

(Meeting held at the County Offices, Newland, Lincoln.

Present:-

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillor Eran Bauer.

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council: Councillor I Colquhoun.

Representing Independent Members: Dr Chris Allison, Sheila Brookes, Ron Flintham, Richard Graham, 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).

Also in attendance Elizabeth Barnicott (Natural England (not a member of the Forum).

1. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public stated that vegetation was overgrown on the Viking Way and other footpaths.

Chris Miller stated that the problem of overgrown vegetation was recognised and was not limited to any particular area. He added that the Council's highways contractor, May Gurney, had altered the sub-contractor before the cutting season had started and there had been some uncertainty about the standards being applied by the sub-contractor. There had also been slippage in making a start to cut the grass and the weather conditions had aggravated the problem. The situation was under review by the Council.

Comments by the Forum included that the problem was county wide; the need for the public to be kept informed of the situation through the Council's website; the fact that grass was growing outwards and affecting horse drawn carriages and the problems the public experience in trying to contact the Council to report problems.

RESOLVED

That problems of contacting the Council by the public be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Chris Padley be elected Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing municipal year.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Dr Chris Alison be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing municipal year.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Healey, Councillor D C Hoyes MBE, Pete Skipworth and Irene Unsworth.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 17 April 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 17 APRIL 2012(a) Minute 42(b) – MoD Land and Public Rights of Way

Following an enquiry from the Forum about access across the former Fulbeck RAF site, Chris Miller stated that a letter had been sent to the RAF before the sale of the site but negotiations had already been completed prior to the sale of the land and it had not been possible find a solution to public access. The MoD website had also been examined and there was not any public land coming up for sale.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman write to the County Council to request that the Council should write to the MoD to ask them to consider the reinstatement of PROWS on former RAF sites when the sites were released for sale.

(b) Minute 42(c) – Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park

Following an enquiry from the Forum about the development of footpaths in the Lincolnshire Country Park, Chris Miller stated that he had consulted the relevant staff involved in the preparation of the Country Park and a number of Rights of Way had been identified which he would bring back for consideration to the next meeting of the Forum.

7. WEBSITE SHOWING OBSTRUCTED AND CLOSED FOOTPATHS (minute 42(a), 2012, Forum, 17 April 2012)

Chris Miller stated that there had not been any progress on producing a Council website showing footpaths closed due to the cost of IT resources required to produce the website. He hoped to take the opportunity to review the situation when new IT was installed in the future.

The Forum requested that when the Council updated its IT systems it should purchase a system which could be added to without incurring the cost of having to purchase an entirely new system. NOTED.

8. HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEMES – UPDATE (minute 44) Forum, 17 April 2012)

The Forum considered a draft email produced by John Laws, a member of the South Lincs Local Access Forum, in connection with a press release to make people aware of the opportunities which currently existed for Higher Level Stewardship schemes.

In connection with this report Councillor Eran Bauer took the opportunity to explain the role of the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC) and the benefits it could bring to publicising the Local Access Forums and requested details of the role of the Local Access Forums so that he could raise their profile at the LALC.

RESOLVED

That the draft email, produced by John Laws, amended to reflect the email is coming from the Mid Lincs Local Access Forum, and the attached press releases to the email, be supported.

9. “PATHS FOR COMMUNITIES PROJECT” – UPDATE (minute 43(b), Forum, 17 April 2012)

Elizabeth Barnicott, Natural England, gave an update together with a presentation on “Paths for Communities Project”. She responded to comments from members adding that questions posed by an application would be highlighted on the Natural England website (<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/p4c.aspx>). The presentation would be sent to the Forum by the Secretary. NOTED.

10. PAST CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The Chairman read out his report to the meeting and the Secretary agreed to email the report to the Forum.

It was agreed to consider access to Huddle at the next meeting of the Forum. NOTED.

11. JOINT ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Andrew Savage presented the Joint Annual Report 2011/12 for both the Mid and South Local Access Forums. He also stated that there was a need to complete a pro-forma from Natural England in connection with the work of the Local Access Forums which had to be completed by the end of October 2012. The Forum agreed to consider the completion of the pro-forma at the next meeting of the Forum. The Forum, again, discussed the history and current situation in connection with access to MoD land. The Chairman stated that he would raise this issue on Huddle. NOTED.

12. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP4) – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Details of the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) were presented. The deadline for responses to LTP4 was 27 July 2012.

RESOLVED

That members of the Forum notify the Secretary of their comments on LTP4 before the deadline of 27 July 2012, and the Secretary would forward the comments to the County Council's Communities Directorate.

13. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY – CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM THE FORUM

Chris Miller presented details of a consultation document from Defra in connection with improvements to the policy and legal framework for Public Rights of Way. The deadline for responses was 6 August 2012. Accompanying the consultation documentation was a response already submitted by the Leicestershire Local Access Forum.

RESOLVED

That members of the Forum email any comments they have on the consultation to the Secretary, in the first instance, who will then forward them to the Chairman.

14. BOATS AND THE USE OF 4x4s

Owing to the absence of Pete Skipworth this item was deferred to the next meeting of the Forum. NOTED.

15. UPDATE ON SIGNING OF UNCLASSIFIED COUNTY ROADS

The Chairman requested an update of the signing of Unclassified County Roads following incidents of members of the public using the roads and being challenged by landowners. The Chairman stated that the Local Access Forums should request the County Council to adopt a policy to erect a sign stating that these roads were a public byway. The Chairman stated that it was his recollection that a request to the County

Council had been made in the past but the County Council had rejected the suggestion because it had not complied with highway regulations.

RESOLVED

That the current policy of the County Council in connection with the erection of signs on Unclassified County Roads be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

16. CLARIFICATION REQUIRED OF FORESTRY COMMISSION OPEN ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

The Chairman referred to emails from the Forestry Commission informing the Local Access Forums about details of tree felling. The Chairman stated that the Forestry Commission should provide specific details of which PROWs would be closed and the duration of closure.

Elizabeth Barnicott suggested that this was a subject which should be added to the Huddle site for discussion and she would also take the matter back to Natural England for discussion.

The Chairman agreed to write to the Forestry Commission, on behalf of the Forum, about this matter.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman write to the Forestry Commission, on behalf of the Forum, requesting that they should provide specific details about the closure of a PROW and the duration of a closure, due to tree felling.

17. JOINT APPROACH TO PLANNING CONSULTATION FROM LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES

The Chairman stated that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) needed to deal with the effects of planning applications on PROWs in a more consistent manner and suggested that the body which comprised all LPAs could provide the necessary coordination to overcome this problem.

Chris Miller stated that this matter had been raised in the past with LPAs and communication on the impact of planning applications on PROWs had improved. He stated that proposals were under consideration to include the effect of planning applications on PROWs in a planning application. NOTED.

18 COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Councillor I Colquhoun and Andrew Savage presented reports on behalf of North East Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire County Councils on progress in the implementation of the Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan. (ROWIP (1))

Andrew Savage added that in connection with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2)) he was developing a list of potential stakeholders but emphasised that there would not be any network analysis undertaken similar to that undertaken in ROWIP (1). NOTED.

19. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS WORK FROM OCTOBER 2006 – 19 JUNE 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.

20. 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.

The Forum discussed the effect of public footpaths crossing railway lines and the need for Network Rail to discuss the effects of any proposals to change a railway crossing with stakeholders. It was agreed to consider this matter at the next meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that PROW across railway lines be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

21. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2.00pm on 9 October 2012 at Market Rasen Fire Station

2.00pm on 15 January 2013 at Horncastle College

22. MEETING WITH THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

The Chairman requested that the meeting involving the Chairmen of both Local Access Forums and the Assistant Director of Highways and Transport should be arranged towards the end of October 2012. Chris Miller agreed to examine. NOTED.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm