

NOTES OF SW LAF CHAIRS AND SECRETARIES MEETING

9 November 2011

Quantock House, Taunton

Present:

LAF members: Mike Amos (Chair, North Somerset LAF), Eric Clark (Vice Chair, Wiltshire & Swindon LAF), Ray Fairchild (Chair, Plymouth LAF), Bob Harvey (Co-Chair, Torbay LAF), Greg Jones (Vice Chair, Somerset LAF), Richard Partington (Chair, Exmoor LAF), Justin Robbins (Chair, Devon CAF), Jim Scobie (Chair, Cornwall CAF), David Waterstone (Chair, JLAF), Patrick Watson (Chair, Dartmoor Access Forum), Alison Williamson (Vice Chair, Gloucestershire LAF)

LAF support: Sue Bishop (Dartmoor Access Forum), Teresa Buckley (Torbay LAF), Tara Hansford (Dorset LAF), Chris Hogg (JLAF), Ross Johnson (Plymouth LAF), Abbie Keeper (Exmoor LAF), Sally Vickery (Somerset LAF), Hilary Winter (Devon CAF and Regional Coordinator)

Natural England People & Partnerships Team

Dot Isgrove, Rob Leek and Jane Yates

Agenda item	Action
<p>Welcome and introductions Introductions were made. NE LAF responsibilities: <i>Dot Isgrove:</i> Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay, Devon, Dartmoor, Exmoor and Somerset <i>Rob Leek:</i> North Somerset. JLAF <i>Jane Yates:</i> Gloucestershire and Wiltshire <i>Martin Gilchrist (not present):</i> Dorset</p>	
<p>Huddle Hilary Winter explained she and the other regional coordinators had been looking at and experimenting with Huddle over the past few months. Rob Leek, Natural England, demonstrated Huddle. 1 or 2 people per LAF to be invited to join. Huddle champion needed to check Huddle regularly for it to be effective, perhaps fortnightly. Discussion followed. The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some members are not on internet – barrier to communication. ➤ Turnover of LAF members and secretaries so it was preferable for a member and the secretary to be on Huddle. ➤ Concern that it would now be restricted to 1 or 2 people per LAF. If there were cost implications free sites could be used. ➤ Huddle champions could possibly be elected by the LAF, if several members interested. ➤ Time to access Huddle is an issue but could also be a work saver e.g. briefing papers. Time a factor for both members and support staff facing increasing work pressures. Huddle was not necessarily more effective than e-mail, newsletters or websites. ➤ Potential duplication. e.g. IPROW site used very well. ➤ Potential for interaction through the NE website. ➤ Ideas and principles excellent but difficult to make all encompassing. 	

<p>Mike Amos mentioned possibility of funding for LAF training (ERDF money), through Duchy College.</p>	<p>Hilary Winter/ Mike Amos</p>
<p>National LAF Coordination Jane Yates was acting as temporary NE national LAF coordinator. The new person appointed to the national role would start in Spring 2012.</p>	
<p>Annual Report Proforma LAFs were reminded to complete the Proforma at the end of November.</p> <p>The Proforma provided NE with information on key issues and was useful for policy purposes. LAFs could choose whether to continue to produce their Annual Report; often useful for publicity purposes (printed or web versions).</p>	<p>LAFs to send Proforma to Hilary Winter</p> <p>LAFs</p>
<p>Local Nature Partnerships Jane Yates outlined the role of Local Nature Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced in the Natural Environment White Paper, LNPs are strategic partnerships bringing together key local partners & communities across social, economic and environmental sectors including Local Enterprise Partnerships & Health & Well-Being Boards. • Purpose is to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be integrated in all decision-making • Model allows much greater freedom for partnerships to be more responsive to local needs and geography. It is less prescriptive than previous Local Biodiversity Partnerships. • Some bids are County based but others straddle administrative boundaries to take into account biodiversity areas and economic benefits. <p>Successful bids in SW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Cornwall & Isles of Scilly (Bid led by Volunteer Cornwall)</i> ○ <i>Gloucestershire</i> ○ <i>Plymouth (Bid led by City of Plymouth)</i> ○ <i>Wiltshire</i> <p>Defra lists LAFs as potential LNP members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAFs can play a key positive role - informing discussions and influencing the structure of the LNP to ensure access and green space are properly integrated with nature improvements. • The LNP process offers a way and opportunity to integrate access into projects and organisations that might otherwise overlook access and rights of way. • LAFs can identify for LNPs - areas of high access “interest” and local issues • LNPs can liaise with LAFs to identify sustainable transport and access sites that can contribute to the Green Economy • LAFs can help influence & broaden the LNP membership - encourage Local Greenspace Forum & Rural Community Council involvement • There are already good examples of active LAF participation e.g. Gloucestershire -please send more examples to jane.yates@naturalengland.org.uk • Your Natural England People & Partnership lead advisor will be 	<p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p>

<p>happy to support your involvement and supply LNP contact details.</p> <p>Discussion Clarification was sought as to whether ‘nature’ was defined.</p> <p>To avoid the LNP being too scientifically based it was suggested LAFs should be involved early on, identifying meetings where input would be valuable.</p> <p>Gloucestershire LAF had been involved in early discussions on the Gloucestershire LNP, broad brush initially. Other LAFs had not yet been involved.</p> <p>Local Nature Partnerships will be taken into account under the new planning framework.</p> <p>A second round of bids was going in. West of England was putting in a joint LNP and NIA bid. The Local Enterprise Partnership was a partner.</p> <p>It was suggested Natural England Area Managers have a role in influencing the rural board of Local Enterprise Partnerships and/or the main LEP board to facilitate recognition of rural areas.</p>	<p>Jane Yates</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>Jane Yates/NE</p>
<p>Nature Improvement Areas Some areas in the SW have been identified as NIAs. These are not an area for such direct LAF involvement but LAFs should forward any concerns to NE.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Big Chalk -Chalk downland 2. Marlborough Downs –Chalk downland 3. Northern Devon –Catchment/woodland/grass 4. Plymouth Natural Network –Urban/catchment/wood 5. Wild Purbeck –River/wetland/heath/wood 6. Wye Valley –Catchment <p>NIAs take forward recommendations identified in the Lawton Review, led by Defra, supported by Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and the Department for Communities and Local Government. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o large, discrete areas that will deliver a step change in nature conservation. o local partnerships designed to plan & deliver significant improvements for wildlife and people through sustainable use of resources, restoring & creating wildlife habitats, connecting local sites and joining up local action. 	
<p>Update on multi-use Jane Yates drew attention to a Trails Trust Guide on multi-use paths, a step by step guide using Express Dedication which can be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Create new PROW –footpath,bridleway,restricted byway o Upgrade existing PROW e.g. footpath to bridleway o Re-establish historic routes through re-dedication <p>Process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A user group opens negotiations for a route with a willing landowner 2. Landowner signs a written agreement to dedicate a public right of 	

way with the user group and preferably also with the Parish Council.

3. Route is constructed to satisfaction of landowner
4. An opening ceremony is held in public – constitutes finalisation of dedication
5. LHA can record on Definitive Map through a Legal Event Order.

Advantages:

- Promotes partnership working –user groups, LAFs, landowners, LHAs
- Process is non-statutory so each stage is grant fundable
- Best use of voluntary time in raising money to offer small capital payments to landowners, not to defend DMMOs and Public Inquiries
- Creates routes where needed now, not where history dictates
- Dedicated routes cannot be refused-statutory duty to record them on Definitive Map through a Legal Event Order
- Supported by Defra Minister Richard Benyon, Defra & NE
- Process has been checked by Defra Legal Dept

Progress

Developed in the Mendips by the Trails Trust -10 success stories to date

Being used in the Forest of Dean to create 54 miles of PROW: a north-south route plus community loops to maximise the economic impact of the project and ensure access & use by local residents and visitors alike.

LAF involvement

- The methodology can be used to re-negotiate HLS permissive routes coming to the end of 10 year agreements.
- Where permanent PROW not acceptable, landowners have agreed to “permissive paths” accompanied by a 10 year access agreement.

Support

- Richard Benyon letter in June 2011 urging LAs to allow horse riders to use cycle trails and routes where it is in their power to do so and to encourage dedication and permission where it is not in their power.
- Sustrans Technical Information Note 28 September 2011-Horses on the National Cycle Network
- Natural England & Sustrans sharing best practice & joint working

Discussion

Wiltshire LAF had offered formal advice to the County Council. It felt complex legal issues had not been addressed by the guidance document. It was felt legal processes could be challenged.

Creation agreements were seen as more straightforward and also dealt with important risk assessment and safety issues.

North Somerset LAF had been unable to support a route created by the National Trust in conjunction with access users, for reasons of safety. Cycle tracks were not a legal entity on the Definitive Map. Sustrans new

<p>guidance note was seen as more positive. Bridleways did not require planning permission. Comments were made that funding through LTP should be for multi-use routes.</p> <p>Cycling was seen as providing economic benefits but horse riding also had significant benefits.</p>	
<p>Other matters</p> <p>1. Small grants Small grants were seen as useful to assist local people in producing improvement schemes e.g. Hampshire's scheme. Wiltshire had a Parish Improvement Grants Scheme (PIGs), which provided match funding for schemes. Some Counties had grants available through Parish Paths Partnership schemes.</p> <p>Natural England community grant unlikely to see budget increase.</p> <p>Natural England was asked for an update on funding opportunities.</p> <p>2. Access budgets LAF members expressed interest in knowing the decline in access budgets across the region.</p> <p>3. Tree Health Bob Harvey had attended a Tree Health seminar. He informed the group on the variety of tree pests and potential implications for landscape and access during felling/clearance.</p> <p>4. Stepping Forward Report A consultation was expected on this, following the Natural Environment White Paper.</p> <p>5. Regional Coordination Concern was generally expressed about the diminution of the regional coordination role and loss of funding from 2012. It was suggested LAFs could be proactive in writing to Natural England and the Natural England Board in support of this role. Exploring local authority funding was suggested by NE, but unlikely in the current economic climate.</p> <p>Money for LAFs was part of the budget received by local authorities. Whilst it would be useful to know this amount, perhaps by asking MPs, it was unlikely this figure was available as a ring fenced item. As regards LAF budgets more could be achieved by lobbying councils and making a case for support. It was recommended that LAFs might also consider putting up a business case for specific projects as these might attract funding.</p> <p>6. Upgrading footpaths to bridleways Concern was expressed about instances where vehicular traffic illegally used footpaths upgraded to bridleways. Barriers put in on a temporary basis might be sufficient to deter long-term use. It was suggested that people should take pictures on their mobiles and inform the police, a technique used successfully in North Somerset.</p>	<p>Natural England</p> <p>Hilary Winter/Adept</p> <p>LAFs</p> <p>LAFs</p>