



JLAF OutdoorsWest Working Group Meeting 1 – Notes of meeting

Date: **Friday, 26th February 2010**
Time: **10:00am**
Venue: **Room 10, Riverside, Temple Street, Keynsham. BS31 1LA.**
Present: Chris Bloor (Group Chairman), Ann Fay, Roger Fowler, Robin Winfield, Chris Hogg (JLAF Secretary).
Apologies: Bernadette Macey, David Waterstone, Observer: James Blockley (Cotswolds AONB)

Note: These are notes to the meeting of the discussion group and do not form formal minutes. Their purpose is to provide a brief summary of discussions and further clarification should be sought where necessary. Errors and omissions excepted. Please contact the JLAF at secretary@jlaf.org.uk with any suggestions for addition or amendment.

Points of discussion are in grey bold text.

Context for this group: OutdoorsWest

The three Councils are working on a Joint Outdoors Access website, and have reserved a number of web domain names for such a site. The website will be designed particularly to get new users using paths, but also hold general information and advice on public rights of way for users and landowners. The website will include walks and rides for people to download and follow.

The purpose of this group is to advise on a good template for such walks to be displayed on the website, for download and use on paper, and consider the potential for using GPS type devices. Such routes can also be distributed in paper form. The group may also wish to advise on other aspects of the website design. The groups can advise on work identified under Theme 3 of the ROWIP – Providing Information.

ROWIP → increase use → increase users → Providing Information → Joint Website → Walks and Rides

The group will start with advising on route templates and the website, but may become a sitting working group who can consider and test submitted routes. The group's notes will be on the JLAF website.

10:00am 10 Chairing this group

Chris Bloor was proposed and agreed as Chairman of this group.

1 Introduction and Context:

Bernadette Macey sent with her apologies an email with her thoughts on the subject – she particularly highlighted **the websites of Help the Aged and B&NES Active Leisure and Health Walks**

James Blockley had telephoned because he couldn't come to the meeting and expressed how keen he was on this group's work, and asked to be invited to future meetings. He sent examples of the work he had been doing with the Cotswold AONB to promote short circular walks on their website, in a monthly magazine and through Tourist Information Centres (TICs).

The group considered the context shown above.

2 A joint website

The website is likely to be focused around the experience of a member of the public wanting to find out about walking, horse riding or cycling on paths in this area. More technical information on public rights of way for users and landowners would be held on the site, and the JLAF website could potentially be managed within the same set up. The councils have reserved a number of web domain names for such a site.

The group recommended outdoorswest.org.uk as the main domain for the website. Information should be held jointly where possible and not be duplicated – there is some good PROW text and prompted walk information on B&NES and SGlos websites which should go on the outdoorswest website.

Principle of holding information on website, with alternative formats produced or printed from there.

3 Our 'target market'

An overall aim to catch the attention of first-time users, so the website needs to be approachable, easy to use, and likely to make someone return to use again. There are however, more than one target market. Specific users:

Inexperienced or first time users: health walks, guide-led walks, short circular walks, casual users from other attractions or start points, there-and back again routes, easy access routes, guided horse rides.

Casual users: dog walkers, family walks, circular walks, walks from other attractions, evening or weekend use from home

Enthusiasts: long distance walkers, day walkers, horse riders, carriage drivers, off-road cyclists, clubs, commuters, hobbyists (wildlife, birdwatchers, historians, landscape interests)

Sport users: long distance walkers, events, trail runners, fitness users, sponsored users

Children, young people, wheelchair users, other disabled people, health walkers, users with children in pushchairs, dog walkers, carriage drivers and motorised users.

The website could have a very wide coverage, not just for public rights of way but for other 'green' activities, including park and country park 'honeypot' visitors, nature conservation sites (local nature reserves) and a source of information on national trust-type properties.

4 Tabletop exercise: existing examples - web and paper examples

Local websites

All agreed that current websites, particularly council-run websites provide no information for horse riders.

Information on routes does exist on different websites and on paper but is difficult to find where it all is.

There is some useful information on the current Council websites, including definitions of PROW, how the system works and how to report issues. On South Gloucestershire's website there is information on the promoted walks in the area, and on Bristol City Council's website. There is also some cycling

information, including some short cycle rides in the Avonmouth area.

Other websites

Members reviewed the following websites before the meeting:

- "Places to go in South-West England" on the Forestry Commission Website
- The "Outdoor NI" (Northern Ireland) network of websites, including:
- Nottinghamshire County Council's "Countryside access and conservation" webpages
- "Get Walking in Wessex" on the National Trust's Website
- "Bikely.com", an international cycle route website owned by Future Publishing in Bath
- "Walking World.com"
- "Interactive Mapping" on Somerset County Council's Public Rights of Way website

The OutdoorNI websites (eg walkni.com) were attractive and easy to navigate. Some of the route maps were limited in detail, but the summary templates were clear.

Nottinghamshire Councils 'Route exchange' routes are excellent, a good search function and using it is clear. Good use of OS maps.

Some websites had limited local information (for example the Forestry Commission website had walks in the Forest of Dean). The National Trust website was easy to navigate.

The 'bikely.com' and 'walkingworld.com' websites are comprehensive.

Paper information

There are paper route leaflets, though they are not available throughout the whole geographical area. Some are well designed (eg South Gloucestershire's Easy Trails) but leaflets are preferred to booklets.

Some routes were set up published at a set time and may not be continually reviewed or updated.

There are lots of organisations providing routes.

Some paper routes suffer from poor design and cluttered directions. Some leaflets would require the use of an additional Ordnance Survey map, and it is best to use the leaflet by itself.

Use of directions in boxes with arrows to the point on the map are good. Use of bold to separate directions from other interesting text are good.

Shropshire County Councils maps are a clear and easy to follow.

Long blocks of text are difficult follow.

5 Discussion: Principles of design - the good and the bad

On the website

The website should be navigated depending on the target markets. This table was suggested as an explanation of this:

		New users	Casual	Enthusiast/ sport
Outdoorswest .org.uk homepage →	<u>Introduction for new users</u> (where you can go, what you can do (virtual route, how to use maps))			
	<u>On foot</u> →	Short signed routes, health walks, led walks, honeypots	Circular signed, mapped routes, independent,	Long distance trails, events, orienteering, fitness runners
	<u>On horse</u> →	Trekking centres	Circular rides, starting points, follow the map	Events, long routes
	<u>On bicycle</u> →	Easy routes, short signed rides, starting points	Longer signed routes, mapped routes	Long distance routes
	<u>Motorised</u> →			What to do where to go
	<u>Places</u> (e.g. Parks, Nature) →	Subjects where the website may add information in time...		
	<u>About PROW and Access</u> (more technical PROW information, links to councils, volunteering, landowners' information, the JLAF, the ROWIP)			

The website should link to other access providers, and possibly pull in information, for example with a guided walk calendar.

The website should be attractive and encourage return visits. Areas that will be printed need to be clear, simple and in black and white.

'Horse riding' should be used, not 'riding'

Possibility to add information of interest, so have an area and links to history, nature conservation (particularly interesting seasonal information)

Aim for routes throughout the area.

Disclaimers and a caveat should be added.

Include other information: event calendar, weather links, 'internal links' to councils, routes / adverts on website

Only routes that meet particular standards should be promoted –

routes should be signed on the ground, should be scored on ease of use (easy vs. strenuous), accessibility, length, etc.

Users should not be able to upload routes onto the website, but may be able to submit suggestions. The website users will need to have reliable experiences when they use routes.

On route templates

Should be clear, uncluttered and be printable in black and white on A4. Consider new users in all design.

'road test' any designs.

May need to duplicate templates for an easy read version.

Use km and miles, show likely times

Consider the possibility of website users adding route reviews.

Use a route profile (showing the hills)

Describe how weather conditions affect the route

Information on where to get public transport information

Limit templates for short routes on on 2 sides or less

Show clear stage by stage directions.

Keep directions separate from 'interest' descriptions (eg history) but can cross-reference to text boxes.

Include the following information on templates and/or maps

(using symbols (good example in National Trust Handbooks),

Food places, Toilets, Parking places, public transport (train

stations, bus stops), disabled facilities,

Explain dangers, considerations and caveats.

On maps

Consider alternatives to maps (eg picture guides)

Maps should be clear, consider non map-readers

Maps should show field boundaries but not be cluttered

Consider extra information on maps as above

Cross reference notation to directions at frequent intervals

6 Disabled considerations

This should be considered in every area of the website, so include disabled routes for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists. Consider alternative formats (e.g. audio downloads)

7 Links to work on the ground (e.g. specific signs)

Routes promoted on the website should have waymarks on the routes themselves.

Otherwise deferred to following meeting.

8 The plan from here

The group will meet monthly:

10:00 Friday 26th March 2010. Room 7, B&NES Riverside, Keynsham.

10:00 Friday 23rd April 2010. Room 9, B&NES Riverside, Keynsham.

9 Partners

Covered briefly:

Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council.

JLAF members are keen to be involved.

Keep the project manageable but invite partners at the appropriate stage, including Cotswolds and Mendip AONBs, National Trust, User groups such as the RA and BHS, other Council providers, transport, cycling teams, health walks, nature conservation, parks, possibility for sponsorships.

10 Chairing this group

Dealt with above.

11 'Homework'

Continue to review other examples of routes and mapping and continue the exercises above with members unable to attend this time.

Report back to JLAF meeting on the 5th March.

Close

12:00pm