

Plymouth Local Access Forum

Monday 16 December 2013

PRESENT:

Mr Fairchild, in the Chair.

Mr Stewart, Vice Chair.

Mr Attrill, Mr Curno, Councillor Fox, Mr Harvey, Ms Hitchens, Mr Pawley, Mr Skinner and Councillor Wheeler.

Apologies for absence: Mr Emery, Councillor Foster and Mr Goddard.

Also in attendance: Mark Owen (South West Coast Path National Trail Officer), Ross Johnston and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officers).

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.45 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made by a member in accordance with the Code of Conduct –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mr Pawley	Proposed South West Coast Path Management Structure and Process (minute 34 refers)	Is the Plymouth local representative for the South West Coast Path	Personal

31. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of 2 September 2013 are approved.

32. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

33. TRACKING RESOLUTIONS

The Forum noted its tracking resolutions. It was agreed that the LAF Secretary would –

- contact Kat Deeney, Green Infrastructure Team Leader, to remind her that reports regarding the Local Nature Partnership and the Derriford Community Park were required for the next meeting;
- ascertain from Kat Deeney, Green Infrastructure Team Leader, whether the Forum members were able to assist with any project for the Local Nature Partnership;
- contact Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer, to remind him that updates on the co-operative Way and the Definitive Map were required for the next meeting.

34. **PROPOSED SOUTH WEST COAST PATH MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND PROCESS**

The Forum received a presentation from Mark Owen, South West Coast Path National Trail Officer. Members were informed that –

- (a) the South West Coast Path measured 630 miles;
- (b) the record for completing the path was 14 days, 14 hours and 44 minutes;
- (c) the majority of people spent 10+ years completing the path;
- (d) the path encompassed two World Heritage sites and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- (e) 81% of walkers of the South West Coast Path were ‘social’ walkers;
- (f) walking the South West Coast Path was the most popular activity after shopping (according to ‘Visit Cornwall’ statistics);
- (g) 6.2m people walked the South West Coast Path every year, spending £389m (mainly in small businesses), which helped to sustain 8985 (full time equivalent) jobs;
- (h) £2.1m of investment from the EU and Defra had enabled improvements to be made to the South West Coast Path;
- (i) the economic value of the South West Coast Path increased by 10.4% during 2010-2011;
- (j) the number of visitors to the South West Coast Path increased year on year;
- (k) 29 sites along the South West Coast Path had been improved using money received from the EU;
- (l) there had been 160 small scale improvements along the South

West Coast Path during 2013;

- (m) the Great South West Walk, organised by the South West Coast Path Association, had raised £250,000+, which had increased to £640,000+ with matched funding;
- (n) there were 86 map information boards located in campsites and other holiday locations, which listed information on walks in the surrounding area. These locations also held a supply of leaflets and maps about the South West Coast Path;
- (o) farm information boards had been produced to provide information about farms along the South West Coast Path;
- (p) there were 500+ walks available on the South West Coast Path website. The walks were designed to appeal to everyone;
- (q) seven new guidebooks in the series 'Walks Along the South West Coast Path' had been published;
- (r) an APP for smartphones was now available for the South West Coast Path, and plaques containing the QR (Quick Response) code had been placed on a selection of finger posts along the path.

Following member's questions it was reported that –

- (s) Mark Owen had considered placing plaques containing the QR code on finger posts in the Plymouth area.

Under this item, Mark Owen provided members with an update on the National Trail Review – South West Coast Path Proposals & Implications. Members were informed that –

- (t) Natural England had started a review in 2009, and maintenance funding had now been allocated to a national formula;
- (u) funding had been set for three years to enable forward planning;
- (v) Natural England funding needed a 3:1 local match (Highway Authorities or National Trust);
- (w) the maintenance budget for 2013-14 was now £612,000 (approx. 30% reduction from 2009-2010), and did not include a contingency for cliff falls and other exceptional events (of which there had been 37 in the last month);
- (x) it was proposed to formally discontinue the existing management structure (South West Coast Path Forum, Strategic & Practical Managements groups) and replace it with a new structure. The key components parts of this new structure were -

- Regional Stakeholder Group;
- Delivery Management Group;
- Local Liaison Group;
- SWCP Team.

Mark Owen subsequently spoke on the development of the South West Coast Path. Members were advised that –

- (y) the South West Coast Path was designated as the UK's favourite walk, ranked as one of the world's greatest walks, and had made the coast of the south west the UK's best year-round walking destination;
- (z) the South West Coast Path had good attributes to encourage people to visit the area – views, climate, travel times, accommodation, wildlife and heritage;
- (aa) there was potential to market Plymouth as 'the UK's best city for walking breaks' due to various factors, including the city's unique naval heritage and variety of countryside on offer;
- (bb) a range of projects were being developed along the South West Coast Path, including 'Walkers are Welcome' towns and Walking Festivals;
- (cc) the South West Coast Path was investigating the possibility of introducing an apprenticeship scheme which would provide extra manpower to complete repairs to the path;
- (dd) the South West Coast Path employed a Commercial Liaison Officer (whose post was soon to terminate) who encouraged businesses and other organisations to get involved in projects which were very local to them, which they could relate to, and which their customers would benefit from;
- (ee) a 'Great South West Walks' event was planned for 20-28 September 2014. This event was currently at the planning stage;
- (ff) it was hoped that improvements to the South West Coast Path would improve the tourist trade and ensure that the region's heritage was better maintained, identified and recorded.

Following members' questions it was reported that –

- (ii) of the 37 coastal erosions that had occurred in the past month, most had been fixed, although some were considered to be long term projects.

Ray Fairchild, Chair, thanked Mark Owen for his presentation, and looked forward to working with him in the future.

35. **COOPERATIVE WAY BROCHURE**

Agreed that this item is deferred until the Forum's next meeting.

36. **LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (LAF) ANNUAL REVIEW FORM: APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013**

Members discussed the Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013, which had been submitted to Natural England.

Ray Fairchild, Chair, pointed out that he had completed sections 1-7 of the form (with the assistance of David Pawley and John Emery). Section 8 had been completed by Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer.

After a lengthy discussion, members expressed their displeasure at the comments in section 8, and pointed out that they did not accept the criticisms of LAF that had been made.

It was agreed that Ian Stewart, Vice Chair, would write to Natural England to express the Forum's displeasure at the comments contained in section 8, to advise that they did not accept these comments, and to express regret that he did not have the opportunity to discuss the comments with Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer.

37. **PATHS FOR COMMUNITIES UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2013**

Members discussed the Paths for Communities Update – September 2013, along with the Autumn 2013 edition of the Paths for Communities e-newsletter. Members noted that –

- (a) not all of the funding sources listed in the e-newsletter were available to Plymouth City Council;
- (b) the Stepping Stones to Nature project (SS2N) was involved in sourcing funding for footpaths, along with other projects;
- (c) Mark Owen, South West Coast Path National Trail Officer, had sourced the funding required to build the steps at the Royal William Yard.

Councillor Fox left the meeting at the end of this item.

38. **WORKING GROUPS**

There were no reports from the Forum's working groups. It was agreed to set up a working group to visit the disused railway line between Laira Bridge and Cattedown Wharves before the Forum's next meeting.

39. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Forum reviewed its work programme and agreed that a site visit to the disused railway line between Laira Bridge and Cattedown Wharves is organised before the Forum's next meeting.

Mr Attrill left the meeting at the end of this item.

40. **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Forum noted its correspondence and agreed that a further letter is sent to Mr Gillhespy, thanking him for his response and asking for a further update to his earlier letter.

41. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Agreed that the next meeting of the Forum is held at 10.30am on Monday 17 March 2014.

42. **ISSUES ARISING FROM FORUM MEMBERS**

Bob Harvey, LAF member, raised the issue of the possibility of him becoming a member of the South Devon AONB Partnership. It was agreed that Ray Fairchild, Chair, would contact Hilary Winter of Natural England (South West) to discuss this matter further.