

BOROUGH OF PENDLE
MEETING OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
MONDAY, 16 JUNE 2014

Present:

Allan Aspinall..... Burnley and Pendle Ramblers
David Foat..... Pendle Walking Festival
Tony Helm..... Nelson CHA
Shirley Northcott..... Peak and Northern Footpath Society
Howard Nunnick..... Burnley and Pendle Ramblers
Tim Ormrod (Chair)..... Local Resident
Tom Partridge..... Pendle BC
David Penney..... Pendle Walking Festival/Colne Walkers are Welcome
Keith Pickup..... Pendle Walking Festival
John Rowe..... Nelson Town Council
Trevor Walsh..... Pendle Disability Forum
Cllr David Whalley..... Pendle BC
Ron Whalley..... PLT Out and About

**Minute
No**

1. Apologies

Margaret Brown..... Pendle Walking Festival
Mark Chung..... Burnley and Pendle Ramblers
Margaret Fletcher..... Pendle Walking Festival
Jennifer Little..... Pendle Walking Festival
John Lofthouse..... Pendle Walking Festival
Geoff Salter..... Pendle Walking Festival
Peter Smith..... Pendle Walking Festival
Derek Tate..... Pendle Walking Festival
Peter Walker..... Pendle Walking Festival
Kathryn Wilkinson..... Goldshaw Booth Parish Council

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 16 December 2013

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were moved by Howard Nunnick and seconded by Allan Aspinall as being correct.

3. Matters Arising from the Meeting of 16 December 2013

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. Public Rights of Way Statistics for the Period December–May 2013

4.1 The Forum considered the statistics presented to the meeting which showed that there had been 106 reports received from members of the public in the last six months. In the same period, 167 reports were cleared. This meant that at the end of November there were 96 outstanding reports. Of the reports received in the six

months to February 2014, 86 per cent had been cleared within three months of being reported.

- 4.2 T Partridge commented that this had been a productive six months during which the team had made a big impact on reducing the backlog of outstanding reports which has been reduced to less than an informal benchmark of 100 outstanding customer reports.

5. Public Rights of Way Reports and Faults cleared from December 2013–May 2014

- 5.1 A report consisting of 12 pages of detailed information on individual cases was discussed.

- 5.2 T Partridge highlighted an unusually high number of trees which had fallen across footpaths during the last six months due to the high winds. On the whole these were cleared of the path by the Countryside Access Team. Where specialist skills and equipment were needed to deal with difficult or very large trees, the landowner was asked to arrange for the necessary work to be completed.

- 5.3 Footpath 89, Higham: T Partridge mentioned this had been a difficult enforcement case because we had been unable to secure the cooperation of the landowners, in this case the trustees of a charity. The work to remove the obstruction of a hedge and a fence was eventually carried out after serving an enforcement notice. The cost of carrying out the work had subsequently been recovered from the trustees. There had been a number of reports about how this obstruction affected members of the public. These reports proved to be very valuable in demonstrating that the criticism which we had received from the trustees about the proposed enforcement action was unfounded.

- 5.4 Footpath 54, Higham: H Nunnick commented that there were two separate cases where the Countryside Access Team had unblocked an obstructed gateway at Stump Hall Farm. T Partridge said that simply removing the cause of the obstruction, ie the nails or screws, seemed to be the most efficient way of dealing with these repeated offences since we did not have evidence of who was responsible.

- 5.5 S Northcott commented that the report presented an impressive account of the volume and quality of work carried out by the Countryside Access Team, particularly since this work had to be carried out alongside other activities such as organising the Pendle Walking Festival.

6. Outstanding Complaints Over Six Months Old

- 6.1 Forum members considered a report giving details of issues which had been unresolved for over six months. There were no comments on the report presented.

7. Public Path Orders – Summary of Current Cases

- 7.1 A detailed report with details of outstanding diversion and extinguishment order cases was considered by the Forum.

7.2 T Partridge commented that the work on diversion and extinguishment orders was given a high level of priority because it helped to generate a significant income (£12,000 in 2013/14) which helped to offset the cost to the Council of providing other parts of the Countryside Access Service.

7.3 The footpath issues at Doughty Farm, Nelson, were also briefly discussed. T Partridge confirmed that there had been no concerns raised when we consulted various bodies on the latest proposals. There had been no objections when we advertised the combined diversion and extinguishment order. There is a small amount of work to install gates and carry out waymarking after which the diversion process will be completed and the file closed.

8. Pendle Walking Festival 2014

8.1 T Ormrod welcomed a number of Pendle Walking Festival leaders who had been invited to join the Countryside Access Forum.

8.2 T Partridge reported that a programme of 73 walks had been put together in the last few months for this year's festival which will run from Saturday, 30 August until Sunday, 7 September 2014. The festival will include the four-day Pendle Way, the four-day Lancashire Witches Walk from Barrowford to Lancaster and a new 22 mile walk to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The walk will be for a group to complete a circuit of the so called Pendle Hill "Outlier".

8.3 The draft programme is currently with the designer for final amends. It is due to be sent for printing this week for printed copies to be delivered to the Council by 27 June 2014. We will then start distribution by posting out to 50 Tourist Information Centres, walking clubs in the north of England, libraries, members of the public who have made enquiries about the Walking Festival in the last two years and walk leaders.

8.4 The walking festival has also been advertised in the Ramblers "Walk" magazine, and it is due to be advertised in Country Walking Magazine.

9. Countryside Access Strategy 2014–2019

9.1 T Partridge reported that work had started on implementing the Countryside Access Strategy. One of the most significant changes had been the introduction of a new priority matrix. This has meant that we no longer seek to resolve every valid report which we receive. Instead, we keep a record of every problem affecting a public right of way which is reported to us but we only seek to resolve issues where there is a reasonably quick and practical solution or where the problem reported affects a well-used footpath or bridleway and the problem is having a significant impact on public enjoyment of the right of way in question.

9.2 Cllr Whalley referred to the need to get more support from parish councils in regularly checking the public rights of way in their area and reporting issues which need sorting out. T Partridge responded that there is a strategy action to encourage people to report issues. We will therefore ask the parish and town councils if they have any volunteers in their area who would be willing to do this.

ACTION: T Partridge to write to all parish and town councils to this effect.

9.3 T Ormrod suggested that the new Strategy should be made available online.

ACTION: T Partridge to place the Strategy on the Council's website.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 T Partridge reported that Lancashire County Council had given notice that it would terminate the agreement by which Pendle Council dealt with public rights of way matters on its behalf as from 1 April 2015. This was due to the need to make substantial costs savings which includes the £55,000 annual payment provided for Pendle to deliver the service. This issue will be reported to the Council's Executive on 26 June 2014. It is unclear what, if any, service Pendle Council will be able to provide after this reduction in funding has come into effect.

10.2 J Rowe suggested that town and parish councils may have an interest in funding the continuation of the service now they have greater powers of precept to raise revenue.

10.3 There was general consensus in the Forum that this was a very disappointing development and it would be a great loss to the district if Pendle was unable to provide a local service to maintain the public right of way network.

10.4 H Nunnick asked how far a wind turbine should be sited from a footpath with respect to the danger which they posed to public safety. There was some discussion about the risk of a turbine falling over, and the risk of ice from a turbine blade being launched in the direction of a public right of way. There may be additional risks to horse riders if their animals are spooked if ridden too close to a windmill.

11. Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The next meeting will be on Monday, 15 December 2014 at 2.00pm.