

Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forums Joint Annual Report 2014/ 15



Chairman's Introduction

Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum

The issues facing LAFs seem to remain largely the same from year to year, but the relative size and urgency of each change. The many errors, anomalies, and omissions of rights of way from the definitive rights of way map is one that grows more urgent because of the 2026 so-called "cut off" date. Unfortunately, at the same time the national political support for improving the network has steadily declined. In our LAF concern over this is especially strong over the shortage of bridleways, or roads suitable for horse riding, and the general lack of connectivity caused by "missing links" and anomalous gaps.

One area where we seem to be seeing a gradual thawing of political resistance is the idea that network changes should be made to improve it for users rather than just the traditional convenience of land owners. The concept that authorities not only can, but should, make road crossing safer, if necessary by forcing diversions on unreasonable land owners, has at last taken root, and we hope may gain wider acceptance. There is a similar early slow movement towards the idea of closing some of the more absurd and anomalous missing links by diversions and creation.

With these slow changes it is particularly irksome that we are all now caught in across the board restraints on local government budgets. This is ironic because improvement to the facilities for walking and cycling reduces car use and the need for new roads, and also reduces health service expenditure far more than the cost. Investing to encourage walking, both as exercise and transport is very good value in public expenditure. We must to do more to get this message to government.

Chris Padley

Chairman

Mid Lincolnshire

Local (Countryside) Access Forum

South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum

Welcome to the Joint Annual Report of the Lincolnshire Local Access Forums for 2014/15.

It has been a very interesting year and I believe that we have made a great deal of progress despite a very challenging financial situation. We are extremely fortunate in having an enthusiastic forum, and as chair of the forum I would like to take this opportunity to thank members and officers for their support during the past year.

Members of the forum were saddened to hear of the deaths of two of our members during the year. Brian Montgomery, who was the first chairman of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum, passed away in August and Alan Gibbon who had been a LAF member for three years pass away in December. Both Brian and Alan contributed a great deal to the work of the forum and will be sadly missed.

The forum has continued to examine a wide range of issues over the last twelve months from familiar areas of interest such as Rights of Way Improvement Plans to emerging issues such as public rights of way affected by level crossings.

I would also like to thank the Disability sub group for it's continued efforts outside of full forum meetings. During the last twelve months the group has published an additional four access for all leaflets for routes at Gibraltar Point, Skegness, Boston and Lincoln. In the coming year the group are planning to embark on a diverse range of tasks including the publication of additional access for all leaflets, the provision of walk leader training and the wider promotion of disabled access in Lincolnshire and Rutland.

The coming year will hold many challenges and a great deal of creative thinking will be needed in a rapidly changing financial environment.

County Councillor Ray Wootten

Chairman

South Lincolnshire and Rutland
Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Role and Purpose of Local Access Forums

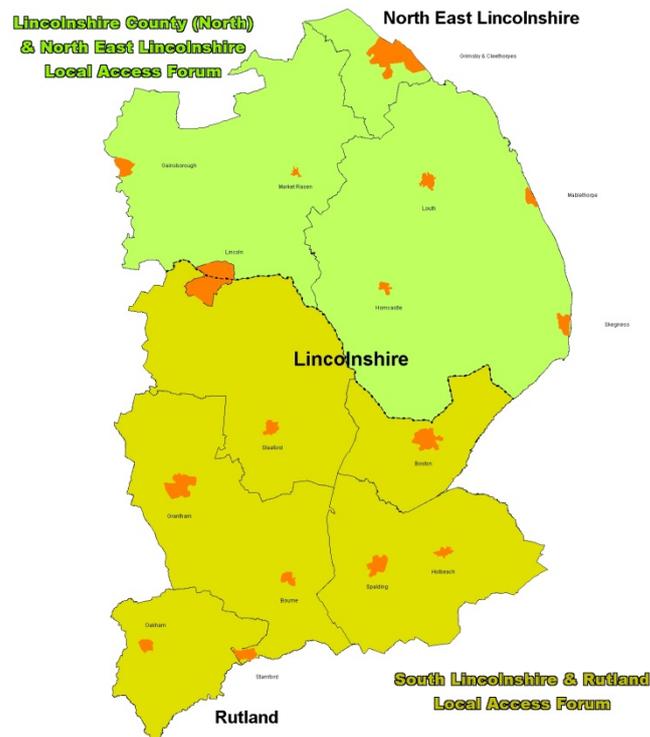
Local Access Forums (LAFs) are statutory bodies established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Two LAFs were established in 2003, covering Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and Rutland. The Mid Lincolnshire LAF (Mid Lincs Forum) is a joint forum between Lincolnshire County Council and North East Lincolnshire Council. The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF (South Lincs Forum) is a joint forum between Lincolnshire County Council and Rutland County Council.

Lincolnshire County Council provides a secretariat service to both Local Access Forums.

Local Access Forums provide independent advice to the local authorities and other relevant bodies on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open- air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.

The Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forums provide advice on three main areas:

- the development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people;
- improving the rights of way network; and
- the implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside.



Membership of Local Access Forums

Each LAF consists of up to 18 members representing a wide range of interests, including rights of way users, land managers and farmers, rural business, health, heritage, nature conservation, tourism, transport, disability groups and minority groups.

Members are appointed for up to three years and the appointing authorities are required to maintain a balance of interests on each forum.

A list of members is shown in the membership section of the Annual Report.

Changes in membership and appointments

-Mid Lincs Forum

Irene Unsworth resigned from the forum at the end of her appointment.

-South Lincs Forum

Members of the forum were saddened to hear of the deaths of Brian Montgomery in August and Alan Gibbon in December. Dr Rebecca Johnson was appointed to the forum in September 2014.

-Chair Appointments

Chris Padley was re-elected as Chair of the Mid Lincs Forum and Dr. Christopher Allison was elected as the Vice-Chair at the July Annual General Meeting. County Councillor Ray Wooten was elected as Chair of the South Lincs Forum and John Williams elected as the Vice-Chair.

Review of meetings and discussions of the past year

Meeting Details

Both forums held 4 full meetings during the reporting period. Meetings have been held at the following venues:

Mid Lincs LAF	South Lincs and Rutland LAF
15 April 2014 – Lincoln	16 April 2014 – Oakham
22 July 2014 - Huttoft	9 July 2014 – Lincoln
28 October 2014 - Waltham	15 October 2014 - Grantham
22 January 2015 – Wragby	14 January 2015 – Stamford

The average attendance rate for the Mid Lincs LAF during the reporting period was 58% and the South Lincs and Rutland LAF was 68%.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe local access forum meetings and members of the public and other interested parties who would like to raise items for consideration by the forums may do so by contacting the Secretary.

Agendas and minutes can be viewed on Lincolnshire County Council's website by searching the Committee Records System at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/laf

Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIP)

Lincolnshire County Council

Both forums have continued to receive updates on the implementation of the first Lincolnshire RoWIP. Improvement works have again concentrated on promoted routes, routes in popular areas of the county and those in the vicinity of villages and towns.

During the reporting period RoWIP implementation has included

- the creation of one public footpath
- surface improvements on 15 routes
- extensive access improvements on Leadenham Public Footpath No. 1
- the publication of two bus walk leaflets
- the publication of two walk leaflets in the Coastal Country Park
- the publication of one Lincolnshire Walk leaflet for Saltfleet

The pre-draft of the Second Lincolnshire RoWIP was presented to both forums at the April meetings. The second ROWIP will have an increased emphasis on community involvement and partnership working as a result of the County Council's decreased capability to deliver the plan on its own.

Three broad themes have emerged for the future development of the Lincolnshire PRow network.

Theme 1 – Network Improvements

Theme 2 – Improved Customer Service

Theme 3 – Social Inclusion

The process of developing the Second RoWIP has been influenced by a number of factors including significant changes in national policy, County Council priorities and the potential for a further reduction in funding in the coming years. It is envisaged that the draft document will be published in the coming financial year.

North East Lincolnshire Council

The Mid Lincs LAF has continued to receive updates on the implementation of the North East Lincs RoWIP. Particular focus has once again been given to addressing those routes that intersect with busy trafficked roads within the Borough. In this respect, working in partnership with the Casualty Reduction Officer for Humberside Police, a legal order has been made to divert a section of a key promoted route (Ashby Cum Fenby BW91), forming part of the Wanderlust Way, to provide a safer crossing point on the A18 Barton Street. In addition, officers have also been working to reinstate Waltham FP72.

Works are continuing towards the production of a Consolidated Definitive Map for North East Lincolnshire, which would provide a much needed and more relevant Map and Statement to replace the current version with a relevant date of 1953.

In addition, officers have produced a draft protocol regarding 'Gaps, Gates and Stiles', which is currently awaiting approval. This protocol will then provide formal guidance for landowners and their tenants as to how to apply for permission to install/replace/change path furniture.

Rutland County Council

A timetable showing the stages in preparing the second Rutland ROWIP was presented to the forum at the January meeting, but until it [the second plan] is published delivery against the objectives in the first ROWIP will continue to be reported.

Over the past year work in Rutland has been focused around our core actions of 'Improving standards of maintenance across the network' (Core Action 1) and 'Reducing the number of physical barriers on the network' (Core Action 3). A review of the annual mowing programme has now been completed and some significant savings are now anticipated for 2015/16. We invested heavily, spending almost 30% of the annual budget, on improvements to the surface and drainage of footpaths and bridleways across the county whilst continuing to fund the replacement of existing (lawful) stiles with gates. Requests for the creation of new routes and projects requiring significant capital investment must be considered against Highways schemes through the County Councils prioritisation system; at the time of writing two requests for new bridleways are seeking approval by cabinet.

Delivery of the second Rutland ROWIP in accordance with the timetable presented previously no longer appears possible. The analysis of user needs through a review of existing data sources relevant to countryside access and rights of way was delayed whilst errors in the MENE (Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment) data were raised with Natural England (NE) and, more significantly, the proposed condition survey is now being undertaken in-house in order to reduce costs. Despite this the authority will meet its obligations under section 60(30) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, which requires that local authorities review their plans at intervals not exceeding 10 years in length, and endeavour keep the forum apprised of its progress towards this objective.

Access for the Disabled

The Disability sub group has continued working on the development of a series of access for all leaflets aimed at disabled users and families with pushchairs.

The sub group has produced an additional four leaflets during the reporting period at;

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

Each leaflet provides detailed route information describing path surfaces, path gradients and cross-slopes, as well as the location of path infrastructure, parking and on site facilities.

The group has also become increasingly involved in the promotion of disabled access in Lincolnshire. The Willingham Woods access for all route was featured in the summer 2014 edition of County News magazine, Gordon Norris and John Law attended the 'Give it Some Buzz' Health and Fitness Show in Spalding and the group has produced a slide show for use in doctors surgeries to promote countryside access opportunities in the county.

In the coming year the group are planning to undertake a diverse range of tasks including;

- The publication of four additional access for all leaflets,
- Providing dementia walk leader training
- Providing countryside for all training
- The production and installation of interpretive panels.

Public Rights of Way and Level Crossings

Both forums have shown an increasing interest in the issue of public rights of way affected by level crossings.

Network Rail manages in the region of 9000 level crossings across the country. Approximately 1,500 level crossings are on public vehicular roads and the rest are in locations where public footpaths, bridleways and private roads and tracks cross the railway. The RoWIP rail crossing audit identified over 93 locations in Lincolnshire where public rights of way cross the rail network. Some of these are provided for by grade separated crossings such as a bridge or underpass, however, the majority are at level crossings with no control measures other than a stile/gate at the line side and infill boarding between rails to avoid trip hazards.

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) policy on level crossings is to seek to reduce risk through a variety of means and, where practicable, reduce risk as far as possible through the elimination of level crossings in favour of bridges, underpasses or diversions. Where elimination is not possible, the ORR aims to ensure that Network Rail and other duty holders introduce measures to reduce risk so far as is reasonably practicable. During the course of last 12 months Network Rail has worked on a number of schemes in Lincolnshire aimed at improving the safety of public rights of way affected by level crossings

Members of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF expressed concern that some public paths have been unofficially closed by Network Rail and are keen to establish dialogue on this issue. The forum believes that they should be an initial point of contact on any rail crossing proposals effecting public rights of way in Lincolnshire and Rutland. Rail crossings and public rights of way is now a standard item on the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF agenda.

The Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum discussed the proposed closure of Lincoln Public Footpath No. 41 at Ballast Hole crossing(*) and the Chairman attended the public inquiry on behalf of the forum.

(*)The public path order to extinguish Lincoln Public Footpath No. 41 was confirmed on the 18 May 2015.

Other Topics Discussed

- The future of the permissive path network
- South Lincolnshire Walking Festival
- Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park
- The Department for Transport's Cycle Delivery Plan
- The Future of Public Rights of Way Delivery in Lincolnshire
- The East Midlands LAF Chairs meeting
- Definitive Map Modification Order and Public Path Order Updates
- Travel4Rutland Cycle Route Infrastructure

Sub Groups

- County Farms
- Access for the Disabled
- Lost Ways

Presentations

The Mid Lincs LAF received one presentation during the reporting period;

- Phil Garner, Public Health, Lincolnshire County Council – The role of public health.

The South Lincs and Rutland LAF did not receive any presentations during the reporting period;

Forum Expenditure

Mid Lincs Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200.00
Member travel expenses	£ 276.90
Total	£1,476.90

South Lincs and Rutland Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200.00
Member travel expenses	£1,720.95
Sub Total	£2,920.95
Total	£4,397.85

Membership

Mid Lincolnshire Local (Countryside) Access Forum		
Name	Area of Interest	End Date of Appointment
Sheila Brookes	Carriage driving	July 2015
Alison Healey	Land Management/ Horse riding, Health	July 2015
Christopher Padley	Walking, Cycling	July 2017
Raymond Shipley	Conservation/ Game keeping	July 2016
Peter Skipworth	Walking, Conservation, Tourism	July 2017
Irene Unsworth ⁽¹⁾	Farming, Rural Business	July 2014
Dr. Christopher Allison	Walking	July 2015
Colin Smith	Walking, Health Walking	July 2017
Richard Graham	Health Walking, Walking	July 2015
Sandra Harrison	Horse riding	Sept 2016
Councillor IB Colquhoun	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. C. Hoyes	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. McNally	Local Authority Representative	n/a

(1) Irene Unsworth resigned from the forum at the end of her appointment.

South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forum		
Name	Area of Interest	End Date of Appointment
Bryan Bowles	Farming / Land Management	July 2015
Rosemary Harris	Landowner, Local History	July 2016
Barbara Smitheringale	Walking, tourism	July 2015
Audrey Morley	Farming, Horse Riding	July 2015
William Cross	Land Management	July 2017
Alec Hill	Recreational Motoring	July 2016
Gordon Norris	Walking, Access for people with disabilities	July 2015
Alan Gibbon (3)	Walking	July 2014
John Williams	Walking	July 2015
John Law	Other Interests	July 2017
Ian Cox	Countryside Management	July 2015
Paul Marshall	Disabled Access	August 2016
Dr. Rebecca Johnson (2)	Other Interests	September 2017
Councillor B. Montgomery (1)	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor R. Wootten	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. Brailsford	Local Authority Representative	n/a

- (1) Brian Montgomery passed away August 2014
(2) Dr Rebecca Johnson joined the forum in September 2014
(3) Alan Gibbon passed away in December 2014

Contacts

Mid Lincolnshire Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Secretary Steve Blagg
Democratic Services Officer
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Lincoln
LN1 1YQ
01522 553788
E-mail: steve.blagg@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Advisors

Andy Savage
Senior Countryside Access Officer
Lincolnshire County Council
Communities
City Hall
Lincoln
LN1 1DN
01522 782070
Email: countryside_access@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Nicola Hardy
Public Rights of Way
Mapping Officer
North East Lincs Council
Highways and Transport
Origin One
1 Origin Way
Genesis Way
Europarc
Grimsby
DN37 9TZ
01472 324726
Email: nicola.hardy@nelincs.gov.uk

South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Secretary Andrea Brown
Democratic Services Officer
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Lincoln
LN1 1YQ
01522 553787
E-mail: andrea.brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Advisors

Andy Savage
Senior Countryside Access Officer
Lincolnshire County Council
Communities
City Hall
Lincoln
LN1 1DN
01522 782070
Email: countryside_access@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Stuart Crook
Rights of Way Officer
Rutland County Council
Transport Strategy
Catmose
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6HP
01572 758260
Email: scrook@rutland.gov.uk

Further information about the work of the Local Access Forums is available at
www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside