

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF)

Time: 10am – 1.30pm

Date: Thursday 24th November 2022

Venue: Hybrid meeting (Dorset Council Offices and Microsoft Teams)

Present:

DLAF Members:

Philip Hackett (PH) (chair)
Janet Davis (JD) (vice chair)
Fiona Bowles (FB)
Chris Slade (CS)
Jim de Bertrand (JdB)
Paul Tomlinson (PT)
Nicola Harper (NH)
Mandy Willis (MW)
Dawn Rayment (DR)

Local Authority Officers:

Bridget Betts DC (BB) (Environmental Advice Manager)
Davie Ackerley DC (GN) (Senior Ranger – Central)
Vanessa Penny DC (VP) (Definitive Map Manager)
Wayne Sayers (WS) (Transport Planning Team Leader)
Philip Elias BCP (PE) (PRoW officer)
Ellen House BCP (EH) (PRoW officer)
Jemma Reddaway DC (JR) (Support officer)
Cllr. Simon Christopher DC (CSC) (Councillor, Marshwood Vale Ward)

Apologies:

Amanda Wallwork (AW)
Cllr Mike Greene (BCP) (CMG)

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from AW and CMG

2. Declaration of interests (DOIs)

PH asked all to please indicate DOIs at time of each agenda item.

3. Minutes of the last meeting, actions and matters arising (22.07.22)

- PH proposed the previous minutes were a true record. Seconded by CS. No objections/ abstentions.
- Matters arising from July 2022 minutes:
 - A8.1 (Monkey Jump WCHAR response): A response was sent from the previous DLAF coordinator incorporating DLAF views but there was no response back from National Highways. WS asked BB to send the response to him as their team have regular meetings with National Highways and are looking at this area.
 - A9.7 (Planning working group): With the departure of the previous DLAF coordinator, the planning working group would not continue as originally envisaged. Instead, since the Ramblers are consulted on major applications, JD would inform the DLAF of any major applications.
 - A10.2 (Access to Wild Woodbury): No members expressed interest of a visit to Wild Woodbury therefore it had not been arranged. JD asked the DLAF to let them know if they would like to go. CS expressed interest.

All other actions from March 22 DLAF meeting minutes have been completed although some await further response.

Actions:

- **A3.1: BB to send suggestions regarding Monkey Jump roundabout to WS**

4. Multi - User Routes Presentation

WS provided a presentation on his team, the work they do and on multi user routes. Key points included:

- 3 teams make up transport planning: road safety; strategy and policy team; and delivery team.
- Relevant policies used include the Cycling Walking and Investment Strategy; Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), Gear Change, LTN 1/20, Dorset Council (DC) Local Plan and the Dorset Right of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).
- A main consideration when looking at schemes and prioritising is the benefits that will be delivered
- A key priority is a need to shift short car trips off the road network to provide congestion reduction, reduction in carbon emissions, improved air quality especially around schools and accessibility for those less mobile (A 'short trip' definition was not set in stone but around 8km)
- Most schemes are in urban areas due to the policies and funding streams but there is also an interest on the periphery of urban areas and often this is where the Public Right of Way (PROW) network is involved.
- Route surfacing was discussed in detail and specific examples of the National Cycle Network (NCN) 2 route project, and the North Dorset Trailway were presented as examples where considerations for surfacing included their long-term maintenance, embodied carbon, environmental impacts, and individual circumstances of paths. When surfaces are considered all users (including potential users) are considered so that the best surface to accommodate those users is chosen. Unfortunately, some user groups have a different preferred surface.
- There are valid reasons where it would be prudent to improve the surfacing of a bridleway where the predominant user is likely to be walkers and cyclists. These could include where a bridleway is designated as part of the NCN, is an important sustainable transport link connecting villages to their next largest town or is an important link enabling users to undertake utility trips e.g. to access employment, education, appointments, shop, etc.
- There was a discussion around horse riders and their preferred surfacing including recommendations of using Flexipave. WS said that different surfacing is trailed and that all considerations are taken into account. There had been recent good feedback on the NCN 2 and 26 west of Dorchester from 2 horse riders who were using the newly resurfaced bridleway.
- FB queried whether surfacing discussions are happening nationally and help quicker discussions locally. WS answered currently they tend to go back to partners like Sustrans and ask what products are around.
- Using the example of the North Dorset Trailway, PT asked to what extent DC consider themselves responsible for maintaining the trailway. WS could not give an exact answer without looking, explaining that maintenance is an issue nationally as there is no ring-fenced budget. DA added that there are different designations across the trailway and there will be an agreement in place for the surface to be maintained across its length to its user, however DC only own some of the trailway. DA offered to bring up maintenance of the North Dorset Trailway with Graham Stanley, Greenspace Manager (GS).
- NH raised that active travel is not just about climate change or exercise but also wellbeing and quality of experience. They described issues near Leigh Road, Wimborne, where biodiversity enhancements were promised that would lead to improved quality of experience, but they do not appear to have been done. WS was aware of some tree planting and discussions regarding the wildflower mix but would be happy to walk the route with NH and discuss.
- PH, JD, FB stated that they would support and find it useful for DC to have a policy on multiuse in the Dorset RoWIP. BB said the Dorset RoWIP would have a statement on multiuse and surfacing.
- NH added that where appropriate a multiuser statement/policy should also link in with local, and neighbourhood plans.

- Suggestions for other improvements were received, such as Chideock to Bridport, North of Dorchester and Charminster to Charlton Down. Linking Charminster and Charlton Down is a route WS and DA have been trying to deliver for over 10 years, to change a footpath to bridleway and link the villages, school and nearby stables but due to landownership it is very difficult to do.
- WS happy to discuss other schemes such as Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) improvement schemes further, although many have not progressed yet since points made previously have been recorded.

Actions:

- **A4.1: WS and NH to meet and discuss biodiversity improvements**
- **A4.2: DA to bring up rough areas of the North Dorset Trailway and maintenance of the trailway to GS**

5. Dorset Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance

Key points of discussion:

- DA presented the latest maintenance report statistics, noting the number of jobs is beginning to decrease. Since 2013 the number of reports have climbed from 110 to around 3000 likely due to better public reporting of problems on the PRow network.
- There is now a website address on the new coloured plastic waymarkers to enable users to report problems via their phones whilst on site.
- Service improvements include the use of tablets, making better use of slightly more staff and volunteers, and smart working such as focusing on parishes which have helped the service keep up with the increase in reports.
- A discussion on stiles and gates - no new stiles have been authorised for over 10 years. Currently there are approximately 16,000 gates and 8,000 stiles. Stiles are the property of the landowner and can only be changed with their permission and if a landowner wants a stile it is difficult to prove a stile is not needed for stock control. DC take the view that we will repair stiles on their behalf to the British Standard. Gates are much more accessible and an example where all stiles have been replaced by gates to improve accessibility is in Sturminster Newton. Another example is in Leigh where 5 stiles are replaced with gates a year.
- NH raised the issue of barbed wire around stiles and if the barbed wire should be peeled back 2m away from the stile when repaired. DA explained where it runs across a stile it will likely be encased in wood so the fence tension and integrity are not affected, but would take this to the next Senior Rangers' meeting to check.
- PT queried how many Rights of Way Liaison Officers (RoWLOs) there are, noting the aim is to have one per parish and the previous DLAF officer said the list of RoWLOs is out-of-date with some gaps. BB stated that one of the actions in the ROWIP is a plan to re-energise those relationships. DA added that engagement with parishes and RoWLOs is vital as they know where the walked routes are and are the eyes and ears on the ground.
- NH stated that the width of many bridges is too narrow for mobility scooters and enquired whether wider bridges are being put in. DA responded they will be put in on a case-by-case basis where needed, for example in Cerne Abbas linking to the school, and DC do their best to make paths able for use by all including mobility scooters. Any mismatch in DC vs National standards for this width can be looked at going forwards. DA had a site visit with someone using a mobility scooter recently and it was very helpful to see all the considerations needed including push gates. NH added that latches with yellow coverings benefit those who are less visually able, and DA confirmed all new gates installed have these latches.
- Clarification as to whether prioritising actions is based primarily on public safety, raising an example of damage by forestry vehicles. DA responded it is judged by the Senior Ranger, case by case and recommended any PRow issues are reported through the Cside system and not assume the council are aware of them, so the rangers can act on them.
- Definitive Map errors - DA asked that any are reported, although explained the original drawing of the Definitive Map sometimes created errors.

- PH asked whether fingerpost signs are kept in stock and whether additional waymarkers can be added where people experience problems. DA responded that fingerposts from the highway are replaced but are often taken and flailed; after a few attempts they are replaced with a metal alternative if needed.

Actions:

- **A5.1: DA to raise barbed wire and stiles issue at the next Senior Rangers' meeting**

6. BCP Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance

PE and EH provided a short presentation. Key points of discussion were:

- The BCP PROW team has expanded with EH joining in August.
- The BCP RoWIP is about to be adopted and will run until 2040.
- Project updates included looking for improvements to a path too narrow for equestrians, looking to secure a footpath along the Stour, aiming for no stiles and a commitment to survey all paths and determine access compliance.
- Reporting of PROW issues – MW stated that if you do not live in the BCP area you cannot report issues. PE said that PROWs can be reported and are not largely are not maintained by them and said he was not aware of this issue but there should be another way to report maintenance issues, and if not to contact the rights of way email address on the BCP website.
- NH asked who is responsible for access onto open spaces - the open spaces team administer access onto open spaces but PE and EH work closely with them.
- PT queried whether PE and EH had researched how to achieve the ambition of upgrading a path in the Stour valley to a bridleway, as the process is legally difficult in DC. PE admitted this hadn't been done but that it would be helpful to consult DC about the process. BB recommend PE contact Graham Stanley (GS).

7. Legal Record Team - Definitive Map & Statement

VP gave a presentation of recent figures – key points included:

- Applications have slowed recently, allowing for some catch up with a significant number of in progress cases waiting to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.
- The team are up to date apart from DMMOs which currently have an approximately 20-year backlog.
- PH asked how easy it would be to upgrade a footpath to a bridleway. VP responded it is easy with landowner permission and there is some paperwork to complete. Without landowner permission, someone can make a DMMO application if there is evidence of use but without evidence to support a DMMO it would come down to discussion with the landowner. In appropriate circumstances, DC could make a compulsory creation order, although this would involve providing compensation to the landowner, or compulsory purchase of the relevant land.
- PT noted a great majority of the England Coast Path (ECP) is on existing PROWs but in one or two places it will create a new route. PT asked whether that would feed through onto the Definitive Map. VP answered that it has not been considered yet and it would take discussion with the legal team but they would be happy to discuss with them and report back.

Actions:

- **A7.1: VP to report back on if route creation as part of the ECP would feed into the Definitive Map**

8. Dorset RoWIP Update

BB gave a presentation on an update of the Dorset ROWIP. Key points included:

- The draft is currently being finalised.
- Currently it is planned for the Dorset RoWIP to go out to consultation to the internal advisory group in December and then the DLAF, then through the Council Cabinet in April. The internal advisory group is made up of people such as WS and VP who have helped in reviewing the ROWIP.

- Key themes include - mapping, maintaining, improving and connecting, knowing where to go, providing a more accessible network and partnership working. Each theme has a consultation outcome and opportunities.
- The previous Dorset RoWIP had over 54 objectives and many more actions – the new ROWIP will have fewer but larger outcomes, high level actions and be accompanied by shorter term delivery plans.
- FB asked whether the improvement priorities map will be fixed for the 10 years or be added to, noting an opportunity map would be very useful so they can be responded to when funds become available. BB said there will be delivery plans on 3-yearly basis so opportunities can continue to be fed in. A new scoring mechanism is being developed that can help if priorities shift.
- DLAF members discussed that it would be helpful to have a meeting to give their views on the Dorset RoWIP when it is ready for consultation. JD said that it would be better to consult other statutory groups who are consulted on Definitive Map orders, for example the Ramblers and the BHS, separately, as opposed to through the DLAF.

Actions:

- **A8.1: Meeting to be arranged for the DLAF consultation on the Dorset RoWIP for approximately January 2023. BB to communicate dates for release of the draft ROWIP. Statutory groups will also be consulted. BB to check whether public consultation required on draft and report back.**

9. Member feedback from associated groups/meetings

- **Local Nature Partnership (LNP)** – FB fed back that the LNP agreed to use the DLAF as things about access were being discussed. The LNP are keen the DLAF would help join up DC and BCP activities. FB will continue to sit on the LNP and is happy to take issues for the DLAF to future meetings.
- **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** – See addendum

10. DLAF work programme

This agenda item was moved to the next DLAF meeting once input has been received from the Dorset RoWIP.

11. A.O.B

This agenda item was moved to the next DLAF meeting.

12. Date of next meeting

A meeting to discuss the Dorset RoWIP will be arranged for approximately January 2023. For 2023 meeting dates current options are: 23/30 March, 20/27 July, 23/30 November.

Addendum

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) -. JD attends Dorset AONB meetings on behalf of the DLAF, as a non-voting member. The Board meets three times a year and last met on 22/11/2022. The AONB undertakes a huge amount of very interesting work, some of which is of direct relevance to the DLAF. JD is encouraging AONB Officers to consult the DLAF about access and PRoW matters and finds it frustrating that the DLAF is so little known amongst the bodies which attend the AONB Board meetings. Of particular interest is the Defra funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) initiative. FIPL funds projects under four headings: People, Place, Climate and Nature. You can read about the projects on the AONB website here: [Funded-Dorset-AONB-FIPL-Projects-V.4.pdf \(dorsetaonb.org.uk\)](https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/Funded-Dorset-AONB-FIPL-Projects-V.4.pdf). Of the 85 projects approved, probably only about half a dozen have a distinct access element, including the provision of a wheelchair accessible route but there are others with an access element. Another project of relevance to access and rights of way is “Stepping into Nature”, an award winning

project which facilitates nature-based activities for an older audience which has lottery funding, and Health and Nature Dorset (HAND), the aim of which is to increase access to, and use and connection with the natural environment to support and enhance physical and mental well-being across the Dorset and BCP council areas.

JD also intended to report the following matters under agenda item 11:

- At the last meeting we ratified a response to Natural England (NE)'s consultation on its review of Statutory Directions on the ECP between Portland and Lulworth. We've had the decisions on Eweleaze Farm and Shortlake Farm. NE's decision is to leave the original direction unchanged and to extend it for a further six years. Therefore, both directions to exclude people on up to 28 days per year between 1 March and 31 October will remain in place. JD can provide copies of the relevant documents if anyone wants them. As far as JD could see, the DLAF was the only consultee which responded.
- A couple of months ago we had some email exchanges about an access problem east of Lulworth Cove. This prompted me to make some enquiries of NE about progress with the ECP in Dorset. Ironically, since the first stretch was opened here, it rather looks as if we might also have the last stretches opened. This is the report JD had from Richard Andrews at NE.
- Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle, although the Planning Inspector's report has been with Defra a long time, this stretch still requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment to be written covering this stretch, this has been held up due to the number of such assessments that need writing. JD's national colleagues are now beginning to look at this and so some progress is being made on this stretch.
- Lulworth to Kimmeridge, discussions remain ongoing between Defra and the Ministry of Defence to agree that the ordinary route can go through the ranges and an alternative route, resulting in no additional coastal margin can be landward of the ranges and available when the ranges are not open to the public.
- Kimmeridge to Highcliffe, this stretch was published in 2017 and finally approved this year following a report by the Planning Inspectorate, the following link provides more details, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-lulworth-cove-to-highcliffe>. Since then, a deficiency has been identified in the determination process relating to Chapter 6 of the report. Accordingly, the Secretary of State has consented to the quashing of the approval of Chapter 6 of this coastal access report by means of a High Court Order. A decision regarding the determination of Chapter 6 will be made by the Secretary of State in due course. The Access Authorities are now applying for establishment grants to complete the works on the ground, for the reports that have been approved so that much of the stretch can be opened. (The problem stretch is between Southbourne and Mudeford Quay.)