



Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF)

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

JLAF 23

Draft Minutes of meeting, Friday 4th March 2011

Date: Friday, 4th March 2011

Time: 2:00pm

Venue: The Carter Room, Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham. BRISTOL. BS31 2AU

Present: JLAF Members:

Ray Newbigin (JLAF Chairman), Robin Winfield (JLAF Vice Chairman), Ron Phelps (JLAF Deputy Chairman), Chris Bloor, Bill Dawson, Ann Fay, Roger Fowler, Peter Gould, John Gunnery, Collette Linehan, Bernadette Macey, Adam Stratton, David Waterstone, Margaret Wilson.

Also in attendance:

Rennie Dickins (South Gloucestershire Council), Richard Thomas (Natural England), David Bruce, Chris Hogg (JLAF Secretary), Christopher Orlik (Bristol City Council), Graeme Stark (Bath & North East Somerset Council).

A	Action
A1	INTRODUCTIONS
A1	Welcome to new members and introductions The Chairman welcomed all present.
A2	Apologies JLAF Members: Robert Killen Duncan Venison (Bristol City Council), Cllr Chris Cray (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Andy Short, Cllr Trevor Blythe (Bristol City Council), Peter Ashcroft Members Not Present: Jill Britten. Resignations: None.
A3	Declarations of interest No declarations were made.
A4	Minutes of the last meeting on 5th November 2010. The minutes were <u>agreed</u> as an accurate record of the meeting. As an update, GS informed the meeting that the issues at Haycombe Lane are now being addressed. GS, and the officer responsible for maintaining the paths in Englishcombe, will contact the landowner and, if necessary, follow through with enforcement action.

A5	Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda None.	
A6	JLAF Membership/Recruitment Roger Fowler, Peter Gould, Colette Linehan, Ray Newbigin, Ronald Phelps, Margaret Wilson and Robin Winfield all indicated that they would like to reapply for membership when their current term expires in June 2011. Robert Killen was not present but other members indicated that he would also like to reapply.	
B	MAIN BUSINESS	
B1	Health and Outdoors Access Peter Ashcroft (Physical Activity Regional Lead, Public Health Team, Department of Health South West) had been due to give a presentation to the JLAF but unfortunately had to give his apologies due to conflicting commitments. He has sent a briefing document, which is on the meetings page of the JLAF website.	
B2	The future of the Public Forest Estate in England JLAF members were asked for their responses to the 'The future of the Public Forest Estate in England' consultation and the Chairman thanked members for their replies which were used to put together a draft response. Overcourt Wood is the only locally affected woodland but residents within the three authorities still access other local woodland such as the Forest of Dean and Leigh Woods and forests further afield such as the Forest of Dean, on the Mendip Hills and Westonbirt. It was agreed that any response should centre on access and be non-political. Although pedestrians are well catered for on Forestry Commission (FC) land, there is little provision for equestrians and cyclists. The proposals are complex and the consultation asked leading questions. The proposals have been dropped by the government, partly because organisations such as the National Trust and Woodlands Trust didn't want to get involved. The associated website has been closed down. It was proposed that the JLAF response, which was written before the withdrawal date, should be sent to the Minister for consideration. This was agreed. CL suggested the best way to ensure access is public ownership. CB felt that the Forestry Commission were not perfect regarding access and provide little for horseriders; RF highlighted issues with Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) on FC land. Beyond the consultation, 19% of FC land is still set to be sold off under existing legislation. The Chairman pointed out that small parcels of land can be particularly important to local users, especially in urban areas. JG pointed out that there are private owners who supply good access and that public access could be playing a role in the spread of diseases such as that currently affecting larch trees. CB highlighted Bristol City Council's proposed sell off of public open space. RT stated that it was the FC that dedicated their land as Access Land and they generate a large amount of their income from access rather than cropping and they are therefore access professionals. Access Land legislation is not easy to enforce and access points can be legally blocked off. CB will provide text to include in the JLAF's consultation response to highlight that the legislation is relatively weak and does not adequately protect public access. It was agreed that a response would be sent to DEFRA/the Minister.	Chris Hogg
B3	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Implementation Currently going through Committee at the three authorities and is expected to be in force by 1 st April 2011; currently available on the West of England website. The Joint ROWIP is to be reviewed and renewed with JLAF involvement. The revised	Chris Bloor Chris Hogg

	<p>plan may involve more specific proposals and a greater emphasis on health promotion and will look for new funding opportunities.</p> <p>OutdoorsWest: There have been difficulties enforcing the OutdoorsWest website delivery. The main contractor is providing the mapping and there have been issues with the delivery of the actual website. A considerable amount of officer time has been involved in ensuring that the website can be delivered for the 20th March deadline and RD highlighted the excellent work being done by CH.</p> <p>CH introduced the website and provided an overview of the proposed features including the JLAF forum which will allow members to discuss relevant issues between meetings. CH would demonstrate the completed website to members at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman said that OutdoorsWest would increase the demand for access to the countryside for those with a computer, had access to the internet and had access to a car. This was an excellent development but there was a large group of people who had no car, no computer, were in poor health and took little exercise.</p> <p>"Access for the disadvantaged", is the temporary title that the Chairman suggested for this group of people and he suggested that the JLAF turn their attention to this group.</p> <p>Research figures show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the south west, 21% have no car – SW Observatory • In the south west, 30% have no computer – SW Observatory • Nationally, "50% of those with an income of less than £11,500 never use the internet" quoted by Martha Lane Fox (the government computer expert and co-founder of Last Minute.com) and reported in the Financial Times. 	
B4	<p>Gating Orders</p> <p>The Deputy Chairman introduced Gating Orders which are designed to address problems of anti-social behaviour and the fear of such behaviour. The JLAF has a Position Statement and different interests must be weighed in the balance in considering a proposal. Photographs of two gating orders were shown to JLAF members.</p> <p>There are currently gating orders in place at Kipling Road in Filton and PROW163 in Fishponds. There are apparently proposals to repeal the legislation and the reduction in funding is likely to reduce the number of proposals. It was agreed that the JLAF would request that the PROW163 Order be reviewed after 12 months.</p>	Chris Hogg
B5	<p>JLAF Project Progress</p> <p>i. Chew Valley Lake</p> <p>The Vice Chairman updated the JLAF on set backs with the planning application as a result of inconsistent advice from Natural England. RT agreed to investigate the problems and report back. MW stated that there is strong local support for the proposals.</p> <p>ii. River Avon Riverside Routes</p> <p>B&NES Council have written to DW indicating that they are looking at the feasibility of building a bridge but DW felt that after 4 years the time had come to refer the matter to the courts.</p> <p>Stabilisation works on the towpath in Bristol should be completed shortly. Shortly after securing a dedication agreement for a section of Monarch's Way, high water has eroded 100m of the path. RW highlighted the good work being done by CO on Bristol City Council's section of the river path.</p> <p>RD recently hosted the Severn Way partnership meeting.</p> <p>iii. Bridleway link at Frampton Cotterell</p>	

	No report. iv. Lansdown Access Land The Lansdown footpath will be advertised on the new OutdoorsWest website.	
C	<u>ITEMS FOR RATIFICATION</u>	
C1	JLAF Response to "South Gloucestershire Council Core Strategy" The JLAF draft response to B&NES Council's Core Strategy was considered and ratified.	
D	<u>ITEMS TO REPORT/ FOR INFORMATION</u>	
D1	JLAF activities None.	
D2	Regional LAFs and English Access Forum English Access Forum not currently running due to changes within Natural England.	
D3	JLAF Annual Report 2009-10 The JLAF Annual Report 2009-10 was summarised and its contents was agreed by all present.	
D3	<p>News from the PROW teams</p> <p>The Chairman reported that PROW teams are dealing with 'hellish workloads'.</p> <p>South Gloucestershire Council S. Glos are losing a post and are trying to manage work accordingly. Looking at which functions are powers and which are duties, possibly with a view to not processing Public Path Orders (PPO)s.</p> <p>Bristol City Council. Staffing levels are stable. A new path has been completed near Muller Road.</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Council. GS stated that B&NES has already stopped processing PPOs.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that the cuts are hitting B&NES PROW team particularly hard. He stated that central government said that there is nationally an average of 8.9% cuts (taken over four years) but, because of front-end loading, B&NES government grant is down by 20.0% this year after allowing for inflation. The B&NES PROW team is down 27% in terms of staffing levels.</p> <p>The Chairman has recently written to the B&NES Executive Member asking that the B&NES PROW team not be subject to more cuts in staffing.</p> <p>Figures from all three authorities suggest an increasing backlog of Diversion Order applications, which are a statutory duty. There is a 4 year outstanding work load in both Bristol and South Gloucestershire and over 20 years' outstanding work load in B&NES. This large backlog of work in B&NES is exacerbated by the fact that Bath did not have a Definitive Map.</p> <p>The JLAF will continue to press for the PROW teams to be adequately resourced.</p> <p>The issue of volunteers was raised and it was agreed that, while in some instances this can work very well, there are issues around 'red-tape' and supervision.</p>	
D3	Public Rights of Way Liaison Groups Bristol City Council. The members reviewed the agendas in the background papers.	

	<p>South Gloucestershire Council The members reviewed the agendas in the background papers.</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Council. A voluntary PROW Liaison Group is being set up with the Chairman of the JLAF chairing the meetings, DW acting as secretary and GS attending on behalf of the authority; the first meeting is to be in April.</p>	
E	<p>Any Other Business DW highlighted the success of 'Walkers are Welcome' which is a scheme designed to attract members of the public to a specific town to go walking. It was agreed that this has benefits for local economies and that it is something the JLAF could get behind.</p>	
F	<p>The next meeting JLAF24 at 2pm on the 1st July 2011 at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Temple Street, Keynsham, BS31 1ED</p> <p>Proposed Agenda items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OutdoorsWest website demonstration. - Bristol, cycling city 	
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