

Report to JLAF Meeting 15/10/2015 from Working Group South (WGS)

We had a meeting on 17/08/2015 at the Beaumont Hotel, Hexham, from 17:30-19:15.

Present: Nick Rossiter, Alan Mitcham, Amanda Earnshaw, Ted Liddle

Apologies: Ian Jackson, Donella Rozario, Michael Smith

1. General Discussion on Way Forward

Looking at the suggested list of topics we selected RoWIP (general and issues arising) as the priority area for the short term. The topic is one of the three main areas under study by JLAF members as individuals and we thought there was significant potential for the Working Group to be involved.

Other topics thought to be worthy of study in the medium term were:

- 1) Parishes – Working with Parishes (collaboration with Working Group North via SR, we would cover parishes in the south of the county)
- 2) Position Statements as they arise (AE already made some study in this area)
- 3) Prepare a Guide to reporting problems on public RoW (AM would like to lead on this)
- 4) Cross-county Anomalies (abrupt change in status of RoW as cross county boundary, noted in North Pennines and in Tyne & Wear area, TL would like to lead on this)
- 5) Access Islands (isolated areas of public access, with no connections to network e.g. some CROW land, suggested by AM)

2. RoWIP

The intention is that WGS should review the current RoWIP, originally written about 2007 though undated internally; the document was scheduled for review 5 years later. AE has already made some comments on the RoWIP in a 2-page document which will be circulated to members of WGS, together with the url of the current RoWIP on the Northumberland CC site.

To review the RoWIP, it is proposed that members of JLAF particularly interested in the topic (as indicated on the spreadsheets of projects) should spend two evenings going through the existing document in detail and making notes on a spreadsheet as we go along. Members identified for this purpose are AE, AM and NR (WGS) and CF (WGN). All are being asked to attend the 1st session at AE's house in Acomb on 28/9 at 18:00. It is aimed to produce an interim report for the full JLAF meeting on 15/10 with the 2nd session following in November.

We are liaising through AE with the JLAF representative of Northumberland CC to determine the nature of current annual reviews and reporting procedures.

3. Ramblers Grid Square

We thought WGS ought to help the Ramblers in the Big Pathwatch project. The aim is to survey intensively the footpaths in a 1-km square. We intend to cover 2 adjacent 1-km squares, probably a little W of Hexham, on Tuesday 8/9 from 09:30-12:30. The survey

requires a GPS link on an internet-capable phone. AM has provided further details by email.

Sequel to WGS Meeting 17/08/15

3. Ramblers Grid Square (update)

WGS did support the **Big Pathwatch** on 8/9 with four members (AM, AE, TL, NR) out in the field. AM will be reporting separately on this.

2. RoWIP (update – interim report)

Three of us (AE, NR, Chris Foster) met at AE's house on 28/09/15 to take further our review of the RoWIP. The summary of the discussion is given below.

Documents available:

NCC RoWIP (undated, c2007-8, pdf) at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=efc7e0dc-a38a-4ddf-a38a-a45dcb0fc3d9&version=-1>

AE's preliminary comments on the RoWIP (made available as a doc file - Action Plan 1.1 progress report)

Discussion:

The RoWIP document is critical for monitoring progress in maintaining and enhancing our rights of way. The current document is thought to originate from 2007-8, with explicit references to the year 2006; it has not been updated since. We felt that the document should be regularly updated:

- a) perceived priorities change e.g. bridges, as linchpin of a walk, appear to have risen in importance as funding becomes tighter
- b) the law changes e.g. the Deregulation Act
- c) related plans change dynamically e.g. those of the National Park
- d) the action plan should change dynamically to reflect the operational situation

With the current shortage of public funds, we felt that NCC might be able to delegate some activities to JLAF or local footpath groups. For instance such bodies could help with surveys and monitoring, including seeking opinions from landowner interests such as the NFU/CLA and specialist groups such as the Trail Riders and Hang Gliders. JLAF could raise its profile by helping NCC constructively to provide regular updates to the RoWIP.

Research Areas Identified:

- A) How do the RoWIP vary from county to county?
- B) What do other counties do in updating their RoWIP (e.g. Norfolk's sent earlier by AE)?
- C) (topical question for next JLAF meeting) How do Tyne&Wear manage their RoWIP?
- D) How are the difficult cross-border issues handled?

Way forward:

Members of the RoWIP subgroup should read the RoWIP, form their own opinion on the constructive criticisms that are to be made, read AE's comments and annotate them with their own feelings.

AE can then produce a revised version, which will be circulated to the subgroup for approval before being sent to David Brookes for his opinion, along with an invitation for a meeting perhaps with the RoWIP subgroup. **This needs handling with significant discussion** and maybe other senior members of JLAF should be involved.

Timing should clearly be as soon as possible but it will not be possible to complete the process in time for the next full JLAF meeting on 15/10. **We should aim to submit comments by 15./10 to AE** who will then finalise the document, forward it to us for a brief check and then organise a meeting, in discussion with others.

NR
08/10/15