

# Minutes

of the Meeting of the

## North Somerset Local Access Forum

**Tuesday 30 January 2024**

Castlewood

Meeting Commenced: 18.05

Meeting Concluded: 20.01

### **Councillors:**

A Dan Thomas  
P Peter Burden  
Helen Thornton

### **Independent Members:**

#### **Rights of Way and Access Land Users**

P Marianne McAleer  
P Sheila Dixon  
P Nikki Barton  
Jonathan Brownett  
P Julie Main (Chair)  
P Tina Hamilton

#### **Landowning Interests**

Vacancy  
John Harris  
P Robert Parsons  
Bernard Gray  
P Richard Jones  
Vacancy

#### **Other Interests**

Gillian Hopkins  
A Nigel Bourne  
Vacancy  
P James Tonkin  
Vacancy  
Vacancy

### **Officers**

P Elaine Bowman  
(Place)  
P Jonathan Gall  
(Place)  
A Andy Carroll  
(Place)  
P Harriet Isherwood  
(Corporate Services)

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

### **LAF Election of Vice-Chair**

**39 Resolved:** that James Tonkin be elected as Vice-Chair.

### **Welcome and apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)**

#### **LAF**

**40** The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and the apologies were noted.

**LAF Public Participation**

**41** None.

**LAF Declaration of Interest by Members (Agenda Item 2)**

**42** None.

**LAF Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 October 2023 (Agenda Item 3)**

**43**

**Resolved:** that the Notes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

**LAF Pier to Pier cycle route (Agenda Item 4)**

**44**

The Active Travel and Scheme Delivery Manager informed the Panel of the current status of the Pier to Pier cycle route which was noted to be in its final stages, with construction of a farm track near to completion. The Officer noted a view to open in the spring, as close to the beginning of April as possible, and a main objective to fully open the route for the Summer even if this forced the route to close temporarily during Winter to allow for additional improvements. Signage was also to be erected along the entire route to inform route users that it would not be open until Spring and should not be used prior to, later replaced by permanent National cycle way signage (this would not include notices to cyclists regarding the requirement fix a bell to their bicycles). Although horses were not to be displayed on the signage, the route from Ham Lane through to Wick St. Lawrence was to be used as a permissive bridleway. Publicity was planned through press releases and social media posts with an opening event to be scheduled for June, and LAF Members expressed an interest in attending. New maps had been produced detailing the Tutshill sluice, included within the most recent edition of the North Somerset cycle map. There was no intention to review the speed limits in the surrounding area. Attention was to be paid to the lanes along and surrounding the route which would be cut back and resurfaced where necessary and routinely inspected. The Panel also heard the financial difficulties which had caused the delay in the cycle route's completion.

**Resolved:** that Officers present a map of the route at the next meeting.

**LAF Secretary's Report (Agenda Item 5)**

**45**

**PRoW Team**

The Secretary noted that her team was as complete as the Council's current financial situation would permit.

**Counters**

Funding had been granted by UKSPF and was used to purchase pedestrian counters for areas identified by the Rights of Way improvement plan consultation as routes which would benefit from resurfacing. These could additionally be utilised as a source of information for future financial applications.

### **PRoW Financial Situation**

The PRoW budget allocation was very small and the team had received instruction to deal solely with health and safety issues which were non-cosmetic. Volunteer groups had been helping to mitigate the effects of the cutbacks.

### **Membership**

LAF vacancies were discussed, with the Forum struggling to source a representative from the National Trust, landowners and cyclists. The Vice-Chair informed members that he was aware of a disability group which may be interested in attending.

### **DMMOs**

Minimal progress had been achieved regarding the resolution of the DMMO backlog due to lack of staff which had only very recently been improved upon. The team had received notification of 7 applications for which the planning inspectorate were issuing direction against to enforce determination within a set timescale, alongside some others which were to be sent directly to the Secretary of State. The team's backlog of around 40 DMMOs was reasonably low compared to neighbouring authorities.

**LAF**  
**46**

### **Access Officer's Report (Agenda Item 6)**

*\*in the Access Officer's absence, the Secretary presented the report\**

#### **Coastal Path Map on Natural England Website**

Natural England had previously assured future maintenance of the Coastal Path, promising a grant on a 3:1 basis, but were currently failing to meet this offer, however were in dialogue with officers and reviewing their documentation. As a result, the Panel heard that maintenance would not be to the National Trail standard advised on the Natural England website. 'Chapter 6' was still with the Secretary of State and no decision had been received yet. The Officer told Forum members that the National Trails website showed all the plans and reports of the entire England Coastal Path should they wish to view them. Members expressed a potential proposal to write to Natural England as the LAF.

#### **Woodspring priory update – National Trust munitions site**

The Forum heard that the former MOD site had been taken over by the National Trust, and that officers were in discussion with them regarding the extent of proposed public access. Members voiced their safety concerns about the site.

#### **Planning Updates**

It was noted that the PRoW team had been involved with plans and proposals relating to Banwell Bypass, including a proposal to extend the bridleway near Portway. Improvements to bridleways within Taylor Wimpey applications were also briefly discussed.

#### **Epic (Long Ashton) update**

The Officer presented a map from the EPIC planning application, detailing the included public right of way routes, footpaths and cycle paths. The officer clarified that there were no bridleways within the application as there were no existing bridleways to connect one to.

**Resolved:** that the Officer present plans of the these locations at the next meeting.

**LAF 47 Chair's report (Agenda Item 7)**

**LAF in Scotland and Wales**

The Chair told the Forum that Local Access Forums in Wales had a similar layout to England's, with a supplementary fourteen page document detailing how Welsh government should listen to the LAF recommendations, alongside an additional countryside LAF with extra legalities from the Welsh government. She noted that the situation was different in Scotland, where a Land Form act provided rights to roam with responsible access, and whilst LAFs remained advisory they also possessed an ability to relate to disputes. The Scottish NAF was unrelated to their LAF and was built up of several organisations, giving the impression of a disjointed system. A Scottish charity called Scotways had been founded to protect and monitor rights of way, which noted the disparity between regional LAFs and the lack of concrete governance in Scotland.

**Update to Environmental Land Management Schemes**

The Forum heard that since the June 2023 move away from EU Agricultural policy, a technical annexe introduced focused on paying for permissive, educational and unified access across farmland and woodland in England. It was noted that existing capital arrangements remained available for maps etc.

**Resolved:** that the Chair circulate the Welsh LAF document.

**LAF 48 Farming Update (Agenda Item 8)**

Information was provided from the Farming Advice service, who had begun offering stewardship for 5 years and sustainable farming incentives for 2 to 5 years. The scheme was to be fully voluntary, and was no longer assessed, but instead awarded based on previous achievements. Some of the schemes offered were based on the types of grasses grown, or on cutting and livestock restrictions. Footpath access awarded landowners with £77 per 100m, bridleway access £158, and reduced mobility access £221. Members noted some niche restrictions in the terms and conditions of the scheme, which was believed to be driven by the government's net zero targets.

**LAF 49 Sub-Committee Reports (Agenda Item 8)**

None.

**LAF 50 Any Other Business (Agenda Item 10)**

None.

**LAF 51 Date of Next Meeting during the 2023/24 Municipal Year (Agenda item 11)**

**Concluded:** that the Forum would meet on the following date:

Tuesday 23 April 2024 6pm

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Chairman

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