

England Access Forum, Fourth Meeting, Tuesday 30th June 2009, London

LAF representatives

Alan Marlow, South East
Matthew Balfour, South East
Andrew McCloy, East Midlands
Andrew Shirley, East Midlands
Bob Smith, East of England
Liddy Lawrence, East of England (joined later)
Duncan Graham, North West (Chair)
Edgar Ernstbrunner, North West
Edgar Powell, West Midlands
Hazel Armstrong, Yorkshire & Humber
Richard Holmes, Yorkshire & Humber
Pam Brookes, North East
Paul Heal, South West
Ray Newbigin, South West

Natural England representatives

Andrew Wood
Amanda Earnshaw
Paul Johnson

Observer

Cath Hart, Regional LAF Coordinator, South East

Apologies

John Sugden, North East
Steve Scoffin, North East
David Bowden, West Midlands

1. Minutes of third EAF meeting, 11th March 2009

Agreed

General discussion around the fact that not all LAFs appear to be receiving copies of papers discussed by EAF. Request that **all** papers be posted on the EAF section of the Natural England website with a general rider that minutes would not be fully approved until the following EAF meeting.

Action: EAF Secretariat to post all non restricted papers on website once draft minutes of EAF and Working Group minutes approved and ensure that through the regional co-ordinators each LAF receives an individual copy.

2. Outstanding actions from 30th April EAF Working Group

Due to unexpected circumstances a paper relating to outstanding actions was not circulated prior to the meeting. It was accepted that this made consideration of items difficult. Agreed that in future papers be circulated in advance of meetings.

- Relationship diagram for EAF and LAFs circulated at meeting – **Action: diagram to include a date and be amended to show link between Natural England LAF Liaison and EAF**
- Verbal report provided on the first regional LAF coordinators meeting – **Action: note of coordinators meeting to be circulated to EAF members at the same time as it goes out to coordinators**
- Dual status routes – the paper discussed by the WG had unfortunately not been circulated to regional coordinators as agreed so no feedback received from LAFs – **Action: AW said Natural England would produce a paper for EAF setting out the issue, the scale of the problem and proposals for what could be done to resolve it. Feedback from regions would be incorporated in this**

- Creation of rights of way code of practice – action has been taken to amend the front cover of the document to identify originator and date of publication
 - Surfacing of shared routes – discussed as main agenda item
 - Proposed Ministerial meeting – a letter has been sent by EAF chairman and awaiting a response from the Minister
 - Items remitted – no feedback available on impact on RoW from major road improvements – **Action: Natural England to provide feedback as soon as possible to EAF**
 - AOB – no feedback on either fencing of woodland plantations or gating orders from LAFs – **Action: circulate any feedback as soon as it is received**
- Statement on legal status of LAFs - **Action: Natural England too follow up**

3. Natural England's policy on access – update

Prior to discussion on this item the Chairman took the opportunity to feedback to AW the outcome of the pre-meeting of LAF representatives. LAF members of EAF felt that the preparation for this meeting had been inadequate and were significantly concerned at the failure of NE to support and finance adequately the work of EAF: they questioned whether EAF could continue its work effectively without a significant change of heart. It had been agreed that DG and MB should arrange to meet AW to discuss how EAF could help Natural England achieve its objectives within support and resource parameters adequate for the purpose. Both AW and EAF members were confident that a way forward could be found.

AW informed the meeting that the Board had considered the access policy, which had been slightly amended to reflect comments made during consultation. The policy has been signed off and will now be published on the website. Natural England will be going back to consultees to inform them of how their comments were responded to.

4. Inspiring People policy consultation

MB reported back to EAF that the consultation event had been well attended, despite the tube strike. The day was an opportunity for attendees to give their views on the policy and overall the majority were supportive. Concerns were expressed about the language used and the sometimes patronising tone. Also concern about the lack of empirical evidence for some of the statements and there were obvious gaps in knowledge. Comments about it being nice words but no action which were understandable as this policy sets the scene for delivery. General feeling that what was said on the day would be taken into account by NE but would not necessarily change the policy.

Some EAF members voiced concern that they had been unaware that the policy was out to consultation and had missed the opportunity to comment as a result.

Action: EAF Secretariat to send EAF members a link to the consultation page on the Natural England website and alert them whenever a new document was posted. A similar alert would be sent to regional coordinators and through them to individual LAFs

5. Coastal Access briefing – LAF role

AE updated the meeting on the recent workshops held in Carlisle as part of the coastal access testing project. These had focussed on best the views of local people could be feed into project delivery. One mechanism that Natural England was exploring was the role that LAFs could have in raising local awareness of coastal access and gathering information from interested parties that could inform the alignment process. It was hoped that a model for how this might work would be available for consideration at the next EAF meeting. A pilot project being conducted in Cumbria would inform the outcomes.

6. Surfacing of shared use public rights of way

PB was interested to learn if this was becoming a national problem as locally they were experiencing an urbanisation of the countryside as routes provided essentially for road bike use.

Reported that Kent have produced a paper on shared use and often surface issues are a by product of the perceived conflicts of shared use.

Around the county it would appear that providing a surface for one category of user, cyclists, was forcing other legitimate users off the route.

Decided that EAF need to open a dialogue with Sustrans.

Action: In the first instance, Natural England to explore if the issue was sufficiently widespread to require action to address it and Duncan Mackay, the relationship manager for Sustrans, would be asked to follow this up. Future action by EAF would be based on the outcome.

7. Decadal review

PB reported back to EAF on the recent stakeholder meeting to discuss Natural England's approach to decadal review.

How the review would be conducted had to be linked to coastal access as happening concurrently. Review seen as major opportunity to engage the public and promote open access.

Legislation requires a 10 year review but it needs to be proportionate to the outcome

AW reported that there was a meeting on 2 July where a decision would be made on how to take the review forward. Unlikely that the whole mapping exercise would be repeated but it would address issues raised by stakeholders and be delivered alongside coastal access.

8. Stakeholder Working Group

PJ informed the meeting that the SWG had been set up to bring the main protagonists together and get them to suggest a range of measures that could take forward the unrecorded rights issues. The SWG had just had its 7th meeting and was due to report to Natural England at the end of the year.

The SWG had recently considered a paper on options for the 2026 cut-off date, which had been seen by some members of EAF. This paper merely captured workshop discussion and did not form part of the main reforms that were needed.

EAF expressed concerns that SWG outputs were not being shared more widely. PJ explained that as negotiation on much of the emerging proposals were at an early stage it was necessary to hold discussions in camera. As options started to firm up things would be shared with a wider community. Outline minutes of the SWG discussions were posted on the website and regional co-ordinators would be kept up-to-date.

9. Open Access Relevant Authority Guidance consultation

This item will be discussed at the next meeting

10. Membership of the Working Group

DG asked for EAF approval to appoint Ray Newbigin to the WG. Agreed

11. Access points on Maps

Highway authorities are providing insufficient information to OS for them to identify access points on their maps.

Action: EAF secretariat to circulate recent correspondence that Lancashire LAF have had with OS.

12. AOB

Recent guidance issued by Defra on LAF's role in providing advice on access to water has caused some confusion. DG had been in correspondence with Defra to clarify the position.

Action: copy correspondence to be circulated to EAF members

Shoreline Management plans appear to give no consideration to access issues and perhaps something needs to go out to those leading on SMPs drawing attention to access, LAFs and ROWIPs

Action: Natural England takes forward

Date of next meeting

In the autumn, date to be agreed

Amanda Earnshaw
3 July 2009

