

DARTMOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

Tuesday 12 June 2007 at PARKE, BOVEY TRACEY

Present: Jonathan Aylett, Mark Bailey, Simon Booty, Clare Boughey, Kevin Chamberlain, Philip French, Roger Goulding, Peter Harper, John Howell, Helen Jenny, Lady Kitson, Rosemary Mudge, Joanna Radford, Judith Ricketts, Patrick Watson Alison Kohler (DNPA Head of Recreation and Tourism), Sue Bishop (DAF Secretary)

Also present: Simon Lee, DNP Sector Ranger for the Teign Valley was present to discuss item 6.

Apologies: John Ballantyne, John Earle, Diana Moyse,

178) Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 February 2007

- i) John Earle already added to the list of apologies for the meeting, otherwise agreed for signing by Chairman.

179) Declarations of Interest

- i) Roger Goulding, items 9 and 10 on the agenda, professional interest.

180) Membership

- i) A letter of resignation has been received from Miss Samantha Collins due to personal circumstances. Her appointment was due to finish at the end of December 2007, therefore a replacement will be sought at this time during the normal recruitment process.

181) Vegetation growth and Access

- i) The opportunity to look at management of the moorland was very useful for non-farming members.
- ii) It was interesting to see the varying levels of vegetation cover arising from a succession of burn areas.
- iii) Dunnabridge was cited as being in ideal condition at present, but without management the vegetation will continue to grow and eventually become a problem requiring management.
- iv) It was suggested that a decent width path through vegetation areas would minimise erosion on narrow tracks, and that a wiggly line would have less visual impact than a straight line.
- v) There are many layers of bureaucracy, which need to reach a cohesive agreement.

Signed

Date

- vi) AK confirmed that access will be considered when drawing up future management plans for the commons. Certain routes would be identified and prioritised, for example the route followed from the car park at the top of Dartmeet Hill to the top of Yar Tor. Other routes leading from car parks, moor gates, and to river crossings would also be considered.

182) Consultation on implementation of the right to apply for orders to extinguish and divert public rights of way, and associated rights of appeal

- i) Existing safeguards for implementing diversions remain in place. It is likely that the proposals would have little impact on Dartmoor, as diversions are already processed as long as they fit the criteria. DNPA hold informal consultations with landowners before drawing up orders and this often resolves many of the possible objections before the legal process starts.
- ii) Under the proposals there will increased costs to landowners.
- iii) Proposal: That the Secretary responds to the consultation expressing concern at the additional costs involved for landowners and suggesting that the rate could be reduced if the new route proved very beneficial to the network. The Forum would like to see Highway Authorities given the means to be more pro-active in approaching landowners for diversions where significant improvements would be made to the network. The Dartmoor Access Forum could not identify any great gain from the proposed legislation for Dartmoor.

183) Public Rights of Way and Open Access

- i) The diversion of South Tawton bridleway 57 is progressing, the order will be put to the Authority meeting in July.
- ii) There are increasing issues when new landowners purchase property without realising the implications of a right of way, then install new stiles and gates without obtaining permission. Some landowners are also fencing the right of way to the strict legal minimum and this also causes local ill feeling. Property crossed by rights of way is likely to be high value, usually meaning that it is not local buyers who move in.
- iii) There are two extremes of landowner, those who are ignorant of the law regarding rights of way, and those who know the law, and are taking them to the letter. Rangers are always happy to work with landowners, often taking the initiative and introducing themselves to the new landowner.
- iv) New landowners often perceive a problem with users of the right of way straying off the route, and infringing their privacy and feel that the only way to prevent this is to block or move the right of way.
- v) The Forum asked if there were any way in which local people could be more involved with local path monitoring, in Devon outside Dartmoor there is the Parish Paths Partnership aimed at the local community, although this scheme does not operate on Dartmoor. Simon Lee confirmed that many of the paths are surveyed by Voluntary Wardens, who do actually come from the community.

Signed

Date

184) Rights of Way Improvement Plan

- i) £10,000 has been allocated to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for 2007 / 08. Rangers are involved in identifying priorities. There is potential for more actual spend as some of the improvements are carried out with partner organisations, for example South West Lakes Trust. The Forum welcomed the increased allocation.
- ii) The “stiles to gates” project has proved successful and trials have shown that gates can replace stiles without causing serious problems, especially if fitted with self closing hinges.

Action: Forum members were asked for suggestions for improvements at the next meeting, either an extension of current work or new projects.

Action: The Secretary was asked to draft a letter in support of the principle of funding for Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

185) South West Regional Local Access Forum meeting

- i) The regional meeting for South West Access Forums was attended by Joanna Radford, Rosemary Mudge and Sue Bishop. It was felt to have been a useful and positive meeting.
- ii) Joanna Radford felt that the Forum members could be more involved in forward planning, even if consulted in other capacities.

186) Local Development Framework

- i) Forum members were advised that the submission version of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document was about to be published by the Dartmoor National Park Authority. Members had been briefed on this Plan in December 2005, the Plan is available on the Dartmoor National Park website, or at the offices of Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, West Devon Borough Council and Mid Devon Borough Council.

187) Water Access workshop

- i) The proposed strategy is intended to influence strategic planning, giving gains such as new slipways, marinas etc. using existing processes to make improvements where possible.
- ii) Sharing of good practice where access is working well is to be encouraged, and common issues and opportunities implemented.

188) Recreational users Group

- i) The DNP meet twice per year with Recreational Users, representing Ramblers, horse riders and cyclists. A Representative from the Ramblers Association had asked for early review of the West Dart dog restriction as Ranger monitoring of this area has shown little use. The Forum felt that the original three year review plan should be adhered to.

Signed

Date

189) Off Road cycling

- i) A draft action plan for cycling in the south west is being drafted. Dartmoor has been identified as a good area for improvements. The DNP has already produced a cycling map which is available through visitor centres.

190) Military access working group

- i) The Chairman attended a recent meeting of the access working group which will inform the environmental review prior to renewal of the licence agreement.
- ii) Ten Tors is the only vary large scale event still taking place during the bird breeding season, and training prior to the event also takes place in that time. A new nesting area map has been drawn up, and some tors have been removed from the event where they are in a particularly sensitive area. Helen Jenny asked if the annual training for team managers should be made compulsory, so that team managers have the most up to date information.
- iii) Walking groups have difficulty planning routes in advance because of the notification of firing days.
- iv) Members of the public walking through dry training exercises can be alarmed by the activity.

191) Dartmoor National Park Management Plan

- i) Forum members were advised that the draft of this document has been published, and encouraged to look at the document on the DNP website. Some members asked for hard copies, and the Secretary will send these out.

Next meeting Tuesday 4 September. (Later changed to Tuesday 4 December)

Signed

Date