

ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS

FOR

PARKS, GREEN OPEN SPACES AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

IN

LINCOLNSHIRE, N.E. LINCOLNSHIRE, LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

1. INTRODUCTION

A number of Government departments and other organisations have recognised for some time that being in parks, green open spaces and the countryside improves peoples' health and general wellbeing. Evidence provided by Natural England shows that people with disabilities do not access these spaces as much as other people. There could be a number of reasons for this but one of the major issues must be suitable access. This report examines how accessibility ambassadors could assist in delivering improvements for the disabled and their carers to access parks, green spaces and open countryside.

2. LAND OWNERS/MANAGERS ALLOWING PUBLIC ACCESS

In many cases Land owners and managers allowing public access do not cater for the disabled. Some are keen to learn and a number of local authority representatives and representatives of national organisations have attended the inclusive countryside access courses, delivered by the Countryside For All trainer used by the South/Mid Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forums Disability sub group. A number of these organisations ask for advice to help their future plans include more appropriate access for the disabled. There are also a number of organisations which feel for one reason or another they do not need to make improvements. The disability sub group has an ever increasing workload and recognises that it cannot make real improvements for the disabled by continuing to use the same processes. There needs to be more time spent with the land owners and managers to enable them to understand the issues facing the disabled. This is where the role of the accessibility manager would assist to move improvements forward. These improvements may be physical changes of the route/site or improvements in communication to enable people to understand what is available and the physical barriers of the route/site.

3. THE ROLE OF ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS

The role of the accessibility ambassador working with organisations which allow public access should include:

- Identifying issues for improvement

- Discussing the improvements required with the organisation

Jointly creating an annual action plan with the organisation

Assisting in funding applications

Monitoring progress of improvements

Liaising with Land owners and managers

Undertake appropriate training

Quarterly attending the accessibility ambassadors meeting to report on progress, receive additional training and network with other ambassadors.

4. PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADOR

The accessibility ambassador should either be disabled or a carer. The role will require the ambassador to drive or be driven by their carer as a number of sites are not easily visited by public transport. Unfortunately expenses cannot be paid. It is essential that the accessibility ambassador is a team player.

5. RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

It is getting difficult to recruit volunteers in a number of areas in the voluntary sector. With this being a new role it may prove even more difficult to attract volunteers. The number of volunteers required for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is 32. The number of volunteers for Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire is also 32. It is envisaged that attracting this number of volunteers may not be reached. To make the project worthwhile it is thought that a minimum of 8 accessibility ambassadors in each Region is necessary. Prior to obtaining funding it is necessary to find the level of interest there is from people who are disabled and carers in becoming accessibility ambassadors. Appendix A displays a questionnaire for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland potential volunteers. Appendix B displays a questionnaire for Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire potential volunteers.

6. TRAINING OF ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS

To ensure the accessibility ambassador has the confidence and can provide the right advice to organisations it is important they receive the right training. The training providers are currently being selected. The training will include accessibility training and design of sensory open spaces/trails. It is expected that the training will be a two day course plus a half day at a later stage to deliver training on the role of the accessibility ambassador. An overview of the two day training course is displayed in appendix C. The training will be delivered for Leicestershire and Rutland then Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. A handbook will also be provided for the accessibility ambassador to guide them in their role.

7. ALLOCATING ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADOR TO AREA

The volunteers will initially be asked at the recruitment stage to indicate in order of preference the local authority area they wish to work in.

8. ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS REGIONS

In order for the accessibility ambassadors to have a body which will provide advice, direction, support and further training as required etc. it is necessary to examine the capabilities of the organisations which will assist in driving this project forward. Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL) is well regarded as being able to manage these types of projects. LCIL represents the disabled and carers of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Although Rutland is the responsibility of the South Lincolnshire Local Access Forum it makes sense for the Rutland team of accessibility ambassadors to become the responsibility of LCIL. As there are no major organisations similar to LCIL representing the disabled in Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire the Mid/South Lincolnshire and Rutland Disability sub group will take on the role of being responsible for the accessibility ambassadors until a suitable organisation believes it can take over the role. To ensure the sub group follows the Natural England Guideline for Local Access Forums the Lincolnshire ambassadors will need to be seconded to the Disability sub group.

9. FUNDING

Prior to requesting funding it is important to assess the interest from volunteers. To ensure we can get the volunteers required for the project it is necessary to publicise the need for voluntary accessibility ambassadors. Following on from that establish how many people would be interested in attending the 2.5 day course and being active accessibility ambassadors.

10. ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS TEAMS

To enable the accessibility ambassadors to work efficiently and have a real impact a team of ambassadors would be allocated either to a district, borough or city council's geographical area. Each team should consist of four ambassadors. The team would choose a chair person and would operate as a committee.

11. AREA ANOMOLIES

With Oadby and Wigston district council's geographical area being small and compact this should be included in with Leicester City areas team's workload.

12. PRIORITISING THE WORK OF THE TEAM

The team would select the organisations within their area to prioritise, prioritise their work and manage their workload. To enable quick wins to be achieved, working initially with the teams area local authority should be most advantageous.

13. ORGANISATIONS CROSSING THE TEAM'S BOUNDARIES

When the team wish to carry out work with an organisation that crosses their boundary it is important that the chair person communicates this to all chairs involved. In some cases it may be ideal to work jointly with the team in the neighbouring area, if the improvement is one which could be replicated in more than one area of the organisation.

14. INTRODUCTION OF ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADOR TO THEIR AREA ORGANISATIONS

The regional coordinator organisation should email the land owners/managers with public access informing them of the team of ambassadors operating in the area. This email should also explain the role of the ambassadors and their contact details.

15. ANNUAL CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENTS

The area team of accessibility ambassadors will be responsible for contacting the land owners/managers with public access in their areas, investigating what improvements can be made and agreeing an action plan. That action plan may include short term and long term goals. That action should be signed by the land owner/manager as the agreed action plan. World Disability Day which is expected to be held in December 2017 will be when the action plans for both of the regions will be announced. The relevant land owners/managers will be invited to the event along with the accessibility ambassadors. The World Disability Day 2018 event should include the achievements from the past year and the plan for the year going forward. A further 3 meetings per year should take place at quarterly intervals for the accessibility ambassadors to network etc.

16. LAND OWNERS/MANAGERS ACHEIVEMENT AWARDS

Prior to the World Disability Day the achievements for the year will be summarised and the accessibility ambassadors within each region will be able to vote for the land owners/managers which have made the greatest achievements in improvements.

17. FUNDING OF MEETINGS AND ANNUAL EVENT

The local authorities in the region should jointly fund the quarterly meetings excluding the annual event. This should include contributions towards the hire of the venue, teas, coffees and biscuits. With there being 8 local authorities in the Lincolnshire Region and 9 local authorities in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Region this should be a very small cost for the local authorities to share. The annual event should be held in a venue which is appropriate for the occasion. For Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland something similar to the rooms at the King Power or Tigers Stadium would be appropriate. It is hoped that these facilities could be provided free of charge for the event.

18. TIMESCALES

Once the level of interest is established by volunteers in becoming accessibility ambassadors funding can be sought. It is hoped that the expressions of interest can be obtained by the end of September 2016. If there is enough interest funding could then be sought. It is expected funding for training should be obtained by the end of April 2017. Training could then be delivered by the end of September 2017. It may be useful to stagger the training and implementation to enable any unforeseen issues to be addressed.

ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS REQUIRED

IN

LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

Are you disabled or a carer?

Do you want to improve accessibility to parks, green open spaces and the countryside?

Would you like to volunteer for the Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living, to work with organisations which provide public access to parks, green open spaces and the countryside?

Can you drive or do you have a carer who will drive for you?

If the answer is yes to the questions above you may like to become an accessibility ambassador. The accessibility ambassador works with a team of ambassadors investigating access improvements required, discussing the improvements with organisations and assisting in developing an annual action plan. The role will include travelling to different sites but unfortunately expenses cannot be paid.

Two and a half days training will be provided.

We are currently examining how many volunteers are interested in this role. Once we have established the numbers we will apply for funding to deliver the training. When we have been successful in attracting funding we will contact those of you who are interested in becoming an accessibility ambassador to advise you of training dates etc.

If you are interested in becoming an accessibility ambassador please complete the following:

Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

Please indicate the geographical area you wish to work in. Number 1 being your 1st choice and number 8 being your last choice. If you do not wish to work in a specific area please leave blank:

Leicester City, Oadby and Wigston District Council	
Blaby District Council	
Harborough District Council	
Melton District Council	
Charnwood District Council	
North West Leicestershire District Council	
Hinckley and Bosworth District Council	
Rutland County Council	

Please note we aim to deliver the training either in or close to Leicester.

ACCESSIBILITY AMBASSADORS REQUIRED

IN

LINCOLNSHIRE AND NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

Are you disabled or a carer?

Do you want to improve accessibility to parks, green open spaces and the countryside?

Would you like to volunteer for the Local Access Forums disability sub group, to work with organisations which provide public access to parks, green open spaces and the countryside?

Can you drive or do you have a carer who will drive for you?

If the answer is yes to the questions above you may like to become an accessibility ambassador. The accessibility ambassador works with a team of ambassadors investigating access improvements required, discussing the improvements with organisations and assisting in developing an annual action plan. The role will include travelling to different sites but unfortunately expenses cannot be paid.

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Please indicate the geographical area you wish to work in. Number 1 being your 1st choice and number 8 being your last choice. If you do not wish to work in a specific area please leave blank:

City of Lincoln	
West Lindsey District Council	
East Lindsey District Council	
North Kesteven District Council	
South Kesteven District Council	
South Holland District Council	
Boston Borough Council	
North East Lincolnshire County Council	

Please note, we intend to deliver the training in both the north and south of Lincolnshire. If we do not have enough volunteers to run two training courses, the training course will be delivered in a more central area.

TWO DAY TRAINING COURSE OVERVIEW

Introducing the role of Accessibility Ambassadors

Principles of inclusion

Equality legislation

Countryside equality scenarios

Countryside for All standards

Accessible publications

Definition of a sensory garden and how to create one

Benefits of a sensory garden and how they can be used to deliver health, social and learning benefits

Sensory plants, what makes a good one, how to choose and use

Ideas for different spaces

Pitfalls and how to avoid them

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