

(Meeting held at Horncastle College)

**Christopher Padley (Chairman)**

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors Eran Bauer and Denis Hoyes MBE

Representing Independent Members: Dr Chris Allison, Sheila Brookes, Ron Flintham, Richard Graham, Alison Healey, Chris Padley, Ray Shipley, Peter Skipworth and Colin Smith

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

Apologies for absence: Councillor Iain Colquhoun and Irene Unsworth

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public stated that some footpaths were obstructed, citing examples at Potterhanworth and Lincoln, and enquired if the Council was proposing to take any action to remove the obstructions. Andrew Savage stated that the described issues involved paths which were obstructed by buildings. The County Council had mapped those issues and in some cases Public Path Orders had been made to divert paths.

It was suggested that the Council ought to have a website showing which footpaths were closed, the reason for closure and the action, if any, being taken by the Council to resolve the closure. Various other examples of closure were given by the Forum some of which related to closures by the Police following anti-social behaviour. Andrew Savage stated that in connection with anti-social behaviour the Council did not implement Gating Orders.

29. RICHARD GRAHAM – NEW MEMBER

The Chairman welcomed Richard Graham to his first meeting of the Forum. Richard represented walkers, was a member of the Ramblers and led health walks in the North Kesteven District Council area.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 11 October 2012, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the replacement of “Boulding” by “Balding” in minute 20 and the replacement of “Barker” by “Barnicott” in minute 21(c).

31. MOD LAND AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (minute 22, Mid Lincs Local Access Forum, 11 October 2012)

Following an enquiry from Alison Healey the Chairman stated that access across the former RAF airfield at Fulbeck was currently being investigated, adding that some local authorities had maintained records of the stopping up of footpaths during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War while others, Lincolnshire included, had no record although this did not mean that the records did not exist. Many people wanted to see the footpaths reinstated even if it meant a diversion. The Chairman considered that the County Council needed an improvement plan in place to reinstate these lost footpaths.

32. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(a) Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park (Note:- This item was raised by Dr Chris Allison, not the Chairman)

Following an enquiry by Dr Chris Allison, Andrew Savage stated that two bridges had been installed and one more needed to be installed in the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park. He would find out the latest situation and inform the Forum at its next meeting.

(b) Minutes of the meeting with Paul Coathup, Assistant Director for Highways and Transport held on 26 October 2011

The Chairmen presented the minutes of the annual meeting between the Chairs of the Lincolnshire Local Access Forums and Paul Coathup, Assistant Director for Highways and Transport held on 26 October 2011. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to consider issues considered by the Local Access Forums, e.g. "Network gaps" and examples of these gaps were given by the Forum, at this meeting.

(c) "Huddle" Update

The Chairman stated that Fiona Groves, East Midland LAF Secretary and Elizabeth Barnicott, Natural England had arranged a training session to explain "Huddle" which was an internet networking site on which Natural England was creating a LAF network. However, the training session had clashed with today's meeting. The Chairman suggested that members should go on line to examine "Huddle".

33. VILLAGE GREEN REGISTRATION – PROPOSED CHANGES TO WHICH NEW, OR AT LEAST UNREGISTERED, VILLAGE GREENS ARE REGISTERED AND APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION MADE

Andrew Savage presented a report on the latest situation in connection with the government's intention to review the new Greens Registration system, to see if a better balance could be struck between protecting the green space valued by local communities while still allowing for development opportunities, under the right circumstances. NOTED.

34. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007-2012 UPDATE

The North East Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan update emailed to Members before the meeting was noted. In the absence of a representative from North East Lincolnshire Members were asked to forward any questions or enquiries to Steve Blagg who would ensure that they was passed on to North East Lincolnshire to respond.

Andrew Savage outlined progress made in the implementation of the Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012, in particular, highlighting the improvements made in connection with maintenance and enforcement and the opening of the Lindsey Trail on 29 April 2012.

In response to comments made by the Forum, Andrew Savage stated the work of the Forum would be publicised on the accompanying leaflet for the opening of the Lindsey Trail and the use of volunteers to assist in the opening of the Trail was required; agreed that Chris Padley in his capacity as Chairman of the Forum, should open the Trail; highlighted the improvement schemes during the last three months which were trying to improve accessibility to the network; would prepare a final report for the Forum detailing the work undertaken under RoWIP 2007/12 and stated that he was aware of the use of a key system to allow access to some footpaths.

The Chairman agreed that there were some locations where key access was appropriate, e.g. a country park but issues of maintenance and expense was a factor.

35. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2 – PROGRESS REPORT

Andrew Savage presented a report on progress made in the preparation of the Lincolnshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2, adding that since the publication of the first RoWIP, RoWIP 2 would have to take into consideration the significant changes in National Policy and the current economic climate.

Comments by the Forum included the following:-

1. The East Midlands Chairs of Local Access Forums had stated that there was a need for RoWIP 2 to focus on finding solutions to problems instead of non-specific aspirations.
2. Achieving value for money by tackling gaps in the network and improving access for the disabled.
3. The need to identify problems and to find solutions.
4. A list of issues needed to be addressed should be in RoWIP 2 together with target dates for addressing the issues.
5. The importance of informing the community of achievements.
6. The need to highlight “healthy walking”.
7. The need for an annual statement of achievements and to measure progress.

8. Information pamphlets about walks needed to be easily understood by the mentally disabled, although it was accepted that many of these people were accompanied by a Carer.
9. There was a need to show value for money.
10. Cuts from the Comprehensive Spending Review had impacted on service provision in the Countryside area.
11. The important role of the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, ensuring the press were involved and getting the support Council's Executive, in the work of the Forum.
12. The partnership with the Health Trust on publicising health walks was very good and partnership working was successful.
13. There was a need to involve those responsible for building roads at an early stage because access problems for non motorised users was an issue once a road had been built. The Lincoln East Bypass was given as an example.
14. The educational pack presented at the last meeting of the Forum was identified as a useful educational tool for the public.

The Chairman in thanking Members for their comments asked them to consider what needed to be included in RoWIP 2 and asked them to enquire about any problems encountered by disabled people accessing the countryside.

#### RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the comments made by the Forum be considered by officers in their preparation of RoWIP 2 and, in the meantime, any further comments be sent to officers.
- (c) That Members pass on any information to the Council in connection with access problems experienced by disabled people to the countryside.

#### 35. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS OCTOBER 2006-14 DECEMBER 2011

The North East Lincolnshire update on progress of Definitive Map Modification Orders emailed to Members before the meeting was noted. In the absence of a representative from North East Lincolnshire Members were asked to forward any questions or comments to Steve Blagg who would refer them to North East Lincolnshire to respond.

Andrew Savage presented a report on the progress of Definitive Map Modification Orders for Lincolnshire from October 2006 to 14 December 2011. NOTED.

#### 36. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORT

The North East Lincolnshire Council update on resolving Public Path Orders emailed to Members before the meeting was noted. In the absence of a representative from North East Lincolnshire at the meeting Members were asked to forward any

questions or comments to Steve Blagg who would refer them to North East Lincolnshire to respond.

Andrew Savage presented a report on progress made on resolving Public Path Orders in Lincolnshire. NOTED

37. REVISION OF RIGHTS OF WAY ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Andrew Savage presented a report in connection with the proposed revised enforcement policy for rights of way work.

Comments made by the Forum included:-

1. It seemed to be a common practice amongst local authorities to make a decision and then consult thereafter and this appeared to be the case with this consultation.
2. There was a need to follow good practice by other local authorities.
3. Most landowners complied with the rules and landowners who did not comply were the exception.
4. The need to avoid issuing repetitive informal cautions which would not act as a deterrent.
5. The fine of 50p was derisory.
6. The use of the phrase "consideration will be given" gave the impression that the local authority was not serious. There needed to be more emphasis that if a landowner did not comply then the local authority would prosecute.
7. Non compliance after Stages 4 and 5 had gone past the stage of an informal caution.
8. The local authority had two roles, to keep the public footpaths open and to enforce the law.
9. The third caution should be removed.

The conclusion of the Forum was that the majority of landowners obeyed the law and it was an insult to the law abiding landowners when no action was taken by the local authority against those land owners who continued to break the law. The local authority also needed to respond more strongly against those landowners who broke the law.

Andrew Savage stated that the Council had consulted the East Midlands Group of the Adept about the Policy, emphasised the importance of building relationships with landowners and was not aware of any prosecutions in recent times.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that the comments made by the Forum be considered by the Council.

38. PETER SKIPWORTH'S – (A) REPORTING OF FOOTPATH PROBLEMS VIA THE WEBSITE AND (B) THE JOINING OF ROUTES, I.E. FARMERS BEING APPROACHED TO ALLOW ACCESS TO THEIR LAND TO JOIN UP EXISTING FOOTPATHS

Peter Skipworth enquired whether it was possible to report problems with public footpaths on the Council's website.

Andrew Savage stated that it was possible to report problems with public footpaths through the Council's website, adding that the Council was examining viewing maps on the website.

Comments made by the Forum included the need to be able to report more than one problem at a time because currently this was time consuming and, in this respect, a loop system was suggested. Also, any improvements made to public footpaths needed to be identified on the website. NOTED

Peter Skipworth stated that he was aware of seven footpaths in the Wolds which needed to be joined up. He realised that the local authority was under financial pressure but wondered if there was any solution to the problem. The Chairman stated that this was a common problem and it was his understanding that many local authorities were reluctant to try and solve the problem because of the difficulties that might arise and the ensuing expense involved. It was his view that local authorities should try and solve the easiest cases first. The use of compulsory power should be used, if necessary, if there was a negative response from the landowner. NOTED.

39. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

6.30pm on Tuesday 17 April 2012 at Wragby Fire Station

The meeting closed at 4.00pm