



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

Report to:	Lincolnshire Joint Local Access Forum
Date:	3 October 2023
Subject:	Countryside For All

Summary:

This item invites the Forum to consider an update on the work of Countryside For All.

Actions Required:

In relation to the Grantham Canal (land leading to the towpath at Casthorpe Road), the Forum are asked to consider:

- Whether the path can be placed on the Definitive Map prior to February 2024, so that Lincolnshire County Council can allocate funding to replace the damaged and unsafe gate (as referenced in the report) in the 2024/2025 budget
- Whether Lincolnshire County Council could investigate what improvements could be made to the track from the road to the towpath, and inform the Forum once completed

Background

1. Countryside For All Route leaflets

We were able to send out further orders of Countryside For All leaflets in August. However, we restricted the number of organisations that could place orders due to low stock. Even though we restricted the number of organisations that could order from us, we still were not able to satisfy all the orders.

The next order forms for the Countryside For All leaflets and the LCC walk leaflets will be sent out to the organisations that distribute the leaflets in February 2024.

2. Funding for leaflets in 2024

As per the email previously circulated to the Forum, we have been lucky enough to win funding from the Lincolnshire Coop. However, we will not know the amount of money we will win until April.

We are currently applying through Lincolnshire County Council to the Lottery for funding. We are also continuing to apply to businesses for funding. We have been fortunate enough to enlist the help from a friend to create a Just Giving page. Further details of this will be circulated when it is finalised.

We still urgently need to fill the role of Fund Raiser, to ensure we can provide the leaflets required for distribution.

3. Countryside For All leaflets on hold

3.1. Ashing Land Nature Reserve

As the improvements to the accessibility of the Nature Reserve have not brought it back to the standard required, it has been decided to remove the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve from the Countryside For All portfolio of leaflets and the Visit Lincolnshire web site.

3.2. Hartsholme Country Park

The work that has impacted on the path gradient has been completed. The path has now been resurveyed. We await funding to enable us to update the Countryside For All leaflet for this site.

3.3. South Thoresby Warren (East Lindsey)

We were hoping to have the funding application to improve the accessibility at South Thoresby Warren submitted this year but due to the low stock of the other Countryside For All leaflets, we have had to delay the South Thoresby Warren project. We have and will continue to involve the members of Lincolnshire County Council staff from Virginia House day centre in Louth, who undertake activities at the site. It has been agreed that any other groups from other day centres etc. can use the toilet facilities at Virginia House. One of the requests from staff at Virginia House was to include a Changing Places Toilet facility in the funding application. Thinking Lincolnshire County Council would have already applied for the Government's funding for Changing Places Toilets, the allocation of funds to all of England's local authorities was checked. Lincolnshire County Council had not been allocated any funds from either the phase 1 or phase 2 pots of money. It is likely that Lincolnshire County Council has not applied for this free money. A Freedom of Information request was sent to find out why these funds were not requested. This was sent 31st July, we had no response, so we have sent a further request/reminder 17th September, to which we have had no response so far.

3.4. Rimal Nature Reserve, Saltfleetby

We are still waiting for Natural England to complete further work to improve the accessibility of this site before we undertake the on-site survey.

4. Grantham Canal

Back in 2017 the Disability Sub Group provided evidence to Lincolnshire County Council that the land leading to the towpath at Casthorpe Road bridge belonged to Lincolnshire County Council. The Council is able to record public rights of way over its own land by Deed of Dedication. The process of getting this resolved was started by the Council. However, the person who was dealing with it left the Council and the matter was never resolved. As far as the Sub Group was concerned the Deed of Dedication process was being followed and the route would then be placed on the definitive map. We also felt by doing this the damaged gate we reported would be sorted and possibly the state of the route from the road leading to the towpath would be improved. When our accessibility ambassador for this site revisited it in 2022 He found the issue of the gate had still not been resolved. It was then discovered that the route had still not been placed on the Definitive Map. We raised the issue again in August 2022 and mentioned that we would like the route to be on the Definitive Map by March 2023, so funding could be put in place in the 2023/24 budget to make the gate safe and if possible to improve the path. Unfortunately the path is still not on the Definitive Map.

ACTION: Can the path be placed on the Definitive Map prior to February 2024, so that LCC can allocate funding to replace the damaged and unsafe gate in the 2024/2025 budget?

ACTION: Can LCC investigate what improvements can be made to the track from the road to the towpath and inform the LAF?

5. Across the Lincolnshire Borders

As previously mentioned people and organisations have been asking for Countryside For All leaflets in our neighbouring counties. We have identified four of our neighbours that we can survey and provide leaflets for. This should hopefully also improve our chance of funding from the National Lottery. The routes we hope to include in the Countryside For All portfolio, if we are successful in obtaining funding are:

Rutland – Exton. This already has a Countryside For All leaflet and is popular in Lincolnshire but is out of stock

North East Linc's – Cleethorpes. North East Linc's is part of our LAF but currently has no Countryside For All leaflets.

Leicestershire – Grantham Canal. We have discussed this matter with the Leicestershire LAF and they welcome this move.

Nottinghamshire – Route 64

Nottinghamshire LAF welcome this move but will be discussing this, at their meeting 3rd November. They have some other neighbouring routes which may prove more beneficial to all.

6. Changing Places Toilets

We are pleased to see that Boston, City of Lincoln, East Lindsey, South Holland, South Kesteven and North East Lincolnshire local authorities have been allocated funding to create Changing Places Toilets.

It is disappointing to see that:

North Kesteven did not apply for funding for Whisby Nature Reserve. Their reason being “....due to insufficient space and structural limitations this wasn’t possible”.

City Of Lincoln state they have “no plans to include a changing places facility at Hartsholme Country Park”

As mentioned previously we are waiting for a response from Lincolnshire County Council in relation to Virginia House and other day centres owned by them.

7. Miles Without Barriers

This project is being undertaken by Rutland Countryside Access Forum and Rutland County Council. The aim of the project is to have an interactive web site for public use, displaying the standards of accessibility on each of the PROW in the County. The progress and outcome of this project will be monitored and reported on. It is hoped that if something similar can be undertaken in Lincolnshire, that South Holland will be the first district to benefit from this.

Conclusion

The Forum Are asked to consider the report and the actions required.

This report was written by John Law, Lincolnshire Joint Local Access Forum.