

Mid Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local (Countryside) Access Forums Joint Annual Report 2012/ 13



Chairmen's Introduction

Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum

The LAF's job of advising its local authorities on improving rights of way is bound to be difficult during a period of severe public expenditure restraint, such as we are in now, since lack of funds very much reduces their freedom to act on any advice. On the other hand, not all improvements require extra funds, and everyone involved in rights of way work, whether voluntarily or professionally, must look at ways of cutting out waste and inefficiency, and also put an emphasis on those aspects which save money in the long run. Chief amongst these is surely health. People have always known that fresh air and exercise are good for physical health, and that getting away into a peaceful and beautiful environment is good for the mind. But a growing body of evidence is demonstrating that encouraging and facilitating walking in particular, but other forms of outdoor recreation is a sound investment which will save far more money to the health services than it costs. The Social Care Act has created Health and Well Being Boards by which local government is charged with taking a broad view of improving health, in a "joined-up" approach across all services. In Lincolnshire, the "walking for health" programme, has already been very successful, and has involved an element of improving rights of way. In the LAFS, we believe that the latent value and opportunity that rights of way have as part of the process of getting the nation fit in body and mind, and thereby saving far more money than needs to be spent, is enormous. It is a question of getting the message over to local and national government.

The LAF is only a small advisory body meeting only quarterly, but what have we done to the above end during the year? I feel two themes have dominated the year, one is what might be called the usual ongoing issues concerning things like path maintenance, legal orders, the other is the concerns over illegal motor vehicle use (I emphasise that not all motor use is illegal or a problem, and we are here talking of the illegal use). I feel that both sides found it a very useful meeting, raising awareness of the problem to the police, and establishing lines of contact.

Christopher Padley

Chair

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. You will see that it has been another busy year for the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF with the usual round of meetings and consultations.

Over the past 12 months we have held four meetings and discussed and debated numerous topics concerning Public Rights of Way and the use of the Lincolnshire and Rutland countryside.

The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF covers a wide geographical area and members often have to travel long distances to attend meetings. Despite heavy travel commitments members have shown a great deal of commitment and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions and continuing support. I am sorry to see George Keeping leave us but welcome Barbara Smitheringale and the interest and experience that she will bring to our debates.

During the year significant discussion has taken place concerning the use of motor vehicles in the countryside. Members have worked closely with officers and user groups to identify the key issues and members have provided constructive feedback to find a suitable and appropriate way forward.

John Law has continued to work with Parish Councils throughout the county to raise awareness of the routes which may be lost when Higher Level Stewardship agreements come.

RoWIPs continue to be a vital tool in shaping the future of access to the countryside. Both Rutland and Lincolnshire County Council have made good progress in the delivery of the first RoWIP and the LAF are looking forward to assisting in the development of the second RoWIPs during the coming year.

The coming year will continue to represent challenges for all those who are involved in countryside access. We're conscious that resources are finite and it will be necessary to carefully prioritise resources to best possible affect. It will also be important to build partnerships and engage with people in order to achieve improved access to the countryside.

County Councillor Ray Wootten

Chair

South Lincolnshire and Rutland
Local (Countryside) Access Forum

Role and Purpose of Local Access Forums

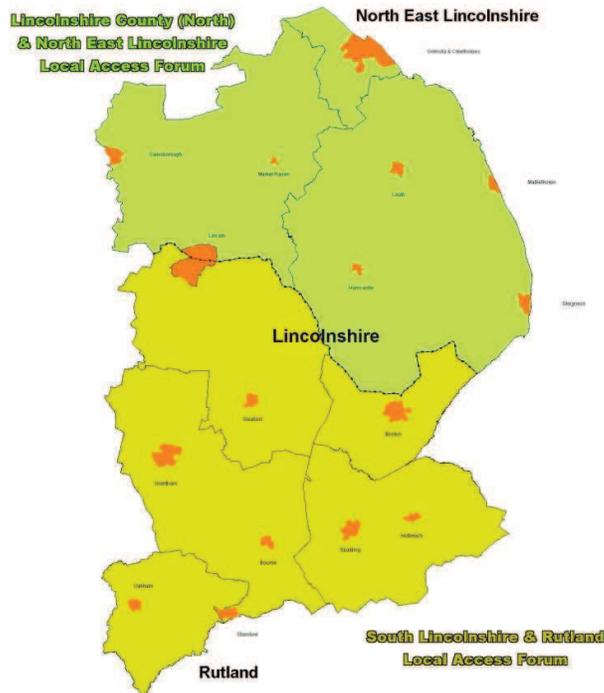
Local Access Forums (LAFs) are statutory bodies established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Two LAFs were established in 2003, covering Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and Rutland. The Mid Lincolnshire LAF (Mid Lincs Forum) is a joint forum between Lincolnshire County Council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

A list of members and their areas of interest is shown in the membership section of the Annual Report.

Changes in membership and appointments

-Mid Lincs Forum

Ron Flintham resigned from the forum in January 2012.

-South Lincs Forum

Barbara Smitheringale joined the forum in May 2012 and George Keeping resigned from the South Lincs and Rutland LAF in January 2013.

-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 Wootten 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 2012/13. Meetings have been held at the following venues:

Mid Lincs LAF	South Lincs and Rutland LAF
17 April 2012 – Wragby	18 April 2012 - Sleaford
3 July 2012 – Lincoln	4 July 2012 – Grantham
9 October 2012 – Market Rasen	10 October 2012 - Oakham
15 January 2013 – Horncastle	17 January 2013 – Grantham

The average attendance rate for the Mid Lincs LAF during the reporting period was 75% and the South Lincs and Rutland LAF was 76%.

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

The first Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published in April 2007. The five year plan has been implemented under four themes, each with a strategic aim and supporting the wider social objectives of the County Council including the aims of the LTP2:

- Sustainable Transport – *Strategic Aim to increase the use of the network for sustainable transport and utility trips*
- Health and Well-being – *Strategic Aim to make it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily lives and lead healthier lifestyles*
- Rural Economy and Tourism – *Strategic Aim to support local businesses and tourism through access improvements*
- Social Issues – *Strategic Aim to enable more people to enjoy walking and riding*

There is also a separate strand of Core Tasks that will assist in the management of the network and access opportunities.

Work commenced on the development of the second Lincolnshire RoWIP during the reporting period. A great deal has changed since the publication of the first ROWIP and the second ROWIP will have to take account of significant changes in National policy and the current economic climate. The second ROWIP will have an increased emphasis on community involvement and partnership work as a result of the County Council's decreased capability to deliver the plan on its own.

Both LAFs will be formally consulted on the Draft Second Lincolnshire RoWIP during summer 2013.

North East Lincolnshire Council

North East Lincolnshire Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published in August 2008. The Mid Lincs LAF has received regular updates on the implementation of the ROWIP from Councillor Colquhoun and Nicola Hardy. During the reporting period notable progress has been made in the delivery of the plan including the review of the Enforcement Policy.

Rutland County Council

2012/13 was the final year of implementation for the first Rutland RoWIP. Stuart Crook provided a final report on the implementation of the RoWIP during the July meeting.

A number of improvement projects have been implemented during the year including the replacement of gates with stiles and cycling improvements between Egleton and Oakham.

Motor Vehicles in the Countryside

Both forums have shown an active interest in the use of motor vehicles in the countryside.

Members have continued to receive regular updates of the ongoing management of Sewstern Lane (the Drift). In 1986 the ancient highway was registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its rare and species rich calcareous grassland. A significant increase in the use of motor vehicles in recent years has led to a severe deterioration in the condition of the lane. The route has now been permanently closed to all motor vehicles and, despite continued use by a small number of motor vehicles, it is hoped that the SSSI will recover and provide more sustainable year round access for non-motorised users.

The Mid Lincs LAF has also shown concern over the general use of the countryside by motor vehicles. The forum highlighted the need to report illegal use to the police to enable any identified 'hot spots' to be addressed by the police and Lincolnshire County Council. The forum has also expressed particular concern regarding the environmental damage which off road vehicles have caused on a number of routes in the county. It was suggested that Huddle could be used to establish the views of other LAFs around the country and gain examples of best practice.

Higher Level Stewardship – Permissive Paths

The Higher Level Stewardship scheme enabled landowners and farmers to enter into 10 year agreement to provide permissive linear and open access. Changes in national policy mean that Natural England is now unable to include permissive access revenue payments in new HLS agreements. As a result, when an agri-environment agreement ends, the agreement holder will not receive any further permissive access revenue payments through any subsequent Higher Level Stewardship Agreement. DEFRA and Natural England are keen to see that permissive access should continue on a voluntary basis in situations where the provision of permissive linear routes or open access has proved to be of public benefit.

John Law of the South Lincs and Rutland LAF has continued to work with Parish Councils throughout the county to raise awareness of the routes which may be lost. The Mid Lincs LAF visited the network of HLS paths at Wragby prior to the April meeting in order gain a better understanding of the importance of the HLS permissive path network. The project has attracted attention from a number of interested parish councils and has led to the retention of a permissive path at Marston.

Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park

The Coastal Country Park (LCCP) occupies an area between Sandilands and Chapel St. Leonards, covering approximately eight kilometres of coastline and up to 35 square kilometres of coastal hinterland. The Mid Lincs LAF has received regular updates during the development of the LCCP. The County Council has now embarked on a project to improve access in the park through infrastructure and access improvements. Two members of the Mid Lincs LAF, Colin Smith and Richard Graham, have volunteered to sit on the Access Sub Group of the Coastal Country Park Task Team.

Access for the Disabled

The Disability Group was re-established during 2012 as number of forum members considered that the needs of disabled users are not been sufficiently addressed. The sub group, comprising of two members from each forum, has met 3 times during the reporting period and attracted a great deal of attention from local disabled groups.

Natural England Update

Elizabeth Barnicott of Natural England attended both forum meetings in January to provide an update on a range of national and regional issues.

Coastal Access - The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on Natural England to create a long distance coastal path around England and an associated margin for recreation. The legislation will be implemented by Natural England over the coming years. It is envisaged that the section from North Norfolk to Skegness will be created between 2015 and 2017. It is intended that both LAFs will be formally invited to provide comments in due course.

Huddle – Elizabeth provided members with a Huddle demonstration and encouraged additional members to become registered users on the system.

National Nature Reserves - Natural England is embarking on a 4 year programme to dedicate all of its National Nature Reserves (NNRs) for permanent public access. Theddlethorpe and Saltfleetby Dunes NNR will be dedicated for public access in 2014. Natural England staff consulted user groups, Lincolnshire County Council and community groups in early 2013 to identify access opportunities on the site.

Other Topics Discussed

- The creation of paths of roadside verges.
- Spa Trail proposals
- PRoW across railway lines
- Ploughing and Cropping on PRoW

Consultation Responses

- Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan 4 – Lincolnshire County Council
- Improvements to the Policy and Legal Framework for Public Rights of Way - DEFRA

Presentations

- The South Lincs and Rutland LAF received a presentation from Elizabeth Barnicott of Natural England regarding the Paths for Communities Grant Scheme.
- Both forums received presentations from Elizabeth Barnicott of regarding Coastal Access, Huddle and access to National Nature Reserves.

Forum Expenditure

Mid Lincs Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200
Member travel expenses	£76.60
Total	£1,276.60

South Lincs and Rutland Forum

Democratic Services support	£1,200
Member travel expenses	£449.40
Sub Total	£1,649.40
Total	£2,962.00

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 2014
Raymond Shipley	Conservation/ Game keeping	July 2013
Peter Skipworth	Walking, Conservation, Tourism	July 2014
Irene Unsworth	Farming, Rural Business	July 2014
Dr. Christopher Allison	Walking	July 2015
Colin Smith	Walking, Health Walking	July 2014
Ronald Flintham (1)	Disabled Access	July 2014
Richard Graham	Health Walking, Walking	July 2015
Councillor IB Colquhoun	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor E. N. Bauer	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. C. Hoyes	Local Authority Representative	n/a

(1) Ronald Flintham resigned January 2013

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 2013
Barbara Smitheringale (1)	Walking, tourism	July 2015
Audrey Morley	Farming, Horse Riding	July 2015
William Cross	Land Management	July 2014
Alec Hill	Recreational Motoring	July 2013
George Keeping (2)	Walking, Cycling, Outdoor Pursuits	July 2013
Gordon Norris	Walking, Access for people with disabilities	July 2015
Alan Gibbon	Walking	July 2014
John Williams	Walking	July 2015
John Law	Other Interests	July 2014
Ian Cox	Countryside Management	July 2015
Councillor B. Montgomery	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor R. Wootten	Local Authority Representative	n/a
Councillor D. Brailsford	Local Authority Representative	n/a

- (1) Barbara Smitheringale appointed May 2012
(2) George Keeping resigned January 2013

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