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**SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE AND RUTLAND
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
19 JANUARY 2011**

Report Reference:- **2**

(Held at North Kesteven District Council Offices, Sleaford)

PRESENT: BRIAN MONTGOMERY (CHAIRMAN)

Representing Lincolnshire County Council:- Councillor Ray Wootten

Representing Rutland County Council:- Councillor Peter Golden

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

Officers:- Chris Miller (Principal Rights of Way & Access Officer), Andrew Savage (Senior Countryside Access Officer) and Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for absence:- Councillor David Brailsford, Michael Brearley, Bryan Bowles, Rosemary Harris, Alec Hill, Mrs Audrey Morley, Gordon Norris and Stuart Crook (Public Rights of Way Officer, Rutland County Council)

29. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Miriam Smith from the Ramblers Association stated that she had produced a database of Defra sites in connection with the High Stewardship Scheme and agreed to email a copy to Steve Blagg who would, in turn, circulate to all members of the Forum.

Miriam Smith stated that there were still problems with 4x4 vehicles on Sewstern Lane and Chris Miller agreed to inform Mark Heaton in the County Council's highways section about the situation.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 October 2010 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of the word "District" before "Peter Golden" in the list of attendees and reference being made in minute 23 to the following:-

"Reference was made to the need to make improvements to the route of Car Dyke when funds became available as this would help to develop tourism".

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31. BUDGETS AND FUTURE DELIVERY

Chris Miller gave details of the budget settlement for Lincolnshire County Council's highways and transportation which amounted to £45.33m for 2011/12, of which, savings of £8.46m had been made over the next two financial years, with most of that taking place in the first year.

The Rights of Way Service had suffered substantial cuts and details of the service structures would be published on 26 January 2011 for consultation. Future delivery of services, including priorities and efficiencies together with this Forum's suggestions on future delivery, would be required.

RESOLVED

(a) That a special meeting of the Forum be arranged for 1.30pm on 9 February 2011, at the North Kesteven Council Offices, Sleaford, to respond to the consultation on service structures and their effects on access.

(b) That the views of this Forum be sent to the Mid Lincs Access Forum and their comments be shared with this Forum.

32. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007
– 2012 UPDATE

The Forum received reports from Lincolnshire and Rutland County Councils on Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007 – 2012 update. The inclement weather had delayed some of the projects and there was also a need to get the Plan in line with the Local Transport Plan 3. With regard to the latter point the Chairman stated that he needed to discuss this further with colleagues at Rutland before bringing the matter back to the Forum.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

33. PROGRESS OF DEFINITIVE MAP ORDER WORK – OCTOBER 2006 – 20
DECEMBER 2010

The Forum received reports from Lincolnshire and Rutland County Councils on progress of Definitive Map Order Work from October 2006 to 20 December 2010.

Officers referred to delays in dealing with appeals by the government's Inspectorate. However, the number of Inspectors had been reduced in the Comprehensive Review Settlement (CSR).

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Following an enquiry about the removal of a footpath in South Holland, officers agreed to investigate this matter. Similar cases of obstruction of public rights of way had been common in the past but improved publicity in recent years by local authorities had improved matters.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

34. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS PROGRESS REPORT

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

Chris Miller confirmed that the diversion of public footpaths No's 8 and 9 at Carlton Scroop had been confirmed by the Inspector.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

35. REGIONAL CHAIR'S MEETING

The Chairman reported verbally on issues raised at the recent Regional Chair's meeting including the possibility of Natural England's co-ordinator losing her job following the CSR; the usefulness of maintaining quarterly meetings of the Chairs although it was noted that Northants County Council had opted out of the region as they considered that they had more in common with the eastern region; the difficulties of the financial effects of the CSR was recognised and the future of the English Access Forum was in doubt because of the lack of resources. In the case of the latter Defra preferred to contact each LAF individually.

Chris Miller referred to the backlog of Definitive Map Orders and the establishment of a working group to examine the matter and come up with recommendations to make the process less confrontational between land owners and users. New legislation was required but the government did not consider it a priority at the current time.

The Chairman stated that rights of way across land owned by the Ministry of Defence had also been examined and the defence estates would be contacted by Natural England; the NFU had been invited to the next regional meeting to discuss permissive access; "Ride Welland" (equestrian) which was a growth area for tourism; and the

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effects of any privatisation of Forestry Commission could have implications for access. In connection with the latter, the English Access Forum had written to Defra about the proposed sale of any land and the need to protect public access. It was agreed that the Local Access Forums should be consulted before any sale took place and it was agreed to add this item to the agenda for the special meeting on 9 February 2011.

RESOLVED

(a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the effects of any potential sale of Forestry Commission land on access be considered at the special meeting of the Forum on 9 February 2011.

36. NATURAL ENGLAND (NE) UPDATE

Chris Miller reported that at the recent regional Chair's meeting the Chief Executive of NE had stated that NE would be a third of its original size following the CSR review and would no longer be able to retain its regional structures. Biodiversity and land use planning were NE's main priorities with no support for direct delivery. Natural England was also examining the possibility of other agencies running the health agenda and nature reserves; coastal access was also being examined. NOTED.

37. EXISTING LAF SUB COMMITTEES

Andrew Savage reported verbally on the current standing of the Forum's working groups. The Forum agreed that all working groups should report their findings in the first instance to the Forum and accepted that working groups would have increased importance as the budget cuts took effect.

Ian Cox and George Keeping agreed to examine the implications of any sale of Forestry Commission land and report back to the Forum on 9 February 2011. The Chairman would speak to Gordon Norris before the next meeting to examine the need for any more working groups required.

RESOLVED

That the report and actions identified be agreed.

38. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

1.30 pm on 9 February 2011 at North Kesteven Council Offices

1.30pm on 13 April 2011 at Stamford (NB The time of this meeting has changed).