

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills - Executive Director-Communities

Report to: **Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and
Rutland Local Access Forums**
Date: **6 July 2011/ 19 July 2011**
Subject: **Access Development Team – Future Priorities**

Summary:

A report outlining the future workload priorities of the Access Development Team

Recommendation(s):

- i) That the forum notes the contents of the report.

1. Background

Following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review it has become clear that there will be a reduction of more than a quarter in the amount of Government grant allocated to local authorities in England over the next four years.

On 13th December 2010 the Government announced that the main general revenue grant funding for Lincolnshire County Council next year will be reduced by £26.7 m. A further reduction of £16.1m will be implemented in the following year. The reduction equates to 18% over the two years.

As a political body the County Council, must decide what it does that it can cease to do, scale down, or look for others to take on.

Workforce change proposals for the rights of way & countryside access service have now been finalised and it is clear that the service must evaluate its work as in the preceding paragraph.

Discussion

New Structure

Following comments received regarding the original proposals The County Council is implementing changes to the public rights of way structure. In relation to the Access Development Team a number of amendments have been made. The Countryside Access Officer post has been disestablished and the Assistant Definitive Map Officer and Assistant Countryside Access Officer roles have been merged to create a new post title of Assistant Rights of Way Officer. This will ensure that there is adequate support to all areas of the section rather than just in Definitive Map work. The Access Development Team will also now include the Definitive Map Officer responsible for public path orders (PPO). It is envisaged

that this will provide improved links between PPO work and ROWIP implementation.

Community involvement

Efforts will be made in the coming months to increase the level of public participation in the management of Lincolnshire's public rights of way network. A number of options are currently under consideration including the provision of an adopt-a-path scheme, developing the existing Parish Paths Partnership scheme and utilising community groups to undertake practical improvement and maintenance tasks. Community Involvement work will be aimed at members of the public, parish councils and user and community groups.

'Ease of Use' surveys will continue to be project managed by the Access Development Team, however, consideration is being given to future surveys being partially conducted by volunteers. User groups have already been approached to assist in field survey work.

ROWIP2

The implementation of the first Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan is now in its final year. Preparation has now commenced on ROWIP 2 with a view to the final document being published in spring 2012.

Unfortunately the recent reduction in staffing and financial resources prevents a full round of community engagement from being undertaken. However, the County Council are confident that the engagement undertaken for the previous ROWIP still provides a sound basis for determining priorities in ROW work.

staffing or financial resources to undertake a full round community engagement . Lincolnshire County Council are confident that the research undertaken for the current ROWIP still provides a sound basis for determining priorities in public rights of way work.

Given the current financial constraints it is considered unrealistic to attempt to implement a programme of improvement works across the entire rights of way network in the county. ROWIP 2 will therefore focus on the aims and objectives of other projects and green infrastructure strategies such as the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park and the Witham Country Park. Aligning ROWIP 2 to other plans and strategies will increase the opportunities of obtaining external funding, enable the concentration of greater resources on a defined area and take advantage of more efficient partnership working.

3. Consultation

a) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

b) Executive Councillor Comments

n/a

c) Local Member Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

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