

(Meeting held at Caistor Heritage Centre)

**Christopher 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, Chris Padley, Ray Shipley, Peter Skipworth, Colin Smith and Irene Unsworth

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

Also in attendance:- Councillor A H Turner MBE, JP (Executive Support Councillor for Waste and Green Issues)

Apologies for absence: Ron Flintham and Alison Healey

18. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Sheila Brookes be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the next municipal year.

19. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 19 July 2011, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. FORWARD WORK PROPOSALS 2011 ONWARD (minute 14, Mid Lincs Local Access Forum, 19 July 2011)

Peter Skipworth stated that the Sub Group had met to discuss the new proposals for prioritising Lincolnshire's Rights of Way and issues discussed had been the effects of the reduction in funding; maintaining annual checks; community involvement in adopting footpaths; involvement of charities to help with funding; the complicated nature of the proposed priority system and promotion of walks.

Peter Skipworth stated that Claire Boulding was due to make a presentation in the Lincolnshire Wolds on BBC Radio 4 programme at 3.00pm on 20 October 2011.  
NOTED.

21. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(a) Short Gaps in the Network

The Chairman raised the issue of short gaps in the Definitive Map route of paths which either now, or had the potential to, block a path and gave examples. He stated that this matter had been discussed at the East Midlands Local Access Forums Regional Chairs and thought that there was a need to lobby at a regional level to solve this problem. Another solution would be to ask a landowner to provide an alternative route. The Chairman stated that there was a need to address the easy ones first giving Partney as an example.

The Chairman stated that one of the consensuses that had come out of LAF Chairs' meetings since their inception was that users expected RoWIPs to be more inclined towards providing specific concrete improvements to the network, such as by providing additional links and closing gaps in the network such as these, and less general and aspirational in their targets.

The Chairman was of the view that there was a need to examine those areas where a simple solution was possible.

Chris Miller stated that his section had records of where gaps existed. NOTED.

(b) Village Green Registration – Proposed Changes to which new, or at least unregistered, Village Greens are registered and applications for registration made

The Chairman stated that he understood that there were proposed changes to the way in which new, or at least unregistered, Village Greens were registered and applications for registration made and that there was substantial fee.

The Forum requested that Dave Clark, who dealt with Village Greens, be asked to prepare a report on this matter for the next meeting of the Forum. NOTED.

(c) “Huddle” – Internet networking site on which Natural England is creating a LAF network

The Chairman reported on the imminent launch of “Huddle” which was an internet networking site on which Natural England was creating a LAF network, which was intended to improve communication within and between Natural England and Defra. It was hoped it would allow Natural England to get a feel for the views of LAFs, although where they choose to, LAFs would be able to exclude Natural England from their own internal conversations.

Chris Miller stated that Elizabeth Barker from Natural England would attend a LAF meeting and agreed that the “Huddle” would allow advice and information to be shared. NOTED.

(d) National Planning Policy Framework – Consultation by the Government – Response of the Forum

The Chairman reported that the National Planning Policy Framework was a key part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible and to promote sustainable growth. The Government was keen to hear views from all interested parties on the draft Framework and how it might be improved. (see

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planninpolicyframework/>)

It was noted that the Ramblers had responded to the consultation in connection with access to public footpaths.

The Chairman stated that he hoped that individuals would lobby the Government but was unsure about what action LAFs could take. NOTED.

22. MOD LAND AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Councillor Eran Bauer updated the Forum on developments in connection with Public Rights of Way on the former RAF site at Fulbeck. He produced paperwork which had been issued by the MoD to interested tenderers for the site. Included in the paperwork was a letter from the County Council's Countryside Access Section making reference to the old network of footpaths that used to run across the airfield and that the County Council was seeking their reinstatement, or if not possible, then a suggested alternative route.

Comments made by the Forum included the difficulty of locating records of previous ownership prior to the routes being stopped up; the need for a long term national campaign to reinstate the footpaths; a lot of evidence of previous ownership was thought to be held by the MoD estates office at Melton Mowbray; that many of the Stopping Up Orders had been made during wartime and had continued well into the 1960s; that no records of previous ownership had been kept by Lincolnshire County Council and that it was hoped that if the previous routes could not be reinstated that diversions could be put in place.

Councillor Eran Bauer stated that he would continue to investigate this matter with the MoD.

Chris Miller stated that discussions would take place with the District Councils to make use of S106 Agreements to get routes established and he would examine the planning process. NOTED.

23. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) UPDATES

Councillor Iain Colquhoun and Andrew Savage presented reports on the Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council, respectively.

In response to comments made by the Forum Andrew Savage stated that the Lindsey Trail would open in Spring 2012; that the improvements proposed for Willingham Woods were aimed at attracting more walkers and cyclists; that the County Council's ROWIP was due to be renewed in 2017, with the emphasis on achievements rather than aspirations; that no work had taken place to date on the new ROWIP because of staffing constraints imposed by the Comprehensive Spending Review and that the Forum would be kept informed of the timetable of preparation of the ROWIP.

RESOLVED

That the ROWIPs be noted and that the Forum be kept informed about the timetable of preparation of the County Council's ROWIP, when known.

24. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS (minute 54, Mid Lincs Access Forum, 12 April 2011)

Councillor Iain Colquhoun and Chris Miller presented progress reports on Definitive Map Modification Orders from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council, respectively.

Chris Miller responded to questions from the Forum, including "Orders incapable of being confirmed, owing to a drafting error", adding that more of these types of Order would be appearing in this report as many of these type of Orders had been made in the 1980s and ought never to have been made in the first place.

Chris Miller stated that the Council was now addressing the backlog of cases which was welcomed by the Forum. NOTED.

25. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORTS

Councillor Iain Colquhoun and Chris Miller presented progress reports from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council, on Public Path Orders, respectively.

Chris Miller stated that the County Council was prioritising improvements to public footpaths on the Lincolnshire Coastal route, Witham Valley and Limewoods as these were key strategic Green Infrastructure projects and were popular areas with the public. NOTED.

26. WOOD LANGHAM – ACCESS ISSUES FOR HORSE AND CART

Sheila Brookes highlighted the problems at Wood Langham in which a 50 yard stretch could not be accessed by horse and cart, though the next couple of miles in any direction beyond this point could be driven.

Chris Miller explained the problems in this area and suggested that the solution was to go through the Modification Order process and for the Order to attract any objections. He stated that he would arrange a meeting with Sheila Brookes and other interested parties to examine the matter. NOTED.

27. DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2pm on Tuesday 24 January 2012 at Horncastle College

6.30pm on Tuesday 17 April 2012 at Wragby Fire Station

The meeting closed at 3.50pm