



Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF)

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

JLAF 24

Draft Minutes of meeting, Friday 1st July 2011

Date: Friday, 1st July, 2011
 Time: 2:00pm
 Venue: The Council Chamber, Keynsham Town Hall, Keynsham. BRISTOL. BS31 1NL

Present: JLAF Members:
 Chris Barrable, Chris Bloor, Jill Britten, Cllr Nicholas Coombes (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Ann Fay, Cllr Howard Gawler (South Gloucestershire Council), Peter Gould, John Gunnery, Robert Killen, Colette Linehan, Bernadette Macey, Ray Newbigin (JLAF Chairman), Sheena Stephenson, David Waterstone, Rachael Whitlock

Also in attendance:

Rennie Dickins (South Gloucestershire Council), Chris Hogg (JLAF Secretary), Rob Leek (Natural England), Christopher Orlik (Bristol City Council), Ron Phelps (outgoing JLAF Deputy Chairman), Graeme Stark (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Robin Winfield (outgoing JLAF Vice Chairman).

Members of the public

Action

A	INTRODUCTIONS	
A1	<p>Welcome to new members and introductions</p> <p>There have been changes in the membership of the JLAF. Ron Phelps, Robin Winfield, Margaret Wilson and Roger Fowler are no longer members of the JLAF. Cllr Chris Cray (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Malcolm Hewson (South Gloucestershire Council) and Cllr Trevor Blythe (Bristol City Council) are no longer Council Nominees.</p> <p>Newly appointed to the JLAF as members are Chris Barrable, Sheena Stephenson, Rachael Whitlock, Christopher Simpson and Micheal Youe, and Cllr Nicholas Coombes (Bath & North East Somerset Council), Cllr Howard Gawler (South Gloucestershire Council) and Cllr Kevin Quartley (Bristol City Council) have been nominated by their respective Councils.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all present, and thanked outgoing members for their contributions to the work of the JLAF. New members can contact the secretary with any queries they may have.</p>	

A2	<p>Succession & Election of Vice Chairman & Deputy Chairman</p> <p>Robin Winfield, the outgoing Vice Chairman of the JLAF has had to resign his JLAF Membership because hearing problems limit his ability to contribute as he would wish. The Chairman praised Robin, who had worked for many years for the National Farmer's Union in Gloucestershire. He has worked tirelessly for the JLAF, particularly bringing his wise counsel and cool head to try to push interested parties to create a new route around Chew Valley Lake.</p> <p>Ron Phelps, the outgoing Deputy of the Chairman of the JLAF, has resigned his JLAF membership to concentrate on new projects. The Chairman thanked Ron for all his hard work for the JLAF. Ron first become involved in Access matters and helped delineate Access Land following the CROW Act 2000. This expertise has been available to the JLAF for the past ten years. Ron worked closely with Council staff in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. He also used his wit and verve in deciphering complex consultation documents and his responses were always dedicated to achieving consensus.</p> <p>The Chairman informed the meeting that he plans to resign his Chairmanship at the November meeting, and was keen to ensure a smooth succession.</p> <p>The Chairman introduced JLAF Member David Waterstone as a candidate for Vice Chairman. David worked in business and for a time was the Chief Executive of the Welsh Development Agency, for which he was awarded the CBE. He was recently Chairman of the Avon Ramblers Association and he is currently chairman of the Avon area of the Cotswold Wardens. In the recent past he has given invaluable help in opening a new footpath in the Lansdown area and re-opening one at Bath University.</p> <p>Robin Winfield introduced JLAF member Robert Killen. Robert comes from a Mendip farming family and is a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, working as a land agent covering estates totalling some 10,000 acres, mainly in Gloucestershire. A member of the JLAF from inception he has been a regular attendee and has made valuable contributions to consultations and sub-committees.</p> <p>David Waterstone was proposed as a candidate and elected unopposed as Vice Chairman of the JLAF.</p> <p>Robert Killen was proposed as a candidate and elected unopposed as Deputy Chairman of the JLAF.</p>	
A3	<p>Apologies</p> <p>JLAF Members: Bill Dawson, Cllr Kevin Quartley (Bristol City Council), Christopher Simpson, Andy Short, Micheal Youe</p> <p>Roger Fowler, Richard Thomas (Natural England), Duncan Venison (Bristol City Council)</p>	
A4	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>No declarations were made.</p>	
A5	<p>Minutes of the last meeting on 3rd March 2011.</p> <p>The minutes were <i>agreed</i> as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
A6	<p>Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda</p> <p>Under item B2 'The future of the Public Forest Estate in England' it was noted that Defra suspended this consultation and have appointed an Independent Panel on Forestry. There is now a six month moratorium on any sales of Forestry Commission land.</p>	

B	MAIN BUSINESS	
B1	<p>JLAF Website</p> <p>The JLAF website at www.jlaf.org.uk had not been fully maintained during the spring whilst resources were dedicated to the OutdoorsWest project. The Chairman stated that this should be improved. JLAF members and other attendees stated that they used the JLAF website.</p>	Secretary
B2	<p>Walkers are Welcome</p> <p>David Waterstone briefed the meeting. 'Walkers are welcome' is a community led scheme where towns or villages can apply to obtain 'Walkers are welcome' status. In Winchcombe in the Cotswolds, achieving the status by providing a good walking experience to visitors, with path, signing and information improvements and promotions by local businesses. Winchcombe has claimed a 40% increase in visitor stays since they achieved Walkers are Welcome status, which has helped revitalise the town. It can therefore be seen as an economic stimulus. Bradford-on-Avon has just achieved this status and it might be appropriate for Batheaston, Radstock, Chipping Sodbury, Chew Magna and other small towns in the JLAF area. Cllr Howard Gawler said that he would welcome such adoption for the schemes, and recognised that towns such as Chipping Sodbury might benefit. 'Walkers are Welcome' is to be an update agenda item at future JLAF meetings, to allow proposals to promote this scheme locally to be discussed.</p>	Secretary
B3	<p>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 'refresh' (update)</p> <p>The first Joint Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) published in 2007 is to be refreshed during 2011. During the preparation of the first ROWIP an extensive assessment was made of access in this area. This original assessment led to the approach to 'increase use of public rights of way' which is still valid – so a refreshed ROWIP will review this approach. A new draft ROWIP document will be issued for public consultation in the autumn and the JLAF will then be consulted. This will be an item on the next JLAF meeting agenda.</p> <p>Cllr Nicholas Coombes questioned the effect on links between the ROWIP and Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP), where there is a review of Transport policy in Bath & North East Somerset following elections – there may now be a greater emphasis towards walking and cycling. Chris Hogg replied that a refreshed ROWIP should take advantage of changes in policy, in transport and in other areas such as health.</p>	Secretary
B4	<p>Staffing and Budgets in the Three Councils</p> <p>The Chairman reviewed the current financial climate, and gave a brief description of current funding for public rights of way in Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council describing budget cuts that had been made. The JLAF agreed that the Chairman should write to the Councils stating the importance of public rights of way and warning of the impacts that cuts may have.</p>	Chairman
B5	<p>Monarch's Way as a National Trail</p> <p>Peter Gould described the Monarch's Way path, created by Trevor Antill who died in August 2010. The path, 615 miles in length, is the longest, inland, Long Distance Path wholly in England. It follows the route of the escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The Monarch's Way Association is approaching Natural England to have the path recognised as a National Trail and is seeking support. It was agreed that the Chairman will send a written expression of support from the JLAF.</p>	Chairman

<p>B6</p>	<p>JLAF Project Progress i. Chew Valley Lake</p> <p>Robin Winfield, introduced the subject because he has been overseeing the project for the JLAF. It is for a new multi user route around Chew Valley Lake. This route was first proposed by the Chew Valley Trails group and raised at the JLAF by Margaret Wilson. Robin expressed his disappointment that he hadn't been able to see the creation of two new sections of route at the north of Chew Valley Lake: one section from Woodford Lodge to the Dam, and one section from the Dam to Hollowbrook Lane. In summary, Bristol Water has been supportive of the project, Bath & North East Somerset had reserved funding for the project but this was withdrawn because the project was not ready for groundworks. Sustrans have been responsible for making planning applications but there have been problems and delays. Natural England were raising nature conservation considerations that needed to be mitigated. A new planning application is due to be submitted by Sustrans. Comments were made that Sustrans were finding it difficult to dedicate resources to the Chew Valley routes whilst working on the Two Tunnels Project in Bath.</p> <p>Rob Leek offered to get an update on Natural England's involvement in the project and report back to members.</p> <p>Collette Linehan offered to contact colleagues in Sustrans to get an update for JLAF members.</p> <p>ii. River Avon Riverside Routes</p> <p>Christopher Orlik distributed maps showing proposals for an improved link route from the centre of Bristol to the start of the Severn Way at Severn Beach. Comments on this proposal should be sent to Mary Knight in the PROW team in Bristol. Work had continued on achieving dedications on parts of this Severn Way link route, including involving, on site works, students on a Conservation and Environment NVQ Course at North Somerset Collect, organised with the Groundwork Trust.</p> <p>Major work to rebuild parts of the riverbank and towpath of the River Avon between Conham and Hanham is complete, meaning that the bridleway is now open.</p> <p>iii. Bridleway links at Frampton Cotterell</p> <p>Rennie Dickins reported that improvements to the bridleway crossing of a main road are desirable and are the subject of negotiations with landowners to see if there can be a beneficial outcome.</p>	<p>Rob Leek</p> <p>Colette Linehan</p>
<p>B7</p>	<p>Demand for Outdoors Access</p> <p>i. OutdoorsWest</p> <p>Chris Bloor, who Chairs the JLAF's OutdoorsWest working group and Chris Hogg, who is the officer coordinating the OutdoorsWest project, gave a summary presentation on the OutdoorsWest website. The full presentation will be put on the JLAF website. The OutdoorsWest website is being finalised, with some design improvements to be made in particular to the way that the mapping and reporting function are laid out – in order to make them more straightforward to use. Officers are adding written content to the website, and have appreciated the contributions from JLAF members in providing a summary of different activities (for example walking (Ron Phelps), horse riding (Ann Fay), running, (Chris Bloor) to go on the website. The website is being written to attract new users to public rights of way.</p>	

Chris Bloor summarised the routes database on the OutdoorsWest website. JLAF members are adding routes to the system and again there will be some design improvements, in particular to maximise the clarity of mapping available to users. Chris Bloor has been working with Bristol Health walk groups, hoping to arrange for their planned walk routes to be added to OutdoorsWest, so it becomes a resource to health walk leaders as well as members of the general public.

Points made in the meeting included:

- Ensure that mapping is clear, preferably not using the very cluttered leisure mapping of the Ordnance Survey.
- Routes that had dedicated designed leaflets should allow those leaflets to be downloaded from the website.
- Routes should be marked with specific route direction signs on the ground wherever possible.
- Line styles on the website mapping need to be clear, and a key needs to be added to the mapping that users print from the website.
- Public transport information should be shown on the OutdoorsWest website – Chris Bloor pointed out that many health walks with older walkers use buses and their free bus travel to meet for walks.
- New JLAF members had looked at the website and thought it had great potential.

OutdoorsWest's written content will be finalised over the next month, and the routes database when there is a good spread of downloadable routes across the OutdoorsWest area. The Councils will coordinate a single big launch and publicity of the website, and at later dates can launch specific features on the site.

ii. Access for the Disadvantaged

The Chairman emphasised that the councils should target improvements that would benefit people who are disadvantaged, who currently do not use the public rights of way resource as much as the population as a whole. The Chairman pointed out that the OutdoorsWest website would help about 75% of people, but not the 25% who have no computer and do not own a car. These are the people who are likely to be disadvantaged and are more likely to be in need of fresh air and exercise. So, the OutdoorsWest website must be just the beginning.

Chris Bloor did point out that whilst there are people who cannot access the website at home, some of those can in libraries and other people (for example health walk leaders) can use OutdoorsWest routes as a resource when targeting disadvantaged users.

iii. "Wild City" in Bristol

On the agenda as a local example of improving access for the disadvantaged is the Wild City project in Bristol, which is funded by the National Lottery via Natural England's Access to Nature scheme. Paula Spiers and Helen Adshead of Bristol City Council are working together as a job share post with community groups on this three year project to increase the experience of disadvantaged groups in Bristol at a network of green sites across Bristol, including Local Nature Reserves. JLAF members at the Bristol PROW Liaison Group had raised the idea of promoting the routes between these natural sites, to emphasise the concept of natural networks. Members expressed their support for the Wild City Project, saying that there should be more programmes such as this.

C	<u>ITEMS FOR RATIFICATION</u>	
C1	<p>JLAF response to 'Moving inland waterways into a new charity in England and Wales'</p> <p>The consultation was about the divestment of British Waterways functions to an independent body – a trust or a charity – and so the JLAF response was confined to issues relevant to outdoors access. David Waterstone raised a query on this consultation response, questioning why the JLAF response did not clearly support a future second set of divestment of waterways, of those waterways controlled by the Environment Agency. Ron Phelps addressed this query with an explanation that the consultation document didn't outline the Environment Agency proposals in a detailed enough manner that they could be considered properly, so it would be best to review only the divestment of British Waterways functions which are detailed in this consultation. An open response was therefore given rather than clear support for an unspecified future proposal. The subject of access along riversides and riparian rights was raised for consideration in such a future divestment.</p> <p>The JLAF response to this consultation, contained in the Background Papers, was considered and ratified.</p>	
C2	<p>Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour Consultation</p> <p>This consultation was general and wide ranging in its content, but it was felt important that the JLAF raised concerns about Gating Order provisions.</p> <p>The JLAF draft response to this consultation, contained in the Background Papers, was considered and ratified. The Chairman expressed his thanks for all of the hard work that Ron Phelps had undertaken as Deputy Chairman of the JLAF in collating members comments and achieving a consensus view on the many consultation responses he had prepared.</p>	
D	<u>ITEMS TO REPORT/ FOR INFORMATION</u>	
D1	<p>The Future of the Public Forest Estate in England</p> <p>The JLAF response as ratified at the last JLAF meeting had been submitted to the government consultation, though subsequently the government closed the consultation following the cancellation of related proposals. The Independent Panel on Forestry, Chaired by James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, was now meeting, and was inviting views, making site visits and will be reporting in spring 2012. There had been some dissatisfaction that the panel had not included equestrians, and concern that the panel would concentrate on existing access and large forests, and not consider potential access and new woodlands near to where people live. Members shared views from elsewhere that the government is not likely to make any further proposals for some years. Ann Fay, who has a particular interest in Forestry Access will liase with the Secretary as this subject develops.</p>	Ann Fay & Secretary
D2	<p>JLAF activities: Regional, England Access Forum and Natural England</p> <p>The Chairman reported that Colin Jones from Natural England had been made redundant and that Hilary Winter, the excellent SW England co-ordinator of LAFs, has been re-appointed, but only on a single year appointment. Natural England has faced recent cuts of about 30% of personnel. Defra, does not seem to be performing well recently so there is a feeling of uncertainty at the moment. The England Access Forum, which gave LAFs contact with government at every level, has now been disbanded by Natural England.</p>	
D3	<p>Environment White Paper: The Natural Choice</p> <p>Defra published a White Paper, outlining their likely policy on the Environment. There are two areas particularly relevant to Outdoors Access. Paragraph 72 identifies proposals to streamline the processes for recording and making changes to public rights of way, and, paragraph 73 summarises the Local Sustainable Transport Funds, linking the environment in a Defra document to a Department for Transport fund. The White Paper also refers to Green Infrastructure, the health benefits of access to the natural environment and the role of Health & Wellbeing Boards.</p>	

D4	<p>Gating Orders Update on current or proposed Gating Orders</p> <p>There have been no new applications for gating orders to the three Councils. Bristol City Council has adopted a new policy for processing Gating Orders. Bristol City Council were asked to report back to the JLAF about a 12 month review of the Gating Order at Public Right of Way BCC/163 Oldbury Court Road to Vassal Road, Fishponds, Bristol, including whether a review will be carried out, and whether there is a commitment for a 12 month review under legislation or policy.</p>	Bristol City Council
D5	<p>News from the PROW teams</p> <p>News from each team was covered under other items.</p>	
D6	<p>Public Rights of Way Liaison Groups</p> <p>Bristol City Council. The members reviewed the agendas in the background papers. The notes of each meeting are now put on Bristol City Council's website at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Transport-Streets/walking/public-rights-of-way-liaison-group.en</p> <p>South Gloucestershire Council The members reviewed the agendas in the background papers. There were two items of particular interest: An item to clarify the different roles (and geographical areas covered by) Streetcare (generally the area within an M5, M4 and A4174 ring road boundary) and the Public Rights of Way Team; and a notice of potential implications of developments at Oldbury Nuclear Power Station.</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Council. An independent liaison group has been established in B&NES Chaired by Ray Newbigin with David Waterstone as Secretary.</p> <p>One item that arose at this meeting and is relevant to the area is a potential Volunteer Warden Scheme that the Ramblers Association wish to establish, to carry out practical work on Public Rights of Way in the area. Colette Linehan who works in Sustrans with their volunteer ranger programme offered to provide advice to the organisers of the Ramblers proposal. On a question of funding, Rob Leek of Natural England said he would investigate sources, and Chris Bloor said that he would raise the project as a good example of 'big society' and the subject of funding in a forthcoming meeting with Charlotte Lesley MP, who is the Government's Big Society Champion.</p>	Rob Leek Chris Bloor
E	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There are proposals for Traffic Regulation Orders on two byways in Bath & North East Somerset, to suspend rights for motorised vehicles. The JLAF wishes to be consulted if these Orders are progressed.</p>	Graeme Stark
F	<p>The next full JLAF meeting JLAF25 at 2pm on the 4th November 2011 at The Council Chamber, Keynsham Town Hall, Keynsham. BRISTOL. BS31 1NL</p> <p>Subsequent full JLAF meetings are scheduled for 2nd March 2012 and 6th July 2011.</p>	
	Close	