

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy4

Report to:	Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum and South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local Access Forum
Date:	3 and 11 July 2018
Subject:	Considerations as to the future organisation of Local Access Forums in Lincolnshire

Summary:

Consideration of alternative options for the organisation of Lincolnshire County Council's two Local Access Forums (LAFs)

Recommendation(s):

That the Forums consider the contents of the report and advise Lincolnshire County Council, Rutland County Council and North East Lincolnshire Council as to recommendations for the future organisation of the LAFs

Background

The formation of Local Access Forums (LAFs) in England and Wales was part of the set of new powers and duties contained in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

It was decided after discussion between Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and Rutland County Council that there would be three LAFs to cover the geographic area of the historic county area of Lincolnshire namely:

North Lincolnshire LAF	-	(North Lincolnshire Council)
Mid Lincolnshire Joint LAF	-	(Lincolnshire County Council and North East Lincolnshire Council)
South Lincolnshire and Rutland Joint LAF	-	(Lincolnshire County Council and Rutland County Council)

The two Lincolnshire County Council LAFs began meeting in 2003 and now, after 15 years, the authority is seeking the LAFs views on proposals to consider the organisation of LAFs across the area.

Since 2003 the LCC Countryside Service has seen much reduction in the staffing resource available to support the LAFs and it is now becoming increasingly difficult to produce reports and to support two Forums often on consecutive days /

evenings. It is also very apparent that membership of the LAFs has dwindled over recent years and in particular there is a significant difficulty in ensuring that membership reflects the appropriate balance between users, landowners and other interests.

Membership geographically is also a concern, especially in the South Lincolnshire & Rutland LAF where membership is generally focussed on the south and west of the area. There is no particular value to LCC in having two LAFs and much of the forward plan will be county-wide matters as opposed to being geographically north and south.

As both forums are significantly low on numbers the County Council believes the time is right to review the organisation of the LAFs prior to any round of recruitment. LCC is certainly not the first authority to do so and others have previously taken an opportunity to review and reorganise their LAFs to provide fresh impetus and to attract new membership. A good example of such an authority is Shropshire who recently reformed their LAF as the Shropshire Great Outdoors Strategy Board – examples of their set up can be found at <http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/>.

The County Council is therefore seeing the advice of both forums as to a proposal to:

- a) de-merge the two forums
- b) reconstitute a Lincolnshire Local Access Forum
- c) to contact North Lincolnshire Council for a view on a sole pan-Lincolnshire LAF or whether a merger with North East Lincolnshire Council was a more viable option.

Legal Issues

The requirements for the reorganisation of Local Access Forums can be found in the The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 and the associated Defra guidance.

An Appointing Authority must give 21 days notice of an intention to withdraw from a Joint Local Access Forum.

Background Papers

- 1) **The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007**
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/268/pdfs/ukxi_20070268_en.pdf

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