

Dear Sir,

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS – Access Sites) – “Name of site”

I am writing on behalf of the Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum which is an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways, byways, cycleways and areas of open access.

Under the Stewardship scheme, land occupiers at a number of sites in the county have been encouraged by Government to provide area or linear permissive access in return for grants, with the programme being administered by Natural England.

A recent change to Higher Level Stewardship has removed support for the access element of this scheme and as such, when agreements come to an end the access may well be removed.

A scheme in your area is due to end on “dd/mm/yyyy” and is shown on the attached map. The walk amounts to about “?” miles, “*mention will be made in this paragraph of the major highlight of the walk/ride e.g. a short circular route with excellent views of the surrounding countryside*” which is of obvious value to the local community. If the permissive access is lost, it will reduce the options for countryside “*walking and riding*” for local residents and visitors to the area. With walking being such an important form of exercise, improving standards of health and general well being, it is essential to ensure that access to the countryside for walking is maintained wherever possible.

If you wish the access to remain available, you may well want to discuss the situation with the land owner/manager to see whether informal access can be retained. I believe advice is available from the Rights of Way team at Lincolnshire County Council to support permissive access agreements.

It may also be of interest to you, that Natural England have developed a new grant scheme called “Paths for Communities” which you may wish to consider. Please see the web address below for further details:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/rightsofway/p4c.aspx>

Letters have also been sent to your neighbouring parishes informing them of the impending ending of the HLS access grant at “*name of the site*”. If you want to discuss the issue with us please get in touch and if you do pursue it, we would be obliged if you would let us know what response you get.

Yours faithfully