

(Meeting held at South Kesteven District Council, Grantham)

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR RAY WOOTTEN (CHAIRMAN (REPRESENTING LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL))**

Representing Rutland County Council: Councillor Brian Montgomery.

Representing Independent Members: Ian Cox, Alan Gibbon, Rosemary Harris, Alec Hill, John Law, Audrey Morley, Gordon Norris, Barbara Smitheringale and John Williams.

Officers: Andrea Brown (Democratic Services Officer, Lincolnshire County Council), Stuart Crook (Public Rights of Way Officer, Rutland County Council), Chris Miller (Countryside Access Manager, Lincolnshire County Council) and Andrew Savage (Senior Countryside Access Officer, Lincolnshire County Council).

Also in attendance: Vicky Allen (Leicestershire & Rutland Bridleways Association), David Gregory (Grantham Ramblers) and Alex Pyper (Leicestershire & Rutland British Horse Society).

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Brailsford and George Keeping. The Chairman announced that Mr Keeping had also submitted his resignation.

29. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2012

Audrey Morley requested that minute number 25, including the resolution, be amended slightly as the Paths for Communities Project was *near* Belton, along the A47, and not *in* Belton as noted in the minutes.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum held on 10 October 2012, with the amendment as noted above, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2012

Further to the last meeting of the Forum, the Senior Countryside Access Officer provided the Local Access Forum with an update on the following areas: -

- i) Sewstern Lane – The Drift – Update

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Chris Miller confirmed that he was aware of the issues, which continued despite a TRO for motor vehicles being issued. No further updates were available but a meeting was scheduled with Natural England and Lincolnshire Police in order to agree an appropriate way forward.

ii) Accessibility and the Needs of People with Disabilities

Andrew Savage explained that a sub-group had been set up by Colin Smith, of which two meetings had been held. Both meetings had included stakeholder groups.

Brian Montgomery confirmed he had attended both meetings as a member of the sub-group and advised that the meetings had produced a lot of interest with Lincolnshire based organisations. Additionally, the Chairman of the Rutland Access Group had also agreed to attend. It was hoped that a full report from the sub-group would be available at the next meeting of the forum.

31. COASTAL ACCESS PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Elizabeth Barnicott, of Natural England, to the meeting and invited her to address members. Key points noted for consideration were:-

- What are the aspirations of the Local Access Forums in relation to coastal access?
- What are the key issues or opportunities which coastal access could help address or deliver?
- How could coast access be used to benefit visitors and residents?

During discussion, the impact on nature sites was raised and it was asked if Natural England would consider moving into areas which could have a potential impact on seal pup season, for example. Ms Barnicott confirmed that lessons had been learnt from past schemes and was confident that these issues would be addressed.

The Local Access Forum would be asked to formally provide their views although any previous comments made in relation to Coastal Access would have been logged by Natural England previously, via the Lincolnshire Coast & Country Park Group.

A suggestion was made to hold a meeting of the forum in the Summer on the coast to focus on this issue and apprise new members of the comments previously made. This was agreed.

The Chairman thanked Ms Barnicott for her presentation.

RESOLVED

- i) That the presentation be noted.
- ii) That a meeting of the South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local Access Forum scheduled for the Summer of 2013 be held on the coast.

32. HUDDLE – UPDATE

The Chairman invited Elizabeth Barnicott, of Natural England, to address members in regard to Huddle, the internet based information forum for Local Access Forums (LAF). A demonstration of the system was given and members were reminded that the information on this forum was the view of the individuals unless it was particularly noted that this was the view of an actual LAF.

Although licenses had been limited previously, there was now no limit on the number of users who could access the system, provided they were affiliated with a Local Access Forum. Members were advised to contact Fiona Groves, from the Natural Route, who could provide a login and password. Contact details for Fiona are below:-

[fgroves@me.com](mailto:fgroves@me.com) Telephone: 01400 251192 Mobile: 07967777502

Website <http://www.naturalroute.co.uk>

Members of the LAF who currently have logins expressed the view that the system was a great source of information and recommended it others.

RESOLVED

To note the presentation and update provided.

33. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- i) Rutland County Council

A verbal report by Rutland County Council's Public Rights of Way Officer was given, which confirmed that there had been little change to the action plan for the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan considered at the last meeting. Work on the footpath between Whissendine and Teigh (surfacing of the access path across the allotments and removal and replacement of four stiles with gates) was to be included.

Two main issues had been progressed since the last meeting. The first was the proposed cycle track at Lyndon Top had received approval at Full Council to go ahead with a CPO. The second was a bid submission for local cycling provisions between Egleton and Oakham to the grants board and it was expected that a response would be received by the end of February 2013.

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Complaints had been made regarding the condition of Mount Pleasant track in Oakham although it was suggested that, following comments made by the Oakham Healthy Walking Group, funds may be available to repair the track.

The planned bridleway over the bridge at Ashwell was ongoing with required items ordered and awaiting delivery. The Terms of Grant dictated that this work must be complete by August 2013 but river levels must be lower before work can commence.

**RESOLVED**

That the verbal update be noted.

ii) Lincolnshire County Council

A report by Lincolnshire County Council's Senior Countryside Access Officer was considered, which provided the Local Access Forum with an update on the progress made in the implementation of the Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Appended to the report was the Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan Action Plan.

The Improvement Plan split into four key themes, as follows: -

- sustainable transport;
- health and wellbeing;
- rural economy and tourism;
- social issues.

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

Members requested an update following negotiations regarding Paths for Communities (P4C) as the Bridleways Association were interested in looking into these schemes further.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

At 3.00pm, Councillor Brian Montgomery, Rutland County Council, joined the meeting and offered the Chairman his apologies for the late arrival.

34. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2 – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION REPORT

A report by Lincolnshire County Council's Senior Countryside Access Officer was considered, which outlined the findings of the Second Rights of Way Improvement Plan Stakeholder Consultation which took place in the Summer of 2012.

Officers were congratulated on the number of responses received to the consultation and in reporting on all of them. Concern was raised that the prioritisation of enforcement action may result in lower priority issues escalating if the required action is continually delayed. It was explained that a reduction in budget had reduced the number of Enforcement Officers, although the team did try and resolve issues within the allotted timeframe.

Occupiers of land had an obligation to ensure that cross-field public footpaths and bridleways were usable and appropriately marked out. On occasion wet weather can make reinstatement difficult but if officers can see no attempt to define, or reinstate, a path contact would be made by way of a standard harvest letter. This letter advises the occupier that the land would be inspected at the start of the next season and, should the occupier continue non-compliance, all paths in their ownership would be regularly inspected.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

35. DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

Members were provided with updates on Definitive Map Modification Order work in respect of Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council, as follows: -

i) Rutland County Council

An update report on those Definitive Map Modification Order applications currently in Rutland County Council's system was considered.

Concern was noted that the delay in dealing with these issues was reportedly due to a vacancy of a Footpaths Officer. Mr Montgomery noted that he would discuss this with the Leader of Rutland County Council to raise the issue, especially given the current tourism drive.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

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ii) Lincolnshire County Council

A report by the Council's Countryside Access Manager was considered, which detailed the progress of Definitive Map Modification Order work since the inception of the current prioritisation policy, together with an overview of current caseloads. It was acknowledged that although cases were dealt with by the date of receipt, some may require resolution sooner. Officers would deal with their current caseload before taking on new cases.

**RESOLVED**

That the report and update be noted.

**36. PUBLIC PATH ORDERS**

Members were provided with updates on Public Path Order work in respect of Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council, as follows: -

i) Rutland County Council

Consideration was given to an update report on those Public Path Order applications currently in Rutland County Council's system. One new case had been received in Exton which was a small diversion of a footpath from cross field to an existing farm track.

ii) Lincolnshire County Council

The Forum received a report by the Countryside Access Manager, Lincolnshire County Council, which detailed the progress of Public Path Order work in respect of the Council's power to divert, extinguish or create public rights of way either of its own volition or following an application to do so from the public.

Five new cases had been received. In relation to the case at 'Tallington', Network Rail were reviewing all level crossings and giving consideration to the safety of each one. Should they decide to close crossings, an alternative would be required.

**RESOLVED**

That the report and update be noted.

**37. ENCLOSING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Public Rights of Way Officer for Rutland County Council, introduced the report which sought to update members regarding the enclosure of headland paths which was raised at the last meeting as a burden on highways authorities to maintain these paths.

It was reported that this problem was growing Rutland and, although not a major issue for other authorities in the East Midlands, the Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers had sought assistance from the HSE and Natural England with little success.

It was asked that, when making an order to divert a footpath, if it could be stipulated that it be a certain width and, if it was to be fenced, be slightly wider. Although this would be beneficial, officers suggested that it was unlikely that this could be legally enforceable. When suggesting a diversion, maintenance of the new rights of way were also considered.

**RESOLVED**

That the report and update be noted.

**38. THE PATHS FOR COMMUNITIES (P4C) SCHEME**

A draft News Release and Briefing Note was presented by John Law, further to a previous update from Natural England in relation to Paths for Communities. A news release had been circulated in Leicestershire and members were asked to consider something similar in Lincolnshire and Rutland.

Ms Barnicott, Natural England, reported that 150 expressions of interest had been received and two grants awarded in Essex and Sheffield, as a result of similar press releases. She advised that applications must be for permanent routes and stressed the need of any applicant to read the guidance before submitting an application.

Members were supportive of the press release and suggested also linking with local tourist boards for wider circulation.

**RESOLVED**

That the Chairman review the draft press release and make suggested changes before taking this forward.

**39. COUNTY ESTATE FARMS**

A presentation was received by John Law which sought members views on the establishment of a sub-group to further look at the County Estate Farms within Lincolnshire and what acreage they represent and to identify any potential areas of

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concern. It was agreed that a sub-group would be beneficial to establish facts and figures and to suggest next steps to the forum.

**RESOLVED**

That members would be contacted to scope interest for the sub-group.

**40. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Forum should be held on Wednesday, 10 April 2013 at 6.30 pm in Stamford.

**RESOLVED**

- i) That the next meeting of the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum be held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at 6.30pm in Stamford.
- ii) That a meeting of the South Lincolnshire & Rutland Local Access Forum scheduled for the Summer of 2013 be held on the coast.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.