**Meeting Minutes**

Meeting: Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF)
Time: 10am – 1pm
Date: Monday 8 April 2024
Venue: Hybrid meeting (Dorset Council Offices and Microsoft Teams)

# **Present:**

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| **DLAF Members:** | **Local Authority Officers:** |
| Philip Hackett (PH) (chair) | Graham Stanley DC (GS) (Senior Ranger) |
| Janet Davis (JD) (vice chair) | Vanessa Penny DC (VP) (Definitive Map Manager) |
| Nicola Harper (NH) | Philip Elias BCP (PE) (Senior Public Right of Way officer) |
| Fiona Bowles (FB) | Andy Brown BCP (Traffic Team Leader) |
| Paul Tomlinson (PT) | Ellen House BCP (EH) (Public Right of Way officer) |
| Nathan McCormick (NM)  | Cllr. Simon Christopher DC (CSC) (Councillor, Marshwood Vale Ward) |
| Chris Slade (CS) | Jemma Reddaway DC (JR) (NET support officer - notetaker) |
|  | Rob Quincey DC (RQ) (Business Solutions Engineer – GIS) |
| **Apologies:** |  |
| Jim de Bertrand (JdB) |
| Amanda Wallwork (AW) |
| Mandy Willis (MW) |
| Cllr. Andy Hadley BCP (CAH) (Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy) |
| Russell Goff DC (RG) (Greenspace Manager) |

1. **Welcome & apologies, declarations of interests**

Apologies were received from AW, MW, JdB, CAH and RG. Declarations of interest (DOIs) will be made at the time of each agenda item.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting, actions and matters arising**
* Minutes of the last meeting (23 November 2023) were unanimously confirmed as a true record of the last meeting.
* Matters arising:
	+ DLAF applications should have a postal address for DR and other DLAF member as their email addresses don’t work.

Actions:

* 1. JD raise issue with DLAF email addresses that no longer work with GS.
1. **Dorset Council Greenspace Management and Maintenance – Graham Stanley (Senior Ranger)**
* In midst of restructure.
* Increase in staff with 8 level 4 apprentices from mid-May. 6 will be based across the county rights of way team and 2 in Country Parks. The apprentices undertake the same tasks as other staff whilst undertaking their course.
* 2 other staff posts are available, 1 in West Dorset, and 1 in Purbeck.
* Kingston Maurward currently don’t offer apprenticeship courses in countryside management. Would consider going back in future if the correct course were available.
* No update on Darknoll Lane.
* Severance:
	+ Severance will be addressed in the ROWIP.
	+ Monkey’s Jump roundabout and Chideock are National Highways issues. They are being looked at and consultation will be required.
	+ A list was produced identifying key severance points 7-8 years ago. PT can find the document if desired.
	+ The Definitive Map team would work on the legal paperwork if new rights of way need to be created or diversions are needed. The team don’t have the capacity to find routes on the ground and are further down the process that the greenspace team.
* Right of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP):
	+ The DLAF believed a draft would be ready after the May local elections.
	+ Can’t give a definitive update on the ROWIP timetable.
	+ The DLAF are a statutory consultee on the ROWIP and should be involved in the process.
	+ The previous ROWIP was meant to be until 2020. On the Dorset Council website, it describes a new ROWIP starting in 2025.
* Bridge budget allocation:
	+ Get £160k each year for repairing bridges on the rights of way network.
	+ When a report is received for a bridge it is assessed and repaired where possible, and added to a list for replacement if required.
	+ All bridleway bridges were assessed last year. It would take 5 years to replace all of them to an upgraded specification to far outlive the current timber with a cost of over £1m. A bid for this capital project was put in but wasn’t successful. These bridges have been returned to the regular replacement schedule and are added to the Council’s risk register. We are currently advised to see other courses of funding but not many exist.
	+ Over the county there are approx. 60 bridges that need replacing and the current budget allows for 4-5 per year.
	+ Prices can vary e.g. large bridleway bridge over main river or small footbridge.
	+ The team carries out minor repairs, but major works are completed by contractors.
	+ Are making note of what bridges are likely to fail in the next few years.
	+ New bridges should be DDA compliant. They may have to be raised higher than the previous ones for flood risk.
	+ The list of bridges requiring replacement could be passed to stakeholders to prioritise on which are most well-used. The Catchment Partnerships can also check if there will be any changes to the rivers.
* Houns-tout cliff fall diversion update:
	+ The England Coast Path project introduced an element of rollback provision.
	+ DLAF members can direct coastal queries to particular area rangers.
	+ The Ramblers were in contact with the senior Purbeck ranger regarding Houns-tout cliff fall that necessitated a long inland diversion. They are working with Natural England and the landowner to provide a solution as quickly as possible and rollback is being used to facilitate it.
* Dorset Explorer:
	+ On the new version the OS leisure base map goes to 1:25k then stops. This change provides a lot more up-to-date data directly from OS but doesn’t provide very zoomed in levels.
	+ The old version is too difficult to maintain and will be shut down in a couple of months.
	+ If there are issues with new Dorset Explorer give feedback via feedback links.
	+ The rights of way layer data held in the new version is the same as the previous version.

**Actions:**

* **3.1.** GS to check if the bridge raised by NH is DDA compliant. The bridge mentioned has steps and is narrow.
1. **BCP Council Public Rights of Way -** Philip Elias (Senior Rights of Way Officer) and Ellen House (Rights of Way Officer)
* River Avon:
	+ Footpaths 16 and 17: The Avon valley is still suffering from water damage and. The popular, strategy and promoted Avon Valley path is essentially underwater.
	+ The team are pushing forward against the regulation aspects.
	+ Intended repairs include restoring failing bridge structures and repairing sheet piling.
	+ Natural England not in agreement therefore the team contacted the MP for Christchurch and that has succeeded in moving things along a little.
	+ Having a meeting at end of week with the Environment Agency and Natural England. Hope can put together a strategy to move this along.
	+ Have also been surveying the land to investigate if a diversion would be possible.
	+ The River Avon have one of the largest farm clusters in England. ELMs payments may give options to push for a diversion as they include payments for access.
* Parley Golf Course:
	+ Seeking to legalise the diverted path but is getting more awkward as time goes on.
	+ Was intended to be resolved by a planning application by Parley golf course for bunding to screen local houses from light pollution.
	+ May be some difficulties with getting that planning application through as flood mitigation strategies are required as the bunding could displace water.
	+ Unsure what result will be. BCP will push harder for the creation of a new public footpath.
* Stour Valley Project:
	+ Have met with the project leader from the National Trust, Katherine Church.
	+ Idea is to create a continuous walking and sometimes riding area. Got own website.
	+ Katherine is coordinating project progress. At the previous meeting connectivity and accessibility issues were discussed.
	+ Next meeting 17April with BCP, DC and Katherine to revisit the project using GIS and discuss boundary issues.
	+ Katherine is interested in approaching the DLAF and providing a presentation.
	+ Pressed for bridge over Stour to be equestrian friendly. References to horse riding were left out of most recent report seen on project.
* Longfleet Drive:
	+ Has been a main expense as things have needed further spend than anticipated due to poor weather. Additional spend will however be helpful for futureproofing.
* Priorities include paths that have declined in quality affecting school children and removing staggered barriers around schools.
* Gates have been replace on FP 127.
* Meeting 29 April to look at access improvements to the Castleman Trailway to make it equestrian friendly.
* Iford Land to Tuckford bridge is not a right of way but the team are progressing with re-implementing this link. It is also part of stour valley way.
* Looking to gather a scheme of works to reimplement access along the rivers using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund. CIL could be a great way forward with dealing with projects that fall outside of the capital programme. The team also look to use TCF where possible.
* BCP intended creating a new walking, cycling and riding map. It was originally produced for Poole but producing one for BCP may not be practical.
* Alternatively, Dorset Explorer is a great tool and more useful than walking maps but it is not promoted. BCP would like to get involved to help promote it via leaflets. DC GIS team happy to have more signposting.
* OS offers a paid app where you can find routes. DC wouldn’t want to replicate same function as OS but creating layers with routes could be a middle ground.
* Looking into encompassing filming/taking photos of rights of way into part of a volunteer scheme. Alternatively, for a higher cost, the team could use a professional cameral for a more professional standard. Something hope will see in the next 2-3 years.

**Actions:**

**4.1.** PE to pass on Katherine Church’s contact detail to arrange a presentation at a future DLAF meeting on the Stour Valley project.

**4.2.** PE to update the DLAF on Avon Valley path progress.

**4.3.** PE contact GS/RQ regarding promotion of Dorset Explorer via leaflets.

1. **Legal Record Team – Definitive Map & Statement –** Vanessa Penny (Definitive Map Manager)
* Parish boundary changes:
	+ Several parish boundary changes took effect on 1 April. They had a huge impact on the rights of way numbering system, requiring over 100 to be legally changed). This will take several months to complete.
	+ The GIS team are working hard to change the boundaries. Can start when this is complete.
	+ The change is boundaries and numbering will not change anything on the ground.
	+ Don’t think any outstanding legal orders will be affected. If any are they will need to go through the process with the Planning Inspectorate again.
	+ Usure what impact the changes will have on maintenance reports. The definitive map, ranger and GIS team will need to work together to resolve any problems.
* Deregulation Act:
	+ In January an update was submitted to ministers with a proposed timetable for implementing the right to apply and reforms. Intending to lay secondary legislation for the right to apply for diversions June/July, DMMO reforms in Decembers and exception regulations 2025. Enforced dates are to be confirmed.
	+ General election date could impact these timings.
	+ Ministers decided to bring back the exception for unrecorded historic rights of way in public use. Intending to lay this as a separate statutory instrument in May.
	+ Further exceptions to the cut-off are still under consideration as there is concern about routes in use. A timetable for the other provisions is not available yet.
	+ Guidance will be issued later in the process.
	+ A lesser burden is expected on surveying authorities by Defra after closures on claims before 1949. The team don’t anticipate a lesser burden in the foreseeable future.
* Cases:
	+ DMMOs: 239 not started, 47 in progress.
	+ PPOS: 5 not started, 2 other PPO case waiting to go to PINS.
	+ There are currently several cases in Thorncombe including one that is waiting to go to the Planning Inspectorate. One order needs to be modified to add two bridges and FP 48 was confirmed recently.
	+ An investigation is ongoing for Brit View Road, West Bay. There are over 100 user evidence statements but not many for bridleway use so there is no harm in providing more. It will be a few months before the outcome is known.
* Providing Definitive Map statements online would be something the team ultimately aim to do but is a way down the team’s workload. The team often email copies of relevant information in response to queries.
* It is hard to distinguish between the sealed Definitive Map statement and the more up to date working copy.
* A member of the team has replaced the member of staff that left last year. Recruiting again to fill that role.

 **Actions**:
**5.1.** VP to email CSC with update on Thorncombe cases.

**5.2.** Update if FP 74 will now be a bridleway.

1. **England Coast Path (ECP) – response from Secretary of State**
* A response was received from the Secretary of State, the Minister for Nature.
* The ECP proposals were within scope of a European court judgement in 2018. Consequently Natural England have revised the proposals it follows in undertaking habitat regulations assessments for proposed sections of the ECP that might have an impact on a European protected sites.
* Natural England are working hard with local authorities on the route east of Lulworth Cove which will be sent to Defra when complete.
* The updated sections for Kimmeridge to Highcliffe and Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle are with Defra to be considered by Secretary of State alongside original proposals.
* Defra officials are aiming to submit all outstanding stretches in 2024. Remaining Dorset sections are aiming to be submitted in second half of 2024.
* Will be notified when approved by Secretary of State and on GOV.UK.
* Implied for one section a revised route was being prepared. If so, the DLAF should have been consulted on it. If a new route is being put forwards, the DLAF would like to see it.

**Actions:
6.1.** JD circulate response from Minister for Nature.

**6.2.** JD to send link to routes.

**6.2.** JD to contact NE to clarify if proposed ECP routes have changed since the DLAF were last consulted on them and progress on an inland route East of Lulworth Cove.

1. **BCP Local Plan consultation**
* The BCP Local Plan is currently out for consultation.
* DLAF responded at an early stage but not yet on the formal consultation.
* The previous consultation notice covered the Local Plan and CIL. CIL is being decoupled from the Local Plan. It is desirable to pick up on the CIL consultation when it is received.

**Actions:**

**7.1.** NH share the original DLAF comments on BCP Local Plan and take a lead on drafting a further DLAF response to the formal consultation.

1. **Member feedback from associated groups/meetings**
* Dorset National Landscape – JD
	+ No further meetings since last DLAF meeting.
* Local Nature Partnership (LNP) – FB
	+ There are two large schemes on nature recovery, the Dorset-scale local nature recovery strategy and landscape recovery pilots.
	+ Should ask the councils if conversations are being had around putting access into the local nature recovery strategy.
	+ Can write to those starting landscape recovery projects to consider access as they could be opportunities for more permissive access.
* Cranborne National Landscape – NH
	+ Linda Nunn would like to talk to DLAF regarding a new long-distance route being planned.
* Note: A solar farm in the National Landscape adjacent to the MacMillan way near Cruxton was granted by planning inspectorate but the minister decided it was inappropriate.

**Actions:**

**8.1.** FB draft queries on local nature recovery strategies to Bridet Betts.

**8.2**. Invite Linda Nunn to a future DLAF meeting.

1. **Ratifications**
* Responses for the below have been submitted.
* Local Transport Plan response:
	+ Joint local transport plan between BCP and DC.
* Active Travel Infrastructure Plan response:
	+ Cllr Hadley responded – DLAF remit is recreational therefore emphasis in response was on recreational use rather than utilitarian.
1. **A.O.B and date of next meeting(s)**
* Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) as a future agenda item. It would be useful to have a presentation on how it is decided where SANGs will be and what they encompass as they provide a large amount of access provision across DC and BCP. Dorset Council’s heathland mitigation officer is on maternity leave, due back September.
* Need to understand more about ELMs and how the payments are allotted to ensure value can be gained from them for access improvements. ELMs are operated by the Rural Payments Agency. Dorset Council have a county farms team who may be able to give more information, contacts are David Haynes or Jenny Stubbs.
* A ROWIP opportunity map showing what we need is a missing link.
* Next meeting Thursday 25 July.

**Actions:**

* **9.1.** Arrange for SANGs to be a future agenda item at the November meeting.
* **9.2.** Follow up with JD’s Forestry Commission contact to arrange for them to attend July’s meeting.
* **9.3**. FB to circulate document on ELMs payments available.