

South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area

Access, Countryside and Rights of Way

9th February 2015

Present: Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Terry Howard, Les Seaman, Cath MacKay, Basil Merry, Philip Ryder, Jeremy Kenyon.

Apologies: None.

Minutes of the meeting, 24th November 2014

These were agreed as being correct.

Matters arising from those minutes

There was no further information on Rod Moor. TH said that there was a problem because Natural England do not appear to be looking at old cases. They have funding for 'like-for-like' cases, but not for old cases. Sheffield Local Access Forum has asked NE to attend their next meeting.

Review of Access Matters

The major work in the Burbage Valley has now been completed. Fencing has been erected to keep the cattle, brought in to help the land regain its natural state, but old fencing remains in various places; a request has been made to remove it. A track on Derwent Edge has been re-surfaced. At the moment it looks ugly, but it may improve as it weathers. On the Bradfield Moors, on land owned by the Fitzwilliam Estate, trees have been removed to help the land revert to a natural state. This is open access land but the Estate is saying that access will be denied until after a review in 2019.

Review of Countryside Matters

Applications for solar farms were discussed. In addition to those in Derbyshire there is the possibility of a 270 acre site in Tickhill. LS said that prime agricultural land attracts a low subsidy, and hence many applications for such land were withdrawn.

TH explained that the Local Access Forums in Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield had agreed to send letters to their respective councils requesting that they Dedicate woodland and open spaces, thus keeping them in the public domain in perpetuity and removing the threat of such land being sold for building purposes.

At our recent AGM it was agreed that the following motion be sent to the Chief Executive/Leader of the local authorities in SYNED, with contact being made with Ramblers Areas in those local authorities affected, but outside of SYNED. The motion reads:

'South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area of the Ramblers Association asks all Local Authorities in its Area to Dedicate (Section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) all woodland and green open space in its ownership for public access.

The Ramblers recognise that Local Authorities are under pressure to make financial cuts and we are concerned that their woodlands and green open space may be seen as "financial assets" for possible disposal rather than "public assets" for public good. We are therefore requesting all the Local Authorities to "Dedicate" these "public assets". We are aware that some of our Local Authorities have already declared that such land in their ownership is publicly available and is shown as such on Ordnance Survey Maps. Although this approach is highly commendable it nevertheless doesn't guarantee public access in perpetuity.

By "Dedicating" woodland and green open space public access will be guaranteed in perpetuity and binding on successive owners and occupiers (even if the Local Authority did dispose of it).

"Dedication" limits a "duty of care" by landowners to that normally owed to trespassers, therefore giving greater protection to landowners. It also allows closure for up to twenty eight days for essential land management.

The benefits of "Dedication" are for everyone and it guarantees public access in the future, irrespective of financial influences'.

Sheffield Council had claimed that dedicating land was prohibitively expensive but this was found to be not the case.

Review of Rights of Way Matters

The document previously distributed re Ramblers Groups in Derbyshire agreeing to act together on any access, countryside or rights of way matters was acceptable to ACROW, although it was considered to be unnecessarily lengthy. The suggestion was made that attempts be made to re-form the Ramblers Peak District Co-ordinating Committee since it is acknowledged that Ramblers does not have a voice in some matters in the Peak District that it has an interest in. It was agreed to consider this in detail at the next ACROW meeting, when the original terms of reference etc would be produced.

AOB

Some discussion took place on the Ramblers Big Pathwatch scheme.