

DUDDON ESTUARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Consultative Committee Meeting of Duddon Estuary Partnership held at Thwaites Village Hall, Thwaites, Nr Millom, 15 July 2009.

Richard Scott, Walking to Health (Chair) (RS)
Brian Crawford, SCSSA (BC)
Jack Park CBC & Millom TC (JP)
Ian Cameron S.Cumberland Wildfowlers Ass. (IC)
Jos Curwen, SLDC (JC)
George Cubiss, Ramblers Association (GC)
Laurence Hilland, Community Rail Officer (LH)
Chris Cutts, Northern Rail (CC)
Pauline Preston, Kirksanton, (PP)
Lorraine Wilson, South Copeland Tourism Group (LW)
Paul Pearson, CCC (notes) (PTP)

Jenny Wain, DEP Secretariat (JLW)
Rosie Baynes, Natural England (RB)
Bob Mandale (BM)
Janette Jenkinson, SLDC (JJ)
Brian Wright, Millom without PC (BW)
Val Garnett, Millom without PC (VG)
Sue Brown, CCC (SB)
Bob Falconer, NFU (BF)
Maggie Cumming, Kirksanton (MC)

1. Introductions and Apologies.

The Chairman welcomed Members and guests to the meeting. Apologies were received from Christopher Sparrow, Graham Ford-Keyte, Ray Cole and Derek Lyon.

2. Minutes of Meeting 10 March 2009.

Agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising

Website – Meeting had been arranged but cancelled due to other commitments. The format of website is generally OK but the information needs updating. If anyone has information and items to go on the website if they could email them to either Paul (paul.pearson@cumbriacc.gov.uk) or Jenny (jenny.wain@cumbriacc.gov.uk) for inclusion as appropriate. Links to other information i.e. on Regional Park, Coastal Access etc will be made and diary dates for future Partnership meetings and the corresponding minutes added.

4. Presentation – Cumbria Coastal Rail Partnership – Laurence Hilland

There are 60 Community Rail Partnerships in England. The Cumbria Partnership was set-up in 2008 and covers the line between Carlisle to Barrow. A Barrow – Lancaster partnership will be set up soon too. In 2008, there was an increase of 17% of passengers, with over 1 million people using the line. The Partnership brings together local and county authorities, train operators, freight companies, rail users and stakeholders to develop and improve the line.

The rail partnership is looking to develop the rail infrastructure to help support new industries, improve rolling stock and stations, providing real time train timetabling and customer help points, improving connectivity to main line services and building the Cumbrian Coast as a tourist destination.

This year's aim is to showcase the area for its breathtaking beauty, views, scenery and picturesque chocolate box stations. The partnership is looking to theme the stations to reflect the cultural and historic influences. They are planning a Roman theme for Maryport station, Dalston as an old-fashioned 'brief encounter' style station. Millom, as the best used station per head of population in the county, is to have CCTV installed to reduce anti-social behaviour and there are advanced negotiations to use the Folk Museum to run the ticket office service for the station. They are updating the station at Askam into a multi-functional station during the day with new facilities and by night the waiting room and buffet area to be used for the youth of the area as a community café. In September, the partnership is launching its magazine "Cumbrian Coaster" which will publicise the activities of the partnership for the coming twelve months.

After the presentation, questions were asked from the floor:

Sunday service – Not financially viable as the service wouldn't break even. There are 17 signal boxes along the line, which would need staffing by 34 employees. They would need to be a big

increase in passengers for it to become viable, particularly as at present the fares here are the lowest in the country.

Timetable - The last train from Carlisle to Barrow is 5:30pm and the rail Partnership is aware of the gaps in the timetable and will be working harder with Network Rail to address these issues. The need for better connections with main line trains is recognised if the coast is being promoted as a tourist destination.

Foxfield Viaduct – Needs to be improved. Would like better walking and cycling links to promote sustainable transport for all along the coast. Fencing posts along the railway need reinforcing and there is some coastal erosion/undercutting around that part of the estuary. RB is talking to Network Rail on this matter.

Car Parking - Big issue at Foxfield and Kirkby stations. JC has spoken with landowners adjacent to Foxfield who are prepared to allow area for parking and the Parish Council would maintain the area. At Kirkby, there is an area of land that if cleared of the trees/shrubs would provide a further 4-5 parking places. The Rail Partnership is pushing for increased parking concessions at the stations and Chris Cutts will look into these possibilities with Network rail.

Disabled Access – Concerns were voiced in regard to accessibility of disabled scooters on stations and trains. Railways don't have to be compliant with DDA until 2036. However, without significant investment to the station infrastructure and a new fleet of trains there is unlikely any improvement to be made to the line. On all stations there are ramps to allow easier access and egress from the trains and dedicated space available for wheelchairs and scooters.

Presentation – Cumbria Nuclear New Build - Kirkstanton

Maggie Cumming and Pauline Preston from Kirkstanton Community addressed the meeting with regard to the proposal to site a new nuclear plant in Kirkstanton. This was submitted by RWE to Government earlier this year. Kirkstanton, along with sites at St Bees and Sellafield have been identified as possible locations for new nuclear build in Cumbria. Government will identify potential sites it would like to take forward in a National Energy Policy Statement later this year. The promotion of the Kirkstanton site to Government was a complete surprise to the local community. It also appears as an anomaly as it is the only greenfield site on the list. If chosen the Kirkstanton Community Group consider that it would destroy the local community and have a serious impact on tourism and the environment.

If this site was supported by Government, a power station would take about 6-years to build. Access could be from the sea, with ramps being developed through a 300-metre corridor between the Ramsar and the National Park boundary. It is likely that RWE will bring their own expertise to build the power station, but it is expected that they will require 500+ associated trades personnel to start-up the build which could bring about economic benefits to Millom. However, representatives from District and County councils on the Duddon Partnership expressed their views that Sellafield is the preferred site in Cumbria for any new build.

The committee officially invited the Kirkstanton Community group to join the partnership and they accepted. The Partnership will set up a working group once the Government's statement is announced later this year. Findings will be brought to the executive committee for agreement in due course. It may be necessary for a special executive meeting to be held in October prior to the AGM in November, but this will be dependent on the Government consultation timetable.

5. Standing items

(a) Budget

Spends to date are £180 on website hosting and £22 on room hire for working group and consultative committee meetings. Balance stands at £5516.

(b) The Bay - Regional Park or Morecambe Bay and Duddon

Further funding from NWDA has been approved to continue feasibility study. The steering group is taking forward the scoping work and governance arrangements.

(c) Shellfisheries/Environment Agency update

No representatives from the Fisheries or Environment agency were at the meeting to update the committee. Alien species (Mitten crabs) have been found in the Duddon and on the estuary. This crab feeds on our native crabs. Staff at Natural England are aware of the situation but are helpless as there is nothing effective to eradicate them. The spartina grass is taking hold on some of the intertidal areas of the estuary.

(d) Nature Conservation Issues – Millom Ironworks Nature Reserve

BC gave an update on the implementation of the 10-year Management Plan devised in conjunction with Cumbria County Council. The nature reserve group has submitted a funding application to Community Spaces for £50k. If successful the grant will be used to improve accessibility at the site for all. Seats and dog bins, made from recycled plastic, have been installed on site and during the summer. Wildlife surveys are being undertaken by the group with a report of the surveys' findings written by the autumn. Due to the hot weather, the ponds on the reserve dried up, so the natterjack toads may not have done well with breeding. Up to four pairs of breeding skylarks have been seen and there is an abundance of Bee and Marsh Orchids and Yellow-wort on the reserve. Quad bikes and motorcycles have become less of a problem at the reserve.

(e) Marine and Coastal Policy

Coastal Change Consultation

Partnership not making a response.

Shoreline Management Plan Consultation

EA is leading on the shoreline review. Stage II of the consultation is complete. Pre-consultation stage III – preferred options later in the autumn. Partnership isn't currently an active stakeholder in this consultation.

Coastal Access Progress – Concern raised with the new signage displayed on public signposts, the signs are only small but an improvement, however some are ambiguous and directing people to dangerous places. The Rambler's Association are in dialogue with Andrew Coleman about the issue and the requirement under Section 28 of the Highways Act. Those around the Duddon are inadequate.

(f) Unauthorised commercial activities

Fishing boats have been sighted between Haverigg Point and Walney Island. There is uncertainty as to whether or not they are fishing illegally. There are concerns that they have also been unauthorised sea angling across the estuary. These issues will be reported to EA. There has been illegal fly tipping in the River Duddon. The telephone number for EA was passed to Brian Wright so he could inform them and voice his concerns.

(g) Rail Liaison

Included with the discussion on the Cumbria Coastal Rail Partnership.

(h) Low carbon and renewable energy

A scoping opinion and EIA has been submitted by Copeland for an application for 6 wind turbines at Whicham hill.

6. AOB

The group was made aware that Brendan Cunningham, a retired member of the Partnership, was in Lancaster Royal Hospital with serious heart problems. The Partnership sent him their best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

Flyers were available promoting Barrow Walking Festival, which includes several walks passing through the Duddon and open to all.

7. Date of next meeting:

Thursday 12 November 2009 Venue to be confirmed.