Robin Winfield for his continued interest and persistence in pursuing this matter.</p> <p>Items:</p> <p>D1 JLAF comment on fencing Bannerdown Common, D2 JLAF response to B&NES Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy Consultation, D3 JLAF letter of support for a West of England Local Nature Partnership, D4 JLAF response to Bus Rapid Transit Consultation(s), and D5 JLAF letter to Bristol Water regarding Chew Valley Lake...</p> <p>...were ratified by the meeting.</p>	

E	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The secretary reported that Michael Youé of British Waterways (soon to be the Canal & River Trust), who could not attend had noted: <i>"If any JLAF partners are interested in a canal towing path partnership project, or other projects involving access improvements please get into contact with me – especially in Bath as I know we are keen to extend the cycleway improvements."</i></p> <p>The secretary reported that on the 4th July the Independent Panel on Forestry had published its final report. This is the panel established by the government a year ago following the withdrawal of their controversial forestry proposals. The JLAF had made a submission to the Independent Panel in July 2011. The government plans to issue a full response to the report in January 2013.</p>	
F	<p>The next meeting JLAF28 at 2pm on the 2 November 2012 in Keynsham</p> <p>Proposed Agenda Items Walkers are welcome Dogs and the Outdoors</p>	
G	Close	