

(MEETING HELD AT HORNCASTLE COLLEGE)

**PRESENT: Chris Padley (Chairman)**

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillor Eran Bauer.

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council: Councillor Iain Colquhoun.

Representing Independent Members: Dr Chris Allison, Sheila Brookes, Mary Finch, Ray Shipley, Peter Skipworth and Irene Unsworth.

Officers: Lincolnshire County Council – Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Chris Miller (Principal Countryside Access Officer) and Andrew Savage (Senior Countryside Access Officer).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Denis Hoyes MBE, Alison Healey and Anne Welburn.

44. MR COLIN SMITH – NEW MEMBER

The Chairman, on behalf of the Forum, welcomed Colin Smith, from the Ramblers, as a new member on the Forum. He stated that Colin had formally been a member of the South Lincs Access Forum but since taking over as the Ramblers' Area Footpath Officer, Lincs North, it was more appropriate that he was a member of the Forum.

45. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of previous meetings of the Forum held on 18 January and 8 February 2011, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to an email received from Alison Healey raising three issues as follows:-

1. The number of meetings of the Forum should be reduced from four to three a year because with the increased use of electronic communication there was not the need to meet as frequently.
2. Requested that one of the meetings of the Forum should focus on a site visit.
3. Reported progress in taking forward the Discovering Lost Ways project.

The Forum agreed that the current pattern of four meetings a year should be maintained; welcomed the opportunity to have a site visit and in this respect Chris

Miller agreed to speak to Kate Percival, Project Team Leader for the Coastal Country Park on the east coast, about the Forum visiting the Park at its next meeting

and welcomed the developments in connection with Alison Healey taking forward the Discovering Lost Ways project. NOTED.

47. WORKFORCE CHANGE PROPOSALS (minute 40, Mid Lincs Access Forum, 8 February 2011)

Chris Miller presented a report on the proposals for workforce change within the Rights of Way and Countryside Access Service following initial comments received on the proposals during the consultation period.

He stated that the revised proposals detailed in Appendix B needed to be amended to show five full time equivalents, not six, Definitive Map Officers. Of the 25.5 posts which existed before the restructure these had now been reduced to sixteen posts.

Chris Miller in response to enquiries from the Forum stated that he would provide details of the financial savings from the restructure; stated that those personnel who had been unsuccessful were able to apply for other posts in the Communities Directorate; stated that as a result of the new structure future service provision would need to be examined; stated the need to continually improve the service and the use of volunteers but accepted that there was the need to avoid duplication with the work of officers.

The Chairman stated that lessons could be learnt from the work of volunteers on Alison Healey's Discovering Lost Ways working group.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments be noted.

48. EAST MIDLAND'S LAFS CHAIR'S MEETING

The Chairman reported on the outcome of the East Midlands LAFs Chair's meeting on 17 March. Matters discussed at the meeting included, amongst others, consideration of the future of the English Access Forum; the positive view by the government of LAFs which met its own ideas of the "Big Society" concept and the importance of LAF annual reports and the seeking of the views on LAFs role in the future review of the Forestry Commission.

It was agreed that the Forum needed to consider the implications of the Localism Bill in the future.

The Forum raised the issue of access problems at the new Country Park on the east coast. Chris Miller agreed that this was an issue and that he was working in consultation with Kate Percival, Project Leader for the Country Park, on access matters, including repairs to four key bridges which would considerably open up the footpath network and consultations were also ongoing with local landowners about

improvements to footpaths. The benefits to tourism of opening footpaths was highlighted. Chris Miller reassured the Forum that money to finance the refurbishment of bridges at the Country Park would not be diverted from other areas where bridge refurbishment was required.

Chris Miller stated that he would inform Kate Percival about Peter Skipworth's suggestion to provide volunteers to help clear footpaths in the Country Park.

RESOLVED

That the report and actions be noted.

49. MOD LAND AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The Chairman presented a paper about concerns expressed at the East Midlands LAFs Chair's meeting about when MoD land was released for sale it was often land once subjected to rights of way closure for military or security reasons which no longer applied. He stated that in most cases the paths were closed permanently and there was currently no legal mechanism to restore them.

Following a discussion about various MoD sites in the county, the legal position and proposed action it was –

RESOLVED

That Chris Miller speak to the MoD Terrier about current land and property holdings owned by the MoD and potential sale of such land in the future.

50. LAF ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman stated that Defra was taking a greater interest in LAF annual reports and therefore there was a need for the Forum to have more input in the production of the annual report. NOTED

51. "BARRIER BUSTING" WEBSITE

The Chairman drew the Forum's attention to the government's launch of a "Barrier Busters" website at <http://barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk/form>.

The barriers the government had in mind were bureaucratic ones. The Chairman suggested that members might like to visit the web site and see if they thought there were any barriers of this kind in the Forum's work that could be addressed. NOTED

52. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DCLG) CONSULTATION – REVIEW OF STATUTORY DUTIES PLACED ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Chairman stated that the DCLG was carrying out a review of statutory duties and details of the website were:-

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/reviewstatutoryduties/>.

The Chairman suggested that the Forum should view the website to indicate support for those duties considered important to retain. NOTED.

53. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007-2012 UPDATE

The Forum received reports from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council outlining progress made in the implementation of the Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012.

Officers stated that there could be access problems to Willingham Woods, Market Rasen, because of substantial reduction in finance to the Forestry Commission. In response to an enquiry from the Forum Stewardship areas would shortly be shown on the access maps.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

54. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

The Forum received reports from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council on progress of Definitive Map Modification Orders October 2006 to 23 March 2011.

Councillor I Colquhoun stated that there had been some issues about the status of a route running through port land which was no longer operational and while local people supported the route it was very likely that the landowner would appeal against any decision to add the route to the Definitive Map. The Forum noted that this was a difficult and complex case and Chris Miller agreed to email details from the "Bridleways" book to Nicola Hardy to assist her with the case.

The Forum expressed concern about those cases where an order had been made but had not been submitted to the Secretary of State. It was noted that there were four cases which existed in South Willingham which were currently being progressed. The Forum requested the need to monitor these cases.

While noting the current system of dealing with orders in date order, the Chairman stated that new orders made should be given priority and requested the need for the Forum to examine, again, how orders were prioritised.

Officers stated that the current procedures for dealing with orders made and not submitted to the Secretary of State would be maintained in the meantime with officers giving further consideration to the issue.

RESOLVED

That the reports and proposed actions be noted.

55. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS

The Forum received reports from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council on the progress of Public Path Orders.

Officers responded to comments made by the Forum in connection with the likely final decision of the Inspector in connection with Horncastle/Roughton which was not expected at this time; that a report in connection with adding a footpath to the Definitive Map at the former Harmston Hospital site was awaited but there was a need to ensure value for money before any order was made; responded to issues in connection with issues raised by Mary Finch about footpaths in Louth and North Somercotes, in the case of the latter the erection of barriers to prevent anti-social behaviour would cause additional problems and John Tinsdale, East Lindsey District Council, had been informed and asked Colin Smith to let officers have the details of the open access land problems issue raised to investigate.

The Chairman suggested the need to advise the public that if they were challenged on open access land or stewardship land they were to get the name and address details of the person preventing them from accessing the land.

RESOLVED

That the reports and actions be noted.

56. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

**2.00pm** on Tuesday 19 July 2011 at Anderby Creek Village Hall. **(N.B. Please note that the time of the meeting had changed from that agreed at the meeting)**. The meeting would comprise a site visit at 2.00pm to the new country park on the east coast followed by the meeting proper at 4.00pm at Anderby Village Hall.

2.00pm on Tuesday 11 October at Caistor Heritage Centre.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm