

Minutes of a meeting of Hamsterley Trailblazers held on Monday 6 September 2004 at 6.30pm in the Forest Classroom

Present: Simon Goodwin (in the chair)
Vicky Chilcott
Dave Church
Gill Church
Ollie Graham
Gerry Hehir, Durham Fell Runners & Teesdale DC
Victoria Lloyd, Parish Paths Officer, Durham CC
Robin Lofthouse
Peter Oughton
Bill Pike
Ivan Pratt
Ian Robson
Andy Samanjoul

1. Apologies for Absence were received from Marie Brown, Chris Dauber and Mick Richardson.

2. Bridleways Victoria Lloyd, Parish Paths Officer from Durham County Council was welcomed to the meeting. Victoria said she was responsible for promoting, maintaining and improving rights of way and that she worked with Parish Councils and voluntary groups, running the District Council Rights of Way grant scheme. She had been working with Hamsterley Parish Paths Partnership who had surveyed existing paths and recommended improvements included signage. To date this group was composed of walkers and horseriders and it was AGREED there was a need for cyclists to also become involved in these groups, including the Local Access Forum for Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Victoria offered to email details of future meetings to Trailblazers.

Victoria said 2003/04 funding had all been spent but there was value in putting together proposals for improvement work during the next financial year. Simon Goodwin drew attention to bridleways that terminated in the middle of nowhere such as St John's Chapel and Doctor's Gate and it was AGREED that to re-establish usage of these would be beneficial not just to cyclists, but to all users. Attention was also drawn to the poor surface finish recently laid down on a number of bridleways and moorland tracks through using large, rough hardcore. This was suitable for 4 wheel drive vehicles but made cycling, walking, running and horse-riding very difficult. It also created a very intrusive appearance on the landscape. It was AGREED Trailblazers set a system to survey the surrounding area, identify problems and solutions and lobby appropriate organisations such as the Local Access Forum and Hamsterley Parish Paths Partnership for improvements. Members thanked Victoria for attending.

3. Durham Fell Runners Gerry Hehir, representing Durham Fell Runners, was welcomed to the meeting. Gerry also worked for Teesdale District Council. Gerry said he felt there was value in the Fell Runners and Trailblazers working together to develop existing and new rights of way of benefit to all. Gerry also said the Fell Runners operated a grading system for trails and that he would email details of this to Trailblazers. He felt there were a number of trails being used by the Fell Runners that were suitable for use by mountain bikers and that he would forward details of these. Gerry suggested a number of funding avenues to explore including Investors in Children and also opportunities to develop joint representation and lobby for transport improvements, such as buses accommodating bikes. Members thanked Gerry for attending and AGREED that there was great value in Trailblazers and the Fell Runners working together in the future.

4. Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2004 were approved as a correct record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

5.1. Risk Assessments Revised Risk Assessment documentation from Simon Goodwin was received. This was approved subject to the following:

- Include statement on how to get someone away in the event of an emergency.
- Include signature from volunteers to say have read and understood Risk Assessments
- Include a 'no lone working' condition
- Send to insurers for final approval

5.2 Insurance Vicky circulated information received from IMBA on restrictions related to insurance on power driven machinery and hours worked. IMBA still considered their policy appropriate for volunteer work but said separate insurance could be needed for a large scheme. It was noted BTCV funding required more comprehensive insurance than was currently available through IMBA and that BTCV offered insurance direct. It was AGREED Vicky explore the possibility of obtaining BTCV insurance direct.

5.3 Charitable Status Information on progress was awaited from the Charity Commissioners.

5.4 Website Vicky agreed to contact Dean over discussion forum update. It was suggested and agreed a link be made to the Fell Runners website.

5.5 T-Shirts Simon had obtained a quote from Workwear of £5.99 each for printed T Shirts plus £25 per screen cost (5 screens required) and it was AGREED to proceed with the minimum order of 20 as soon as the outcome of the Leader grant application was known.

5.6 Sustrans It was noted Sustrans felt Trailblazer riders were too experienced to take part in their new route study, which was aimed at the novice or occasional cyclist.

5.7 Chairman It was AGREED to formally notify members that the election of a new Chairman would take place at the next meeting on 4 October 2004.

6. Statement of Accounts Dave Church presented the Statement of Accounts to the end of August 2004.

7. Phase I Progress Report It was noted that Pete Laing, the Glentress cycle trail designer, had been successful in being awarded the design contract for Hamsterley and expected to start work shortly. Pete was looking for a meeting with representatives from Trailblazers to discuss priorities and requirements. Dave Church, Ian Robson, Andy Samanjoul and Vicky Chilcott said they would like to attend the meeting.

Vicky reported that One North East were reluctant to progress an application for Phase I funding before receiving the full feasibility study for the later schemes, which could take many months to complete. It was AGREED that progress should be made in the current financial year otherwise there was the danger of enthusiasm and interest being lost. Funding of £54,000 looked probable for Phase I, excluding One North East, and it was AGREED to progress Phase I as far as possible with this amount.

8. Other Funding It was noted Phase I funding applications to Leader for £20,000 and BTCV for £10,000 were both looking very positive. Other funding possibilities being explored included Sport England, Barclays and Northern Rock. Gerry Hehir suggested the Countryside Agency was also a funding possibility. It was noted Teesdale Marketing Ltd had agreed to bankroll the CDENT and Leader funding.

9. Publicity Gill Church said Press Releases on the CDENT funding had been sent out to the local press and bike magazines and to date articles had appeared in the Northern Echo and Weardale Gazette. Gill said good photographs were now required of members, preferably in Trailblazer T Shirts, that could be sent out with future press releases. Ollie Graham agreed to speak to Rob on this matter.

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner Bill Pike said that Trailblazers needed to appoint an Independent Examiner to look at the accounts for the year ended 31 August 2004. Ollie said he would contact someone who could act in this capacity.

11. Primary Care Trust Gill reported that the Primary Care Trust was holding a meeting on cycling in the near future and it was AGREED Trailblazers should be represented at the meeting, if possible.

12. Calendar of Events It was AGREED Andy Samanjoul put together a proposed long term Calendar of Events for discussion at the next meeting. It was noted the Ripon Motor Rally had been cancelled and it was AGREED to postpone the mountain bike orienteering event in Hamsterely on 26 September. Andy said he was organising a Glentress weekend either on 23 or 30 October 2004. It was noted the next trailbuilding session would be held on 10 October 2004.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting It was AGREED the next meeting be held on Monday 6 September 2004 at 6.30pm in the Forest Classroom.