

Lazonby Neighbourhood Plan



22nd August 2017

Lazonby Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
c/o Clerk to the Lazonby Parish Council



Dear Sir

Lazonby Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-Submission Draft 29/06/17)

I write in response to the draft indicated above, with particular reference to the proposed new footpaths and potential resurrection of historic footpaths in connection with Lazonby Estate. I wish to object to the proposed new footpaths and the resurrection of historic pathways as indicated particularly in the documents labelled Figure 7 and Figure 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft 29/06/17. I have over 35 years experience of living and working in rural environments throughout England and Scotland as a Farm Manager, Agricultural Consultant and Lecturer. Much of my working life has been spent on large rural estates with diverse farming, forestry and sporting interests and I farm and keep livestock myself.

I have lived and worked in the Eden Valley for over 14 years, five of those years were spent working and living on Lazonby Estate as their Farms and Estate Manager and as such I feel that I am very well placed to comment on the draft proposals. In addition I am very familiar with the two existing footpaths that cross Estate land, being the one from Garthfolds Farm to Bank Top and the one from Fiddlers Lane to Eden Bridge. I note also that, for some inexplicable reason, the footpath sign at Fiddlers Lane has been tampered with recently. Both of these footpaths are used by a variety of individuals, mainly for exercising their dogs. In the five years that I worked and lived on the Estate the number of users of the two existing footpaths remained largely static, despite the considerable increase in the population as the result of new residential development within the village and the surrounding area.

The draft proposals for new footpaths and potential resurrection of historic pathways raises a number of serious issues and concerns, as follows, all of which are interlinked. I am a regular user of the footpaths in the vicinity of my village and appreciate the freedom this gives me when walking in the area but in no way diminishes my concerns:

1. Health and Safety
2. Farming, Forestry and Sporting Enterprises
3. Impact on the SSSI and SAC designation of the River Eden and the adjacent area.

The proposed additional footpaths and the historic pathways cross existing farmland that carries valuable breeding livestock throughout the year and at lambing time, in particular, very young animals and their mothers which are sensitive to disturbance and the health and safety of these animals is paramount. The potential to have a footpath crossing the Settle to Carlisle railway track over a bridge with a very low parapet raises concerns over public Health and Safety and the fact that the bridge in question is actually owned by Network Rail poses further questions as to whether they have been consulted on these draft proposals. All

of the land that the draft proposals cover is involved in some way with farming, forestry and sporting interests. These are all valuable activities on the Estate and surrounding area bringing welcome revenue into the local and regional economy and any additional access into certain areas of the Estate would undoubtedly impact on the day to day operations of these valuable and well established enterprises, ultimately affecting revenue.

The River Eden, as I am sure you are aware is designated a SSSI and a SAC and a substantial area of the Estate is given over to managing this valuable regional asset. Farming, Forestry and Sporting activities are highly regulated in this managed habitat and native breed cattle are allowed to roam freely within a large part of this area on the Estate acting as conservation graziers. Rare ferns, mosses, lichens and liverworts are present in these special conservation areas as well as veteran trees and other rare habitats. Any disturbance from walkers, possibly with dogs, is likely to have a highly negative impact on these special areas as well as posing concerns about Health and Safety risks from allowing members of the public to mix with native breed cattle.

In summing up and with reference to all of the concerns listed above one thing that was of particular interest to me when I lived at Garthfolds and where I had the opportunity on a daily basis to interact with the people who used the footpath through the farm was that whenever I had livestock in the fields that were crossed by the footpath many of these people voluntarily chose not to use the footpath and preferred to use the extensive network of local roads to exercise themselves and their dogs. This was predominantly out of a concern for potentially disturbing the livestock rather than out of a fear of those livestock or for themselves or their pets. This was greatly appreciated by myself and further fostered good relations in the neighbourhood.

Yours faithfully



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