

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 16 April 2015.

PRESENT

Mr. T. Kirby (in the Chair)

Ms. V. Allen	Mr. A. Hillier-Fry
Ms. H. Brown	Mr. J. Howells
Mr. J. Bullock	Mrs. A. Pyper
Mrs. R. Camamile CC	Mr. B. Sutton
Mr. R. Denney	Mr. S. Warren

143. Welcome / Apologies for absence.

Mr. H. Eppel, Mr. P. Tame, Mr. P. Osborne CC, and Mr. J. Law sent their apologies for the meeting. The Forum was also informed that Stephen Palmer had resigned from the Forum and a statement was read out on his behalf.

144. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 were approved subject to the following change:-

Minute 139

AGREED:

b) That the title of the policy be changed to LLAF Guidance to Unrecorded Ways.

145. Urgent items.

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as urgent:-

Green Lane Maintenance.

146. Declarations of interest.

Members were invited to declare any interests in relation to items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

147. Conduct of Members and Amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Members received a report outlining the expected Conduct of Members and the proposed amendments to the Terms of the Reference of the Forum. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 5', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The report had arisen from the need to formalise the use of sub-groups by the Forum. As such, officers had tried to ensure that the amendments to the Terms of Reference reflected the current practices of the Forum as well as taking into account the obligations of the Forum to act as a public meeting;
- (ii). Arising from concerns raised by members, the Forum was informed that the Terms of Reference did not seek to restrict the use of the Google Group as a means of discussion by members, but to ensure that decisions are made by the Forum through a formal, publicly accessible process;
- (iii). Members of the Forum were advised of the financial position that the Council currently faced, and subsequently the limits to the support that it can provide. This included access to County Hall facilities for the purposes of interim meetings due to the requirement that an officer be present whenever the Forum used these facilities;
- (iv). Members were informed that it had been difficult to attract new members to the Forum. It was suggested that this may be due to the extensive technical detail covered in meetings;
- (v). Members expressed that it would be beneficial to defer the item until the next meeting so that greater consideration can be made to the report and amended if necessary to suit the needs of both the Forum and the Council.

AGREED:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

148. Change to the order of business.

Having sought the permission of the Forum, the Chairman varied the order of business to that set out on the agenda.

149. Green Lane Maintenance.

The Forum received a presentation from Mike Sheldrake on the maintenance of green lanes in Leicestershire. A copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The Council defined green lanes as lanes which had been unsurfaced but the public had rights of access to. A large amount of the green lanes were located in the east of the County;
- (ii). A significant effort had been made over the past couple of years to identify green lanes in Leicestershire. At present 61km of the lanes were considered to be in 'poor' condition, 71km in 'deteriorating' condition, and 137km in 'adequate' condition;
- (iii). The Council could apply traffic regulation orders (TROs) on a temporary basis to close green lanes in a poor condition. This was usually undertaken with the

assistance of the landowners. However it was exceptionally difficult to monitor and police the restricted access;

- (iv). The costs of temporarily restricting access to green lanes could cost up to £5000 depending on the complexity of the lane. Members were informed that at the moment the resources available for maintaining green lanes was limited due to the current financial pressures the Council was facing, and were subsequently not considered to be a Council priority;
- (v). Permanent TROs required extensive consultation with local residents, and modifications must be applied if there were objections to the TRO which was a costly process;
- (vi). There were also various costs associated with implementing a TRO and any associated maintenance required, which could potentially be upwards of £15,000. The cost of reconstructing a green lane, despite using recycled materials where possible, could cost up to £50,000. However the method of reconstructing green lanes could last for a significant amount of time if used for normal highway purposes (i.e no or little heavy goods);
- (vii). Members raised concerns regarding the impact of neighbouring authorities closing access to green lanes which could result in an increase in green lanes being destroyed by users coming across the border. The Forum was informed that it was difficult to monitor and enforce this, and could not alter the policy of neighbouring authorities;
- (viii). The Forum was informed that both landowners and some user groups were willing to assist in the closure and reconstruction of green lanes.

AGREED:

That the presentation on the maintenance of green lanes in Leicestershire be noted.

150. Reports from committees and working groups.

The Forum received updates from committees and working groups. A copy of the reports, marked 'Agenda Item 6', are filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The Forum was informed that Harborough District Council had requested feedback from members on Green Spaces. Although the consultation period had closed, the Forum was invited to send back any comments in the next month;
- (ii). Members were advised that officers from the Council would be meeting with the Verges Committee in due course;
- (iii). Members were informed that over 2500 routes had been mapped for investigation which would take a significant amount of time to process;
- (iv). Members had discovered two routes in Melton Mowbray which had been blocked as they had been incorporated into back gardens. The Council had been informed of this and had sent a positive response back to members;

- (v). It was hoped that a meeting would be arranged with Charnwood Lodge to discuss the findings of the Access Reports previously undertaken by the Forum;
- (vi). The British Horse Society and the Ramblers Association had agreed to jointly arrange training which members may be interested in.

RESOLVED:-

That the updates from committees and working groups be noted.

151. Reports from representatives on outside bodies.

The Forum received updates from representatives on outside bodies. A copy of the reports, marked 'Agenda Item 7', are filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Members were informed that following the resignation of Stephen Palmer there was a position available on the Heart of the Forest Access and Connectivity Forum and the North West Leicestershire Cycling Strategy. Members were encouraged to consider taking up these roles at the next meeting of the Forum;
- (ii). The Natural and Historic Environment Partnership were looking for ways to achieve further commercial involvement in the area.

RESOLVED:-

That the updates from representatives on outside bodies be noted.

152. Orders update.

The Forum received an update on the current position with regard to various Public Path and Modification Orders. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from queries from members, it was clarified that there were four plans to be implemented at Bardon Quarry over the next four years. The quarry represented a success for the Forum, who had previously met with the quarry owners to ensure that access was possible whilst work was ongoing. This included the path diversion shown in the report.

A public inquiry was to be held regarding the public footpaths at Frisby Lakes. Members were informed that the landowner had previously contested the status and historical use of the paths.

RESOLVED:-

That the report outlining Public Path and Modification Orders be noted.

153. Items of Correspondence.

The Forum considered any items of correspondence. A copy of any correspondence, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

In addition to the correspondence received from Natural England and DEFRA, officers advised that the Department for Transport had commissioned a cycleway feasibility study to run alongside the proposed HS2 route. The intention was to use already existing networks and where work was planned to take place. Further detail and proposed routes had been recently published.

RESOLVED:-

That the items of correspondence be noted.

154. Change to the order of business.

Having sought the permission of the Forum, the Chairman varied the order of business to that set out on the agenda.

155. The Big Pathwatch.

The Forum received a presentation on the Big Pathwatch. A copy of the presentation and supplementary documents are filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the work that had been done on this project by the Ramblers Association;
- (ii). The Ramblers would be launching the project in June as part of their 80th anniversary. The project aimed to give ordinary people the ability to inspect 1km square of routes via their smartphone to then send a report to Ramblers members acting as intermediaries between the volunteers and relevant Highway Authority;
- (iii). Members expressed concern that this could potentially place significant pressure on the Highways Authorities by receiving lots of reports in a very short space of time. There were also concerns that it would not take seasonal changes to routes into account (e.g a route which is routinely inspected may on one occasion be obstructed by a fallen tree). However members were informed that the Ramblers would be filtering reports and prioritising to mitigate these concerns;
- (iv). The Forum was informed that the purpose of the project was not to criticise the Highway Authorities but to support them.

AGREED:

That the presentation on The Big Pathwatch be noted.

156. Shared Routes.

Members considered a report deferred from the previous meeting entitled Safety and Behaviour on Shared Routes. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Members expressed the ambition to look for a way to educate the occasional and/or unprofessional bike users on where they are permitted to cycle. This could be done either through bike rental places or at schools;
- (ii). Members were informed that the British Horseriding Association would be sending leaflets entitled 'Horses and Cyclists' to Hicks Lodge and another bike rental place;
- (iii). The Forum was informed that there had been successful campaigns in some areas to highlight how shared spaces should be used;
- (iv). Members requested that the item be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum and that there be a guest speaker on the item from the Road Safety team.

AGREED:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

157. Burrough Hill Access Survey.

The Forum considered the Access Survey Report of Burrough Hill Country Park. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Members had met with an officer from the Country Parks service to discuss the Country Park. They were informed that the site was difficult to manage due to the lack of resources. However members were also informed that the site was used less than other parks around the County and the worst access areas were on informal routes adopted by members of the public, rather than on official paths;
- (ii). It was queried whether or not the car park charges would potentially have an impact on the usage of the park. However some members also expressed that this could be vital income for the upkeep of the park. Members recommended that the County Council looked into the possibility of differential charging rates.

AGREED:

That the Burrough Hill Country Park Access Survey be noted.

158. Any other items.

Members were informed that training would be taking place at Oadby and Wigston Borough Council on Countryside for All. However members were informed that it was aimed more toward officers and would not be appropriate for Forum members.

159. Date of next meeting.

The Forum was informed that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 2 July at 5.30pm at County Hall, Glenfield. A meeting of the Network Opportunities Group was to be held on 26 May in room 179 at County Hall.

Members were informed that a meeting room was available at Brocks Hill free of charge for an interim meeting provided that no paying customers wanted to use the room. However it was expressed that this was not the most desirable option due to its location.

5.30 - 8.09 pm
16 April 2015

CHAIRMAN

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