

(Held at the Town Hall, Stamford)

PRESENT: BRIAN MONTGOMERY (CHAIRMAN)

Representing Lincolnshire County Council:- Councillors David Brailsford and Ray Wootten

Representing Independent Members:- Ian Cox, William Cross, Rosemary Harris, Graham Law, George Keeping, and John Williams

Officers:- Andrew Savage (Senior Countryside Access Officer) and Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for absence:- Councillor Peter Golden, Michael Brearley, Bryan Bowles, Alec Hill, Mrs Audrey Morley and Gordon Norris

41. COLIN SMITH, TRANSFERRED TO THE MID-LINCS ACCESS FORUM

The Chairman stated that Colin Smith was no longer a member of the South Lincs Access Forum and had transferred to the Mid Lincs Access Forum because he had taken over as the Ramblers' Area Footpath Officer, Lincs North.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Forum, sent his best wishes to Colin.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of previous meetings held on 19 January and 9 February 2011 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43. WORKFORCE CHANGE PROPOSALS

Andrew Savage presented a report on the proposals for workforce change within the Rights of Way and Countryside Access Service following initial comments received on the proposals during the consultation period.

He stated that the revised proposals detailed in Appendix B of the report needed to be amended to show five full time equivalents, not six, Definitive Map Officers. Of the twenty five posts which existed before the restructure these had now been reduced to sixteen posts.

In response to a comment by the Forum about the loss of the senior Definitive Map Officer post and its effects on reducing the backlog of case work, Andrew Savage stated

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that the service would need to be managed in accordance with the budget.

RESOLVED

That the comments of the Forum be noted.

44. EAST MIDLAND'S LAFS CHAIR'S MEETING

The Chairman reported on the outcome of the East Midlands LAFs Chair's meeting on 17 March. Matters discussed at the meeting included, amongst others, consideration of the future of the English Access Forum which now seemed to be moribund; the positive view of the government that LAFs met the government's own ideas of the "Big Society" concept; the importance of LAF annual reports; the views of LAFs role in the future review of the Forestry Commission were sought by the government; the continuation of funding of the regional Chairs Coordinator's post (Claire Herring) for another year was welcomed; the need for LAFs to liaise with Parish Councils to further the development of Rights of Way maintenance; that Rights of Way maintenance in the East Midlands was better than other regions and the effects of the Localism Bill.

Comments by the Forum included:-

1. The involvement of local people as mentioned in the Localism Bill was welcomed.
2. The Ramblers had been asked to report incidents of the decline of High Stewardship schemes. The government had been requested to retain the power to implement these schemes because they benefited peoples' health.
3. There was a need to encourage people to walk for their health and if walks could be created around or in the vicinity of settlements then this was welcomed.
4. Parish Councils should appoint a footpaths officer.
5. The Local Association of Local Councils (LALC) should be asked to communicate to Parish Councils the need to establish contacts for walking groups.
6. The Forum should produce information for Parish Councils on access in their areas.

Andrew Savage stated that a voluntary scheme for informing Parish Councils about access arrangements already existed in Lincolnshire.

The Forum considered that this was an opportune time to inform Parish Councils of Rights of Way as the election of new Parish Councils was due on 5 May 2011. Stuart Crook agreed to issue a press release to Parish Councils in Rutland on this topic.
NOTED.

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45. MOD LAND AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The Chairman reported concerns expressed at the East Midlands LAFs Chair's meeting about when MoD land was released for sale it was often land once subjected to rights of way closure for military or security reasons which no longer applied.

The Forum commented on the future of Cottesmore RAF base and Councillor David Brailsford stated that he was speaking to the Station Commander on 17 May 2011 and would report on the future of the base for Rights of Way to the next meeting of the Forum.

A member of the Forum stated that another vacant MoD site had been handed over to the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

RESOLVED

That MoD land and Public Rights of Way be retained on the agenda for future consideration.

46. LAF ANNUAL REPORT – FORMAT

The Chairman stated that Defra was taking a greater interest in LAF annual reports and therefore there was a need for the Forum to have more input in the production of the annual report.

John Williams was requested to provide a copy of Leicestershire County Council's Local Access Forum's annual report to Andrew Savage and Stuart Crook for circulation to relevant agencies. NOTED.

47. THE SALE OF THE PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE

Ian Cox presented a report on the sale of the Public Forest estate which was agreed should be sent to all members of the Forum and the Woodland Trust. The conclusion of the report was that there was likely to be a loss of timber and access if the Public Forest estate was sold to private interests. He asked whether the County Councils were being consulted on any sale of the estate to ensure transparency of sale. It was incumbent on Defra and the Forestry Commission to carry out consultations with the Councils before any sale took place.

Comments made by the Forum included:-

1. The Forestry Commission used to consult the County Councils but it would appear that this was no longer the case.
2. A copy of the response of the Peak District Access Forum should be circulated to all members of the Forum.

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3. The working group of members established to examine the proposed sale of the Public Forest estate at the meeting of the Forum in January 2011, should be retained to monitor developments and report to the Forum.
4. This subject should remain as a standing item on the Forum agenda.
5. Ian Cox's report should be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.
6. Reference was made to access issues of Morkery Woods and crossing the A1.

RESOLVED

- (1) That a copy of Ian Cox's report be circulated to the Forum and the Woodland Trust.
- (2) That a copy of the Peak District Local Access Forum report on its response to the future of the Public Forest estate in England, be circulated to the Forum.
- (3) That the sale of the Public Forest estate be a standing item on the agenda of the Forum.
- (4) That the working group of members of the Forum established at the meeting of the Forum on 19 January 2011, be retained to report further on the future of the Public Forest Estate.
- (5) That Ian Cox's report be considered at the next meeting with a view to it being sent to Defra.
- (6) That officers report to the next meeting on the outcome of investigations into access issues at Morkery Wood.

**48. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2007-2012 UPDATE**

The Forum received reports from Rutland and Lincolnshire County Councils outlining progress made in the implementation of the Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012.

Stuart Crook stated that the budget for Rights of Way in Rutland had been reduced by 60% and this would have an effect on service provision. He referred to the Local Sustainability Transport Fund in which Rutland was making a bid for monies in the first tranche and he would report further to the Forum when more details were known.

Comments by the Forum included that in a period of fewer resources there was a need to measure what had not been achieved as well as what had been achieved which could assist both Councils to achieve increased financial funding; with regard to recording this information it was important to obtain feedback from users which would allow the Forum to influence other agencies; there was the ongoing problem of communication with bodies like the Ramblers on issues such as access; the need for officers to communicate any concerns they had about access to the Forum so that the Forum could then relate these concerns to the relevant agency and the need for ramps and

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parking bays to be provided in urban areas to assist people with pushchairs and people in wheel chairs.

The Chairman agreed that the issue in connection with the provision of ramps and parking bays in urban areas was a good point and should be noted by both Councils.

RESOLVED

That the report and the various comments made by the Forum be noted.

49. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

The Forum received reports from Rutland and Lincolnshire County Councils on progress of Definitive Map Modification Orders October 2006 to 23 March 2011.

A comment by the Forum included the possible effects of cuts in legal services and the possibility of blockages in the processing of Definitive Map Modification Orders and Public Path Orders.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that an update on the possible effects of cuts in legal services and the possibility of blockages in the processing of Definitive Map Modification Orders and Public Path Orders, be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

49. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORT

The Forum received reports from Lincolnshire and Rutland County Councils on the progress of Public Path Orders.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

50. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2.00pm on 6 July 2011 at Wrangle Village Hall (Note:- The meeting will include the formal part of the meeting at 2.00pm followed by a site visit thereafter).

(Post Meeting Note: The venue has changed for the meeting on 6 July and revised details will be sent to members in due course)

The meeting closed at 3.00pm