

Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forums Joint Annual Report 2010 /11



Chairmen's Introduction

Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum

Advisory committees to local authorities, in reality, can have only a very small effect, so there is always a danger in giving an annual report that we will exaggerate what difference we can make and disappoint with the reality. With that important proviso, I feel the Mid Lincs. LAF has made a difference during the last year. We have built upon our good relationship with our two principal authorities, Lincolnshire County, and North East Lincolnshire, and are listened to by them. We can see small but practical changes that stem from our input. For the future, the current government's ideas on localism and grass roots input to the way things are run, if sincere, fit well with the role of LAFs, for our members come from the grass roots and receive no fee. We know that LAFs are viewed positively by government, but this gives us greater responsibility to use what influence we have well.

As we all know, a national financial crisis has imposed spending cuts on all local government expenditure. With many backlogs already in this area of local authority work, this is going to create many frustrations for us and the councils. We must concentrate on the positive. The growing value, for health, happiness, and economic tourism, of rights of way is now widely accepted; the public tends to notice this value most when access is under threat. Furthermore, even a reduction in a budget can be given a silver lining. An optimist will see the need for cuts, not as a destructive hacking down, but an opportunity for scientific pruning that will ultimately create a healthier tree, one that is ready to grow strongly and produce better fruit when conditions improve. In short we must take a long term view and not reduce our efforts.

Christopher Padley

Chair

Mid Lincolnshire

Local (Countryside) Access Forum

South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum

The Forum has had a most successful year in consolidating progress on a number of issues, with efforts being concentrated upon the likely impact of the Coalitions proposals to sell off much of the Public Forest estate. Our response was vigorous and posed a number of concerns regarding continued access for ramblers and horseriders and members were relieved when government, faced with considerable opposition from across the country, decided to shelve its proposals; however we will continue to be vigilant in the event of the forestry proposals being resurrected.

The issue of rights of way across MOD land, highlighted by the closure of both Cottesmore and Wittering air bases will be addressed, and contact has been made with the Defence Estates department seeking firm assurances that future public access will be protected and previous rights of way restored.

Natural England's funding cuts will undoubtedly have an adverse impact upon their future support to LAFs across the region, although we are delighted to learn that our regional co-ordinators position has been renewed for a further year.

Positive contact with the Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries has been made, and we are being consulted upon proposals to strengthen positive contact between LAF s and DEFRA to determine ways of joint working on matters of common interest.

Considerable progress has been made with Definitive Map Orders and we will continue to monitor progress on reducing the backlog during the coming year, similarly with Public Path Orders.

I would again like to sincerely thank colleagues for their considerable contribution to the teams work during the past year.

Brian Montgomery

Chair

South Lincolnshire and Rutland
Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Role and Purpose of Local Access Forums

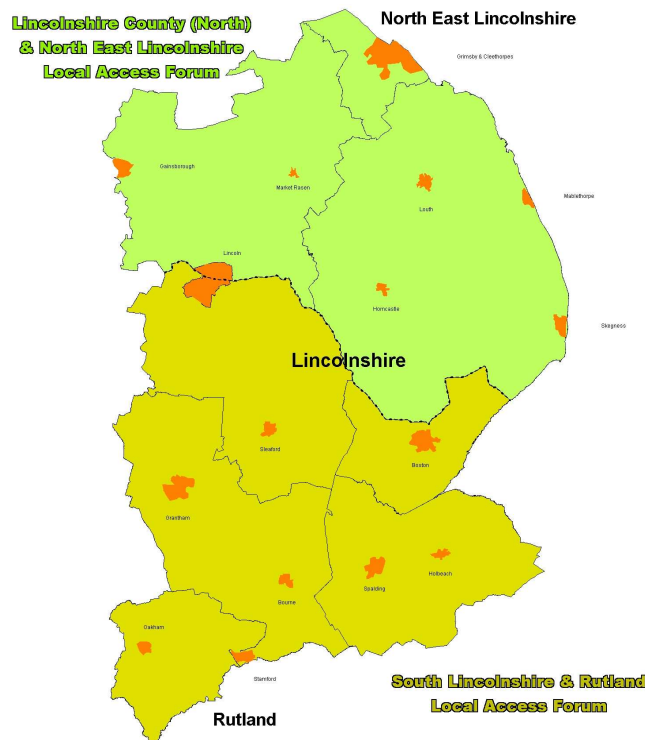
Local Access Forums (LAFs) are statutory bodies established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Two LAFs were established in 2003, covering Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and Rutland. The Mid Lincolnshire LAF (Mid Lincs Forum) is a joint forum between Lincolnshire County Council and North East Lincolnshire Council. The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF (South Lincs Forum) is a joint forum between Lincolnshire County Council and Rutland County Council.

Lincolnshire County Council provides a secretariat service to both Local Access Forums.

Local Access Forums provide independent advice to the local authorities and other relevant bodies on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.

The Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forums provide advice on three main areas:

- the development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people;
- improving the rights of way network; and
- the implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside.



Membership of Local Access Forums

Each LAF consists of up to 18 members representing a wide range of interests, including rights of way users, land managers and farmers, rural business, health, heritage, nature conservation, tourism, transport, disability groups and minority groups.

Members are appointed for up to three years and the appointing authority is required to maintain a balance of interests on each forum.

A list of members and their areas of interest is shown in the membership section of the Annual Report.

Changes in membership and appointments

-Mid Lincs Forum

The forum was saddened to hear of the death of Jean Tapper in January. Jean represented the interests of disabled people on a number of groups in the County.

-South Lincs Forum

Colin Smith transferred to the Mid Lincs Forum in March.

-Chair appointments

Chris Padley was re-elected as Chair of the Mid Lincs Forum and Brian Montgomery was re-elected as Chair of the South Lincs Forum at the July Annual General Meetings.

Review of meetings and discussions of the past year

Meeting Details

Both forums held 4 full meetings during the reporting period and also held special meetings in February to discuss the proposed reduction to the LCC public rights of way budget and the proposed sale of Forestry Commission land.

During 2010/11 meetings have been held at the following venues:

Mid Lincs LAF	South Lincs and Rutland LAF
13 April 2010 – Horncastle	14 April 2010 - Sleaford
6 July 2010 – Cleethorpes	7 July 2010 – Stamford
12 October 2010 – Market Rasen	13 October 2010 - Boston
18 January 2011 – Lincoln	19 January 2011 – Sleaford
8 February 2011 – Lincoln, Special meeting	9 February 2011 – Sleaford, Special meeting

The average attendance rate for the Mid Lincs LAF during the reporting period was 65% and the South Lincs and Rutland LAF was 57%.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe local access forum meetings and members of the public and other interested parties who would like to raise items for consideration by the forums may do so by contacting the Secretary.

Agendas and minutes can be viewed on Lincolnshire County Council's website by searching the Committee Records System at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/laf

Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP)

Lincolnshire County Council

Both forums have continued to receive regular updates on the implementation of the Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan. ROWIP implementation works have again been targeted towards improving the current public rights of way network and countryside access promotion.

A degree of uncertainty has existed during the reporting period of how the spending cuts will affect ROWIP implementation. So far, a number of projects have been scaled back and in some cases stopped altogether i.e. Quiet Lanes project.

The Mid Lincs LAF also held a discussion on the potential for making more use of volunteers to support the implementation of the ROWIP. In particular, the forum discussed the possibility of piloting a local 'discovering lost ways' type project in the Spilsby area. It is hoped that further progress will be made on this project in the coming financial year.

North East Lincolnshire Council

The Mid Lincs LAF has received regular updates on the implementation of the NE Lincolnshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Councillor Colquhoun notified the forum that the implementation of the ROWIP has now been transferred to the Balfour Beatty Partnership.

Rutland County Council

Stuart Crook, public rights of way officer, Rutland County CC, has provided regular progress reports on the implementation of the Rutland County Council ROWIP.

Notable developments during the reporting period have included the improvement of a bridleway at Sounding Bridge, improved access to Rutland Water and upgrading and improving a route at Wardley.

Budgets and Future Service Delivery

Lincolnshire County Council

Chris Miller, Principal Rights of Way and Access Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, gave a report on budgets and future service delivery to the January meetings. The reduced budget for Highways and Planning had been set by the county council in January and the report set out the reductions in staffing and work priorities proposed by the department. It was accepted that government spending cuts meant that a reduction in the budget was inevitable and right of way work would have to take its share of these.

Proposed staffing cuts and other changes were discussed in more detail at an extra meeting in February. These included a reduction of operational budget of 45% including a 60% fall in materials procurement and routine path mowing and clearance. There was to be a reduction of 9.5 equivalent full time posts. The forums' discussion centred on the balance of senior and junior jobs to be cut, through changes to working methods, and what potential there was for the council to accept help from volunteers along the government's "big society" concept. The Mid Lincs forum reported back to the council. The council later implemented an amended set of changes which took into account this feedback and that from user groups and staff.

North East Lincolnshire Council

The Mid Lincs Forum was informed that there will be no cuts in the public rights of way service in 2011/12. This is attributed to a flagship partnership between North East Lincolnshire Council and Balfour Beatty tasked with the delivery of all services within the Highways & Transport division, including Public Rights of Way, in a more efficient manner.

Rutland County Council

The structure of the rights of way section and the number of staff employed in Rutland remains the same despite the reduced levels of funding for local authorities. Budgets for 2011/12 are slightly reduced overall when compared with 2010/11.

The general maintenance budget has been reduced from £103,000 to £98,000. The contribution to rights of way projects from the Integrated Transport Capital programme has been reduced from £25,000 to £10,000, whilst the Local Access Forum budget has seen a slight increase from £24,700 to £25,200.

Service delivery should be unaffected therefore, although at this point in time there is no indication as to whether this position may change beyond 2011/12.

Lincolnshire CC Highways and Traffic Liaison Meeting

Chris Padley, Mid Lincs LAF Chair, attended a liaison meeting on 26 October 2010 with Mr. Paul Coathup, Assistant Director, Highways & Traffic to discuss future budgets and service delivery, partnership working and to follow up issues raised at the previous liaison meeting.

Chris Padley, reported back to the January LAF meeting that "he felt that very good progress had been made at the meeting despite extreme uncertainty over funding".

Presentations

The forums have received two presentations during the reporting period-

Mid Lincs Forum

-Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park – Kate Percival, Natural Environment Team, Lincolnshire CC

South Lincs and Rutland Forum

Access on Environment Agency Land – Nigel Tomlinson, Principal Officer, Regional Strategy, Environment Agency

Other Topics Discussed

- The management of Sewstern Lane/ the Drift
- Coastal Access
- The Public Forest Estate
- Bulls and Public Access
- The Planning system and LAFs
- Higher Level Stewardship Access

Sub Groups

Both forums have a number of sub groups focussing on a variety of projects. The sub groups are:

- Disability and Social Exclusion
- Coastal Access
- Lincoln Eastern Bypass
- Policy Development and Consultation response group
- Promotion and Publicity
- ROWIP Implementation
- Equestrian
- Forest and Woodland Access

Forum Expenditure

Mid Lincs Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200.00
Member expenses	£ 424.70
Sub Total	£1,624.70

South Lincs and Rutland Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200.00
Member expenses	£ 629.45
Sub Total	£1,829.45

Total	£3,454.15
--------------	------------------

Membership

Mid Lincolnshire Local (Countryside) Access Forum		
Name	Area of Interest	End Date of Appointment
Sheila Brookes	Carriage driving	July 2012
Councillor IB Colquhoun	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Mary Finch	Carriage driving/ Access for people with disabilities	July 2011
Alison Healey	Land Management/ Horse riding/ Health	July 2012
Christopher Padley	Walking/ Cycling	July 2011
Raymond Shipley	Conservation/ Game keeping	July 2011
Peter Skipworth	Walking, Conservation, Tourism	July 2011
Jean Tapper (1)	Disabled Access	
Irene Unsworth	Farming/ Rural Business	July 2011
Anne Welburn	Parish Councillor	July 2011
Mark Wood	Motorised access	July 2012
Dr. Christopher Allison	Walking	July 2012
Colin Smith (2)	Walking, Health Walking	July 2012
Councillor E. N. Bauer	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. C. Hoyes	Local Authority Representative	n/a

(1) Deceased – Jean Tapper died March 2010

(2) Colin Smith transferred from the South Lincs forum March 2011

South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forum		
Name	Area of Interest	End Date of Appointment
Bryan Bowles	Farming / Land management	July 2012
Michael Brearley	Farming / Land management	July 2011
William Cross	Land management	July 2011
Rosemary Harris	Landowner/ Local History	July 2013
Alec Hill	Recreational Motoring	July 2013
George Keeping	Walking / Cycling / Outdoor pursuits	July 2013
Brian Montgomery	Rural Business/ Tourism	July 2013
Audrey Morley	Farming / Horseriding	July 2012
Gordon Norris	Walking / Access for people with disabilities	July 2012
Colin Smith (1)	Walking / Health walks	July 2012

John Williams	Walking	July 2012
Vera Woolmer	Regeneration	July 2011
Ian Cox	Countryside Management	July 2012
Graham Law	Walking	July 2012
Councillor Peter Golden	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. Brailsford	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor R. Wootten	Local Authority Representative	n/a

(1) Colin Smith transferred to the Mid Lincs forum March 2011

Contacts

Secretary

Steve Blagg
 Democratic Services Officer
 Lincolnshire County Council
 County Offices
 Lincoln
 LN1 1YQ
 01522 552109
 E-mail: steve.blagg@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Mid Lincolnshire Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Advisors

Andy Savage
 Senior Countryside Access Officer
 Lincolnshire County Council
 Communities
 City Hall
 Lincoln
 LN1 1DN
 01522 782070
 Email: countryside_access@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Nicola Hardy
 Public Rights of Way
 Mapping Officer
 North East Lincs Council
 Highways and Transport
 Origin One
 1 Origin Way
 Genesis Way
 Europarc
 Grimsby
 DN37 9TZ
 01472 324726
 Email: nicola.hardy@nelincs.gov.uk

South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Advisors

Andy Savage
Senior Countryside Access Officer
Lincolnshire County Council
Communities
City Hall
Lincoln
LN1 1DN
01522 782070
Email: countryside_access@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Stuart Crook
Rights of Way Officer
Rutland County Council
Highways Department
28-34 Station Approach
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6QW
01572 772388
Email: scrook@rutland.gov.uk

Further information about the work of the Local Access Forums is available at
www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside