

Minutes of the JLAF Meeting

Tuesday 22 October 2024, 10am to 12pm at Eastburn, South Park, Hexham NE46 1BS

Present:

Alex MacLennan (Chair)	Helen Hindson
Moray Allan (Vice Chair)	Diane Holmes
Ian Glendinning (Vice Chair)	Ted Liddle
Rob Aubrook	Cllr Nick Morphet
Liz Bray	Sarah Radcliffe
Vic Brown	Sue Rogers
Philip Cotton	Jeff Wild
Marie Fallon	

In Attendance

Neil Dawson (NCC)	Jayne Longlands (NNPA)
Tim Fish (NCC) (part of the meeting)	Robert Mayhew (NNPA)
Harry Firth (NCC)	Duncan Wise (NNPA)
Lorna Lazzari (NNPA)	Charlotte Dring (NFU)

Apologies for Absence:

Received from; Daniel Avery, Adrian Clarke, Anna Gudaniec, Iain Robson, Violet Rook, Pippa Ross, Jen Shaw.

1. Recruitment, Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He said there would be a special celebration lunch at 12pm to mark all that NJLAF have achieved, and some additional guests would be joining the group for this.

It was **AGREED** that the Rights of Way Training with Tim Fish and Lorna Lazzari would be deferred to the January 2025 JLAF meeting.

TF/LL

2. Questions from Members of the Public *questions previously submitted by members of public*

None received.

3. Declarations of Interest: *In accordance with Paragraph 6:8 of Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002, revised February 2007, members are asked to declare any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial and/or financial interests in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting and shall disclose the nature of those interests to the meeting.*

None received.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair reminded members of their roles and responsibilities as JLAF members.

It was noted that, when members reply to JLAF emails, they should not select the 'Reply All' option when responding regarding attendance or other minor matters that do not require all members to be aware.

5. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd July 2024

Cllr Nick Morphet noted the correct spelling of Cllr Richard Wearmouth's surname.

Subject to the above amendment, the draft Minutes of the JLAF Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd July 2024, as circulated, were signed as a true and correct record.

7. Matters Arising and updates from previous meetings

(a) Meetings Action Database

It was **AGREED** that members should send any outstanding MAD updates to Jayne by 1st November 2024. ALL

The Chair noted the £70,000 refurbishment costs for Lewisburn Bridge, rather than the £50,000 figure provided in his report. Cllr Nick Morphet asked if the bridge was made from local wood; the Chair replied that Larch wood had been used as this was better for the carbon footprint, would last for 20 to 25 years and was sourced in Britain. Ian Glendinning noted that biosecurity concerns had recently been raised, and it was **AGREED** that an Access Position Statement would be produced on this subject area. IG

8. Introduction to NNP Active Travel Network Plan: Duncan Wise

Duncan Wise presented to the group, providing an introduction to Northumberland National Park's Active Travel Network Plan.

NNPAs Visitor Development Plan focussed on the four Gateway hub towns of; Wooler, Rothbury, Bellingham and Haltwhistle. Duncan noted that, in previous years, there was an unknown element associated with people visiting locations further north in the Park. He said he would like to see better connectivity, sustainable travel, connections with market towns and more people getting to them.

Duncan noted LTN 1/20, which was a 5-year old planning tool that involved a detailed process of assessing the safety of roads. However, he considered this was very technical and may not be appropriate for rural areas.

It was reported that £100,000 had been given to National Parks to develop a rural cycling and walking infrastructure plan, with some money having been set aside for data capture.

Tim Fish joined the meeting.

Sue Rogers queried whether horse riders and disabled people were included in the plans; she considered there were less opportunities for horse riders. Duncan noted that disability was certainly included. He said this was the start of the process and stakeholder engagement was very welcome as was scoping out ways for people to access NNPA. Accessibility for everyone was important (although Active Travel England's focus was on walking, cycling and wheeling). He agreed that Sue's important message should be relayed back to relevant government sources.

Rob Aubrook noted specific plans for the future, and the new rural design guide being developed by Active Travel England. He said we needed to influence the government's stance on the LTN 1/20 model, as the government were listening and the message should be reinforced.

The new Chair of NCCs Walking and Cycling Board was Cllr Richard Wearmouth and it was **AGREED** that Cllr Nick Morphet would ask him about horse riding. Sue Rogers was concerned that NCCs Rights of Way Committee may not have sufficient influence in order to be able to make a difference.

NM

Duncan Wise noted that Active Travel England Reps would be attending NNPA the following day for a tour of the Park; and it was **AGREED** that the specific issue for horse riders would be raised during the day. It was also **AGREED** that an update and summary of the next steps from WSP would be obtained for circulation to members, with WSP representatives to join the January 2025 JLAF Meeting.

DW
DW

The Chair said he would have discussions with Rob Mayhew in future with regards to access for horse riders, and it was **AGREED** that a database of specific sites where horseboxes could park would be created and promoted.

AMcL/
RM

Ted Little noted that the opening and promotion of a disused railway track near Hexham would provide an important link to the rest of the Park.

Liz Bray queried how many places you could go to ride in the Park, she considered there was a lack of opportunities to either ride or hire a horse in the County. Sue agreed there were less opportunities for horse hire as riding schools were closing. The BHS were concerned about this transition, with the elderly and young being affected by this. Perhaps Visit Northumberland could help and it was **AGREED** to revisit this point.

AMcL

Ted said he came across horse riders quite a lot when out riding his bike. He considered that horse riding routes were not widely known to others and felt that routes could be dangerous for riders.

Philip Cotton noted that data capture was collated by Sustrans, to which Duncan Wise replied that WSP were aware of this.

9. ROWIP Update: Liz Bray

Liz Bray gave an update on ROWIP 2025-2035; the 12-week consultation period had commenced on 26th July 2024 and concluded on 18th October 2024.

Liz noted there were 9 members on the JLAF Rights of Way Task and Finish Group. She added that consultations had taken place at local Shows and disused railway lines was a key item which had been drawn out during this process.

The broad consensus was that we were happy with the document produced; however there were some concerns about how we delivered - was it a plan or strategy, would we get partner engagement and were there resources available to deliver?

There would be a facilitated meeting to go through the JLAF responses; this would be held on 30th October at Eastburn at 2pm [*Note: this date was subsequently changed to a date in mid-November*].

Neil Dawson noted that very few Parish Councils had replied to the ROWIP consultation. Nearly everyone responded as a resident (84%) most of whom used rights of way for walking and dog walking, with other categories including; cycling, jogging, horse riding, and motorcycling. Most respondents used routes daily or frequently. Tim, Katherine and Neil would look through and review the collated responses. It was noted that most people who responded were White British.

Duncan Wise mentioned Mosaic, who may be able to provide some useful KPI data.

Sue Rogers queried how people knew that the consultation report existed. She queried whether Parish Councils consulted with local people who use the Rights of Ways.

Vic Brown said that people attending Alwinton Show had been interested in ROWIP consultation and had taken the QR code to review this document at a later date.

Liz Bray queried the low response rate and wondered whether this could be due to the time of year, with people being away during the summer months.

The Chair noted that Rights of Way posters had been displayed at Bellingham Show.

Neil Dawson said that most responses received were from those over 65 and there had been an equal split of male and female replies. He added that 75% of respondents did not have a disability.

It was **AGREED** that Neil Dawson would share the response information with Jayne, for distribution to NJLAF members.

ND/JL

Rob Mayhew noted that much of the Park's income was coming through funded projects. Both environment and climate change were key factors and we needed to continue to relay the message to government, in order to raise our profile and attract funding.

Lorna said that the partnership working approach was important, as well as aligning ourselves to key policies.

Rob Aubrook queried what we could do to influence the powers that be and strengthen their ambition around the ROWIP. Rob Mayhew said we should focus on health and wellbeing benefits from being out in the countryside, would help to help reduce the NHS bill. Provision of access needed to be done in a sensitive and sustainable way; EDI had been a focus at the recent National Park Conference held at Newcastle with visits to Northumberland National Park having taken place.

Rob Aubrook said we needed to translate the message that rights of way can improve people's health and make sure we put this into the right language. He suggested we get someone for Public Health to come and talk to NJLAF.

Marie Fallon asked how we could translate the plan into action; what questions were needed and a detailed ROWIP was required which captured the health agenda, as well as the learning from other ROWIPs. She queried whether we could do more to help Neil Dawson and his team at NCC.

Neil Dawson said that data was key; we need to have more money which is attracted from displaying the benefits.

The Chair asked whether we could define the value of access in Northumberland.

Rob Aubrook queried what is the value that others perceive?

Diane Holmes said that the NHS is an evidence-driven service and the NHS would ask where our evidence was; we need to extract the health benefits which will be a challenging task.

Moray Allan said that going through the Mental Health Trust rather than the acute Trusts, may be more effective in the first instance.

Cllr Nick Morphet had been seeking societal evidence; we needed to evidence that good Rights of Way helped to reduce inequalities.

Rob Mayhew said that EFTEC had looked at the methodology of natural capital accounting in 2020, in doing this, landowners could better understand what this entailed. Rob Aubrook queried how we translated this into a language to make people understand it better.

Duncan Wise noted the Visit Northumberland Destination Management Board, with one key theme being to look at the value of tourism and benefit it has to health and wellbeing, as well as to net zero. A regenerative tourism framework was being developed. He queried whether we needed to include additional datasets into this portfolio of data capture.

Rob Aubrook said that the translation of relevant website information, and getting this in front of decision makers in a format they understand, was key.

Rob Mayhew said that the next NNPA Management Plan review would be the appropriate time to start with any new proposals (he suggested we focus on results of the current Management Plan at the present time).

Rob Aubrook proposed that, once we have ROWIP consultation responses in place, we should write to Executives. This was **AGREED**, with members to send any ROWIP comments to Liz Bray in the meantime.

LB/ALL

10. Rights of Way Improvement Plan: Tim Fish and Lorna Lazzari

Tim Fish reported that ROWIP consultation responses had just been opened-up; comments would be addressed and considered as part of the delivery plan.

The Chair updated on a recent disused railway tracks meeting which had been held at Bellingham and the NHS mechanism aimed at dementia walks was noted. Jeff Wild highlighted the NNPA focus on guided walks, he noted the 'Walk in their Shoes' guided walks based in Rothbury and associated audio recording. Jeff said that audio walks would be included within NNPA's future walking schedule.

11. Dates, Times and Venues for Future Meetings

- (a) JLAF Meeting: Tuesday 28th January 2025 via Teams**
- (b) JLAF Meeting: Tuesday 29th April 2025, venue to be confirmed**
- (c) JLAF Meeting: Tuesday 24th June 2025, venue to be confirmed**
- (d) JLAF Meeting: Tuesday 21st October 2025, via Teams**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 12pm.

2025 venue ideas included:-

- Chillingham
- Cllr Nick Morphet noted the accessibility of Tyne Valley railway stations and suggested reviewing this by train.

Sue Rogers noted two good books which JLAF members may be interested to read which both added a great deal of value:-

- The Lost Paths by Jack Cornish
- The Story of the King's Highway written in 1913 by Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

Ted Liddle spoke of the recent disused railway line meeting held at Bellingham. He said that slow progress was being made, this being a very sensitive matter which was subject to misinterpretations. However, they were reaching a point where this could be developed further. Ted noted that Lynn Turner had recently joined the group.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 12pm, with members invited to join in celebrations in recognition of Ted Liddle and Sue Rogers' achievements for a combined 40 years of voluntary service to NJLAF. The Lord-Lieutenant of Northumberland presented both members with special long-service awards and a special cake cutting ceremony then took place.

Signed:

Date: