

Agenda Item 5



A statutory advisory body to Lincolnshire County Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and other providers of outdoor recreational access

LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM 18 JANUARY 2021

PRESENT:

Representing Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors C Matthews.

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council: Councillor James Cairns.

Representing Independent Members: John Beaven, Sheila Brookes, Sharon Hayes, Sid Mill, Chris Padley, Angie Tomlin, Sandra Harrison, Jon Thornes MBE, Richard Graham and John Laws.

Officers: Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Chris Miller (Environmental Services Team Leader (Countryside Services)) and Matthew Chaplin (Public Rights of Way Mapping Officer, North East Lincolnshire Council).

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2021/22

RESOLVED

That Chris Padley be elected Chairman of the Forum for the period from 18 January 2021 to 18 January 2022.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2021/22

RESOLVED

That Sharon Hayes be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum from 18 January 2021 to 18 January 2022.

3 DEATH OF FORMER MEMBER - COUNTY COUNCILLOR C L STRANGE

The Chairman referred to the death of former County Councillor Lewis Strange, who had been a member of the former Mid-Lincolnshire Local Access Forum and had also been a member of the newly formed Joint Lincolnshire Local Access Forum. The Chairman stated that Lewis had been a long serving Lincolnshire County Councillor, that he had shown a great interest in countryside matters and had made a valuable contribution at Forum meetings.

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4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Salkeld, Erica Spurrier and Nick Tomlin.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Angela Tomlin requested that a note should be made in the minutes that she was the Rights of Way Officer for the British Driving Society for Lincolnshire.

6 NUMBER OF MEETINGS A YEAR (PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS AND UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES)

Officers stated that there was an item on the agenda in connection with the forward programme and that it would be necessary for the Forum to consider how many meetings would be required to deal with those topics detailed in the programme.

RESOLVED

That two meetings of the Forum be arranged annually and that if any more meetings are required these to be arranged as and when required.

7 TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED

That Members of the Forum inform the Secretary of how long they wished to serve on the Forum, i.e. one, two or three years.

(Post meeting note – Members should email their wishes to Democratic Services email account).

8 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW) AND ACCESS WORK DURING 2020

(Note: Sandra Harrison arrived in the meeting)

The Forum received a report in connection with a review of the progress of rights of way and access work in the light of the on-going pandemic. Officers stated that due to the lockdowns during the pandemic more people were using the countryside to exercise. However, it was clear that some people were unaware of the countryside code and included incidents of people feeding livestock and irresponsible parking. Officers had responded to issues of obstruction and making people aware of the code. Officers also stated that there had been problems caused by the inability to publish PROW Orders at the County Offices and the need to write to Defra to seek guidance about their publication and reassuring landowners on access issues caused by the public.

Members' comments included the problems caused by horses going on to a packed public beach, that the public notices in connection with Covid-19 addressed walkers but not horse riders. There had also been confrontations between walkers and horse

riders. Officers stated that the issue of horses going on to beaches was a nationwide matter and incidents of anti-social behaviour were a police responsibility. Officers stated that the Public Notices in connection with Covid-19 had generic wording and had been agreed by Defra following consultations with all stakeholders. Officers agreed to examine the local Notices.

Members welcomed the increase use of the PROW network.

RESOLVED

That the report and the comments by Members be noted and actioned accordingly.

9 DEREGULATION ACT AND LOST WAYS

The Forum received a verbal report in connection with the progress of the De-Regulation Act. Officers stated that very little had happened to date and Defra hoped to implement the Regulations in autumn 2021 and both the House of Commons and Lords would need to approve the Regulations before they could be implemented. Officers stated that the stakeholder working group had begun to meet again and it was hoped to see some progression.

Officers stated that with regard to those Lost Ways before 1949, 2026 was the cut-off date for these routes to be added to the Definitive Map but the Minister was able to extend this date by five years. Officers stated that they had received a number of applications for Lost Ways to be included on the Definitive Map from the British Horse Society and many more applications were expected from this organisation before 2026.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10 ENGLAND COAST PATH

The Forum received a report in connection with the progress of the England Coast Path (ECP) from Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge and a request to respond to consultation from Natural England about this stretch of the ECP which was approximately just 7 miles in Lincolnshire and followed an established public right of way along the Wash flood bank before using the road alongside the River Nene to enter Sutton Bridge.

The route was published for consultations on 25 November 2020 and closed on 20 January 2021.

The Forum noted that on page 2 of the officer's report it should read "Mablethorpe to Humber Bridge".

Officers stated that remaining sections of the ECP were in the process of being completed but subject to habitat and environmental examination including those sections from Sutton Bridge to Skegness and Donna Nook.

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A Member enquired about equestrian access to the ECP. Officers stated that the Government had aimed the ECP at walkers and that any access to equestrians would be left to local discretion. Officers stated that there might be opportunities to allow access to equestrians in certain areas of the ECP.

RESOLVED

That, subject to it being noted that it should read "Mablethorpe to Humber Bridge" on page 2 of the officer's report, the progress of the England Coast Path in Lincolnshire be noted.

11 LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - FORWARD PROGRAMME FOR
COMING YEAR AND LOCAL ACCESS FORUM INVOLVEMENT

The Forum received a report in connection with those topics which the Forum wished to consider with regard to the provision of formal advice to the relevant access authorities. The topics included:-

- Review of the following policies as and when greater detail on Deregulation was available:-Definitive Map Modification Order prioritisation and Public Path Order Processes and Charging
- Review of Accessibility Policy and Guidance
- Preparation of Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2 and of Local Transport Plan 5
- Walking and Cycling Strategies
- Guidance for Planners and Developers
- England Coast Path development
- Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park Development

Officers stated that the Forum might be required to meet more than that twice a year to consider these topics.

Comments by Members included:-

- An enquiry was made about whether equestrian aspects could be considered in the cycling and walking strategies as they mainly used the multi-user routes. Some horse riders and carriage drivers were disabled and could not cycle or walk. Officers stated that this matter had been raised with the County Council's Transport Officers and they had stated that the main emphasis of the strategies was on the utilitarian aspects of cycling and walking as both strategies were required by the Government. The Transport Officers had accepted that recreational access was becoming more important. Officers added that equestrian aspects were normally considered in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).
- Local Access Forums had a responsibility to advise the Councils and it was suggested that the Council's representatives on the Forum might be a better way of communicating advice from the Forum. Officers stated that when matters

of relevance were discussed relating to the Forum's activities they would ensure that the Forum's formal response was included in any scrutiny report.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report and comments by Members be noted.
- (b) That officers prepare a forward programme of those items detailed in the report to enable the Forum to respond to the Councils at the appropriate time.

12 DEMOLITION OF OLD RAILWAY BRIDGES BY HIGHWAYS ENGLAND

The Forum received a verbal report by Chris Padley, a member of the Forum, in connection with the policy of Highways England to demolish all disused railway bridges instead of maintaining them. He stated that many of the disused bridges were used as access by the public. Members' attention was drawn to the following website – Campaigners battle to save old rail structures (theconstructionindex.co.uk). Chris Padley thought that this was an issue the Forum should all take up even if there were no such bridges in Lincolnshire He stated that he was not aware if there were any of these bridges in Lincolnshire at the moment although there certainly had been in the past.

Officers stated that former railway lines were used for access by the public and gave an example of the Spa Trail which had a good surface and sight lines and was well used by the public. Officers stated that Highways England was only responsible for the A46 from Newark to Lincoln and no bridges existed on this road. Officers agreed to examine the mapping and see if there were any bridges which crossed busy roads in the county.

Members stated that they were aware of some disused bridges, including some on the old Louth to Grimsby railway line and the presence of a tunnel between South Willingham and Donnington on Bain. Officers stated that they thought that the tunnel was protected for roosting bats.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report and comments by Members be noted.
- (b) That officers examine if any bridges, no longer in use, existed either over or under busy roads in Lincolnshire.

13 COUNTRYSIDE FOR ALL

The Forum received a report from John Law, a member of the Forum, in connection with the production of leaflets on routes available for people with limited mobility as part of the Countryside for All campaign. John Law gave details of the current production statistics of the leaflets and stated that he had been unsuccessful in claiming funding from the East Coast Community Fund and was in the process of preparing an application for funding from the Lottery for 22 leaflets.

John Law stated that he was also seeking more volunteers to join the Countryside for All Sub-Group which had declined from 6 to 2 members. It was agreed that Members should email Steve Blagg, the Secretary, if they were interested in becoming a member and he would pass the details on to John Law. John Law explained the work involved in becoming a member of the Sub-Group.

It was agreed that the Forum's logo should be passed on to John Law for amendment and use on the leaflets.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted and that Members of the Forum email Steve Blagg, Secretary, if they were interested in serving on the Countryside for All Sub-Group.
- (b) That Steve Blagg email the Forum's logo to John Law for amendment and use on the leaflets.

14 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Officers stated that they would prepare a forward programme for the Forum which would be considered at a meeting of the Forum to be arranged at the start of the municipal year.

The meeting closed at 3.40 p.m.