



**SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE AND
RUTLAND LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
15 OCTOBER 2014**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R WOOTTEN (CHAIRMAN)

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillor D Brailsford

Representing Rutland County Council: Councillor William J Cross

Representing Independent Members: Rosemary Harris, Alec Hill, Gordon Norris, John Williams, Ian Cox, Dr Rebecca Johnson, Paul Marshall and Barbara Smitheringale

Officers: Andrea Brown (Democratic Services Officer), Stuart Crook (Public Rights of Way Officer, Rutland County Council), Chris Miller (Countryside Access Manager, Lincolnshire County Council) and Andrew Savage (Senior Countryside Access Officer, Lincolnshire County Council)

15 WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting and conveyed the news that Councillor Brian Montgomery, Rutland County Council and Forum Member, had sadly passed away. Members observed a minutes silence in honour of Brian.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Dr Rebecca Johnson as this was her first meeting since becoming a member of the forum.

16 PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Stephen Horner of the Peterborough Local Access Forum attended the meeting and presented some information in relation to LEADER funding. As a member of the Northern Footpath Forum, which was started from the Peterborough LAF and incorporated a number of parish representatives (including Deeping St James in Lincolnshire), they were working to get a footbridge over the River Welland near the Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve. This would then make a good circular footpath for people in Deeping St James, North Borough and Peakirk. The majority of the footbridge would be positioned within Lincolnshire and applications had been submitted to relevant bodies to try and secure grants/funding. Mr Horner was seeking the support and assistance of the South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local Access Forum for this project.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- The forum agreed that this was a good scheme which would connect communities in both Lincolnshire and Peterborough but were asked to be mindful that there was a land ownership issue on the southern side of the River Welland as well as the issue of funding. Additionally, the close proximity of the Network Rail Bridge could also be an issue;
- This scheme had previously been looked at in detail when considering P4C but the main issue was funding. Even if this was not a venture for the near future, the support of the relevant Local Access Forums would be extremely helpful should funding become available;

RESOLVED

1. That the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum support the proposal for a footbridge over the River Welland near the Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve at such time sufficient funding becomes available; and
2. That the Chairman of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum, Councillor R Wooten, be given the authority to authorise relevant documents on behalf of the Forum in relation to this scheme.

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Law and Mrs Audrey Morley.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 JULY 2014

In relation to page 7, The Drift – it was confirmed that, at present, no other unsurfaced roads within Lincolnshire or Rutland would be closed during the winter months but members of the Forum were advised that each case would be judged on its' own merit, as per a matter of policy. The TRO did include barriers to put the closure at The Drift into effect but it was confirmed that only motorised vehicles were restricted from its' use.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014 be signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

19 ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 19a Minute No. 5 Hedge between Newstead Mill and Belmesthorpe
The Chairman noted that he had not yet received a response from the Highways Manager in relation to this item.

RESOLVED

That the Highways Manager be contacted by the Chairman of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum for an update.

19b Minute No. 6 Joint Annual Report 2013/14 (Volunteer Insurance)

The Volunteer Indemnity Form had been included as part of the agenda pack. Members were advised that there was a dedicated website for Countryside Access with a specific section for Volunteers:-

<http://microsites.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside/prow-management/how-you-can-help/>

The webpage includes an on-line application form and contact details should anyone be interested in becoming a volunteer. A Volunteer Handbook would be made available to all volunteers.

Tools required to be a volunteer would be supplied, including materials and safety equipment needed (for example: maps, high visibility waistcoat, first aid kit, gloves, secateurs, etc.)

Lincolnshire County Council apply the same standards of health and safety to authorised volunteers as employees with volunteers being covered by the Council's employee liability insurance. Risk assessments for all activities would also be undertaken for all volunteers.

Further information could be sought from the Countryside Access Team on 01522 782070 or e mail countryside_access@lincolnshire.gov.uk

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

19c Minute No. 9 Public Path Orders Progress Report (Bridleway Creation - Oakham to Egleton)

The letter received from the Senior Transport Manager of Rutland County Council in relation to the proposal for a Bridleway between Oakham and Egleton was noted by the forum.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Members were disappointed that the proposal was not supported by the Parish Meeting due to an objection being raised, despite initial indications being supportive;
- Progress was being made in terms of cancelling the legal orders due to grant funding being reallocated. Legal colleagues had, therefore, been instructed to cancel the order and funding moved to another scheme;

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

20 COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS & RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
UPDATE

20a Rutland County Council

The Public Rights of Way Officer, Rutland County Council, advised that no update was available as no progress had been made. It was hoped that progress would have been made by Christmas and that a report would be available at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

20b Lincolnshire County Council

A report was received from Lincolnshire County Council which outlined the progress made in the implementation of the Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Andy Savage, Senior Countryside Access Officer, introduced the report and directed members to page 20, which included the spend before the year end.

No questions were asked.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

21 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND LEVEL CROSSINGS

Chris Miller, Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager, provided a verbal update in relation to level crossings and advised that Network Rail were looking to close a number of level crossing across the country. Within the Lincolnshire, the major scheme was the East Coast Mainline and each of the crossings throughout the county were being considered.

Meetings had been held with relevant organisations, ADEPT, IPROW, etc, and frank discussions had taken place to try and establish who had responsibility for each crossing across the nation. The main conflict was where the railway blocked the community from the open countryside and how they could access this should the level crossing be closed. It was suggested that, should the Forum be minded to, Mott MacDonald be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation regarding this issue.

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During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Where a byway had been restricted and diverted as a bridleway, the existing rights would have to be removed and new rights created at a different, more appropriate level. Transport and Work Act Orders would be dealt with directly by the Secretary of State;
- Members noted that it was becoming more and more frequent that bridleway gates were locked and padlocked.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and verbal update be noted; and
2. That the Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager invite a representative from Mott MacDonald to attend a future meeting to give a presentation on the plans for level crossings.

22 DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

22a Rutland County Council

A report was received on the progress of the Definitive Map Modification Order in Rutland.

Stuart Crook, Public Rights of Way Officer, introduced the report and advised that it was unclear if legal officers had drafted these orders as yet.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the Public Rights of Way Officer make contact with legal officers at Rutland County Council to request a progress update on behalf of the Forum.

22b Lincolnshire County Council

A report was received which provided the progress of the Definitive Map Modification Order work since the inception of the current prioritisation policy.

Chris Miller, Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager, introduced the report directing members to page 65 which provided the active case list.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- In relation to Carlton Scroop/Ancaster, no objections had been received, having spoken to the landowners;
- In one case in Ancaster it was expected that a public inquiry would be required;

- The number outstanding were due to policy issues and a backlog from the outset. Due to the size of the county, there was a considerable amount of land where Rights of Way could be claimed;
- It was thought that cases in Alford and Skegness (page 66) may be outstanding for some years to come, unfortunately;
- In relation to the case in Skegness (progress noted on page 63), it was reported that the next case to be dealt with would be Alford with Skegness after that. It was likely this would be February/March 2015;
- By 2020 Natural England should be within the County but the potential change in government between now and 2020 may have an effect on the completion of the Coastal Trail. However, it was expected that this would be complete by 2020.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

23 PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORT23a Rutland County Council

A report was received from Rutland County Council which provided an update on Public Path Orders within the county.

Stuart Crook, Public Rights of Way Officer, introduced the report and explained that, in relation to Uppingham Ref E307 officers were trying to persuade the Open Spaces Society to withdraw their objection but because there were proposed modifications to the order that this would still be considered by the Planning Inspector.

Braunston was to be removed from the list as the diversion was no longer required.

No questions were asked.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

23b Lincolnshire County Council

A report was received from Lincolnshire County Council which provided a progress update on Public Path Orders within the county.

No questions were asked.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24 THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF LINCOLNSHIRE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY SERVICE

A verbal update was given to the Forum by Chris Miller, Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager regarding the future of the Public Rights of Way Service during the upcoming restructure of Lincolnshire County Council.

£90m in overall budget reduction was to be found over a three year period which would affect services across the County Council. All departments would be asked to consider at what reductions could be made. The Forum would be kept updated throughout the process and it was hoped that as much of the service would be retained as possible.

The Director responsible for Countryside Access would be meeting with the Leader of the Council in the near future to discuss how this budget could be shaped. It was explained that both the Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager and the Senior Countryside Access Officer were now within the Environmental section rather than Highways.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Rutland County Council budget remained the same have made necessary cuts previously;
- The Green Lane Network did have some form of highway status but it was unclear on maps whether greens lanes were footpaths or carriageway, which may cause initial issues during the transition period as Highways did not afford these lanes the same priority as other networks. Footpaths would continue to be afforded the same importance. The Countryside Access team would also be sharing an open plan office with Highways colleagues which would be felt to improve communication and working relations.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

25 DISABILITY SUB-GROUP UPDATE

Mr Gordon Norris presented a verbal update to the Forum on the work undertaken by the Disability Sub-Group.

It was confirmed that four walks had now been completed and the next meeting would focus on the funding for printing and distribution of the leaflets/booklets.

- Gibraltar Point, Skegness
- Westgate Woods, Boston
- Hartsholme Country Park, Lincoln
- Grand and North Parades, Skegness

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In respect to Gibraltar Point, Skegness, it had been decided to go ahead with the walk despite having no permanent toilet facilities available as there was a temporary toilet block and café there.

Hartsholme Country Park walk was not of the same standard as those at Whisby but there footpaths were level and a new bridge had been put in place so it was a good walk.

Grand and North Parades in Skegness were near the boating river and cycle path and have some huts and parking and facilities for making tea/coffee.

Mr Norris advised that funding was a particular issue as a lot of fundraising would be required to meet the costs of printing, etc. The Chairman suggested that the Sub-Group approach the local County Councillor in each area as they may be able to allocate a percentage of their Community Budget to the scheme.

Dr Rebecca Johnson advised that she was aware of a small charitable trust, which supports Rights of Way for disadvantaged groups, who may be interested in supporting the schemes.

Members were encouraged to put forward any suggestions for walks for consideration in 2015.

RESOLVED

1. That the update be noted;
2. That details of the charitable trust be provided by Dr Johnson; and
3. That Members provide suggestions for walks for consideration in 2015

26 TRAVEL4RUTLAND PROJECT UPDATE

Stuart Crook, Public Rights of Way Officer, provided a verbal update and circulated a plan which highlighted routes at Ashwell, Preston to Uppingham, Ryhall, A47 and the Egleton Bridleway upgrade (funding for which will now be used towards the Exton Coach Road to Cottesmore).

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Previous views were that horses should not be on the cycle tracks but, having considered the needs of equestrian users, it was anticipated that further discussions would be held with Highways colleagues;
- Concern was noted about the increase in cyclists and the dangers of riding behind a horse if the proposals were that horse riders were to share cycle paths.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

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27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman invited Members to raise any items of other business which may not have been raised under specific agenda items.

Rights of Way

Clarification was requested for Members that, when dealing with Rights of Way, that they would also deal with maintenance issues. The Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager confirmed that, as officers, they would be responsible for the work involved in maintenance. The Members of the Forum, however, would act as a strategic advisor on other bodies.

Disability Sub-Group

Due to the sad loss of Brian Montgomery, the Disability Sub-Group had a vacancy. Members were asked to consider if they would be able to fill the vacancy, preferably from Rutland if possible.

Workshop

Following an email from Fiona Taylor at Natural England regarding LEADER funding, the Senior Countryside Access Officer advised that they were looking for workshop topics in the event that funding be secured.

Forum Vacancies

It was noted that there were four current vacancies on the Forum and Members asked to give consideration to other people who may be able to join. It was not imperative that Members be local to the areas covered by the Forum. If there was any interest shown, or further information required, Members were advised that both Chris Miller, Countryside Access and Definitive Map Manager, and Andy Savage, Senior Countryside Access Officer, should be contacted in the first instance.

28 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum be held in the Court Room, Stamford Town Council, Town Hall, St Mary's Hill, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 2DR on Wednesday 14th January 2015 at 1.00pm.

It was hoped the next meeting would be held in Skegness in April 2015 but this would be confirmed nearer the time.

The meeting closed at 7.43 pm