

REPORT REFERENCE:- **4.0**

(Meeting held at Wragby Fire Station. The meeting was preceded at 4.30pm by a site visit to a Higher Level Stewardship scheme located on the outskirts of Wragby)

Christopher Padley (Chairman)

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillor Eran Bauer

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council: Councillor I Colquhoun

Representing Independent Members: Sheila Brookes, Richard Graham, Alison Healey (site visit only), Ray Shipley and Colin Smith

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

Apologies for absence: Councillor D C Hoyes MBE, Dr Chris Allison, Ron Flintham, Pete Skipworth and Elizabeth Barnicott (Natural England (not a member of the Forum))

Also in attendance:- John Law from South Lincs Local Access Forum (minute 44)

40. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were not any questions from the public.

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 24 January 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Minute 28 – Website - Obstructed Footpaths

The Forum enquired if any progress had been made to produce a website showing footpaths which were closed. Following a brief discussion it was agreed that this matter should be added to the agenda for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum.

(b) Minute 31 – MoD Land and Public Rights of Way

The Forum was informed that despite a letter to the MoD in connection with public access across the former Fulbeck RAF site, a response had not been received, to date.

(c) Minute 32(a) – Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park

Chris Miller updated the Forum in connection with the construction of bridges in the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park, stating that the Park had a number of fragmented footpaths which would benefit from diversions but were missing bridges. Of the four bridges, two had been completed, one did not meet the aims of the Country Park and an alternative route was required for the remaining bridge.

The Forum welcomed the developments but requested that the Forum, as well as landowners, should be consulted about any proposals for the routing of footpaths in the Country Park.

(d) Minute 32(c) – Huddle Website – Outcome of Meeting on 12 March 2012

Andrew Savage stated that training for some Forum members on the use of the Huddle website had been provided by Elizabeth Barnicott, from Natural England, on 12 March 2012.

The Chairman stated that, to date, there was not a great deal of information on the Huddle site. Officers agreed to keep the Forum informed of developments in connection with the website.

43. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(a) National Access Forum Conference in Newcastle

The Chairman reported on the outcome of his attendance at the National Access Forum Conference in Newcastle on 28 February 2012, stating that Richard Benyon, MP, Minister with responsibility for Local Access Forums, had prepared a video of himself addressing the Conference but, unfortunately, the video had been technically poor; that it was reassuring that people attending the Conference had similar problems to Lincolnshire and the shortage of detail on the implementation of the "Paths for Communities Project".

(b) "Paths for Communities Project"

The Chairman was only able to provide a brief summary about the "Paths for Communities Project" as details about the scheme were not available at the moment. Officers were asked to keep the Forum updated when more details were available. The Chairman was aware that money was available for additional access provision, including for footpaths and cycle ways. Local authorities in consultation with their Local Access Forums could submit a bid for monies and the outcome was based on a competitive process.

Officers stated that they were aware that the project was offering a network for tourism, shops and bed and breakfast, etc, with £1m available this year and £1m next year. They agreed to investigate if match funding was permitted.

(c) Letter from Richard Benyon MP, to all LAFs

A letter from Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, following on from a letter he had originally written to all Local Access Forums setting out four proposals for the improvement of information flow between the Forums, Natural England and Defra was considered. NOTED.

44. HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEMES (HLSs)

The Chairman welcomed John Law who was in attendance to explain about the ending the permissive access element of the HLS schemes and the need for the Forums to be proactive to ensure that, wherever possible, the schemes were kept open. The Chairman stated that some members had taken the opportunity to visit a HLS scheme on the outskirts of Wragby before this meeting. He added that HLS schemes currently included payment for permissive access but as the individual grants ended, there would not be any further money provided for permissive access, with the landowner either allowing them to be continued or closed down.

John Law outlined the type of action taken in Leicestershire, where he lived, presented details of the end dates of HLS schemes and suggested the wording of a letter to Parish Councils to make them aware of HLS schemes in their Parish and the action the Parish Council could take to try and keep a HLS scheme open.

John Law responded to comments made by the Forum as follows:-

1. He was aware of the delay Parish Councils experienced in considering correspondence.
2. The letter to Parish Councils would need to be adjusted for each Parish Council.
3. He stated that the letter to Parish Councils should come from the Local Access Forum.

John Law kindly offered to produce the letter (and map to be enclosed) for the first year on behalf of the Forum which the County Council agreed to circulate. The Chairman stated that next year there would be time to undertake a survey using one of the forms produced by John Laws.

The Chairman stated that if the County Council had an interest in a HLS scheme then they should take responsibility for informing the Parish Council. Officers agreed that HLS schemes could, in some cases, help to improve Rights of Way.

RESOLVED

That the Forum accept John Laws kind offer to produce the letter, and accompanying map and send it to Parish Councils in the first year.

45. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007-2012 UPDATE FROM NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

Councillor I Colquhoun presented a report from North East Lincolnshire's Rights on Countryside Access and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-12. NOTED.

46. IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007-2012

Andrew Savage presented a report on a review of the Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007/12.

The Forum commented on the importance of tourism to the county; welcomed the Discovery packs; enquired about the commencement of ROWIP 2 and enquired about the use of volunteers to improve the footpath network. NOTED.

47. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS WORK FROM OCTOBER 2006 – 4 APRIL 2012

Reports were presented on the progress of Definitive Map Modification Order work from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council including current caseloads following workforce change. NOTED.

48. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORTS

Reports were presented on the progress made on resolving Public Path Orders from North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council. NOTED.

49. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT UPDATE

Andrew Savage presented a report outlining the progress made in the development of community involvement in the management of Lincolnshire's Public Rights of Way network. NOTED.

50. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

6.30pm on Tuesday 3 July 2012 at the County Offices, Newland, Lincoln

The meeting closed at 8.30pm