

Meeting: **Leicestershire Local Access Forum**

Date/Time: **Tuesday, 9 January 2018 at 5.30 pm**

Location: **Framland Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

Contact:

Email:

Membership

Mr John Howells (Chairman)

Ms. H. Brown	Mrs. A. Pyper
Mr. C. Faircliffe	Mr. B. Sutton
Mr. M. Gamble	Mr. P. Tame
Mr. A. Hillier-Fry	Mr. S. Warren
Mr. T. Kirby	Ms. V. Allen
Mr. J. Law	Mrs. P. Posnett CC

AGENDA

Item

1. The Vice Chairman's welcome and opening remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. An Officer of the Appointing Authority takes Chair the election of Chairman & Vice Chairman
4. Minutes of the previous meeting. (Pages 4 - 9)
5. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda
6. Declaration of interest and any items which the Chairperson has agreed to take as urgent
7. Reports from committees and working groups: (Pages 10 - 18)
 - a) Planning and Travel Committee (Roy Denney).
 - b) Network Opportunities Committee (John Law) presentation
 - c) Unrecorded Ways Committee (Stan Warren) – brief illustration of slide show

8. Reports from outside bodies.

(Pages 19 - 28)

- (a) Heart of the Forest, Access and Connectivity Forum (Vicky Allen)
- (b) River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership (John Law)
- (c) National Forest Access & Recreation Group (Roy Denney)
- (d) Lost Ways Training – slide show (Roy Denney)
- (e) East Midlands Local Access Forum (EMLAF) Chairs meeting update (John Howell)
- (f) Charnwood Forest Regional Park Steering Group (Roy Denney)
- (g) Other Meetings and Groups

9. Committees for the coming year and their brief:

Network Opportunities – Chairman John Law (Membership – all members)

Planning & Travel – Chairman Roy Denney (Membership – all members)

Unrecorded Ways – Chairman Stan Warren (Membership)

10. Appointment of representatives to outside bodies (Representatives / Observers & Deputies)

Heart of the Forest Access and Connectivity Forum, at present Vicky Allen, Deputy – John Howells

River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership, at present John Law

National Forest Access & Recreation Working Group, at present Roy Denney, Deputy Vicky Allen

Charnwood Forest Regional Park Steering Group, at present Roy Denney & John Howells

The Local Nature Partnership (Roy Denney) and the Leicestershire Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Partnership, Vicky Allen Deputy Roy Denney) no longer appear to meet.

11. Correspondence:

(Pages 29 - 32)

- (a) Responses, advices and comments sent by LLAF
 - a. Barrow Crossing (Roy Denney)

- (b) Received (Edwin McWilliam)

12. Obstruction Report (Stan Warren)

13. Recruitment and Quoracy

14. Annual Report

15. Future Work Programme

16. Future meetings:

FORUMS:

17th April 2018 (5.00pm for 5.30pm) – Forum – County Hall
(Workshop from 4pm)

18th July 2018 (5.00pm for 5.30pm) – Forum – County Hall
(Workshop from 4pm)

UNRECORDED WAYS MEETINGS:

It was suggested having 4 meetings a year (2.30 – 4.30)

17. Any other items which the Chairperson has
decided to take as urgent.



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday 5th October 2017.

PRESENT

Mr. J Howells (Chair)

Ms. V. Allen	Mr. A. Hillier-Fry
Mr. C. Faircliffe	Ms. H. Edwards
Mr. M. Gamble	Mr. T. Kirby
Mr. E. McWilliam LCC	Mr. C. Faircliffe

1. Chairman's welcome and opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed all those present.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr. R.J. Denney, Mrs. P. Posnett CC MBE, Mr. J. Law, Mr. S. Warren, Mrs. H. Brown, Mr. B. E. Sutton and Mrs. A.F. Pyper.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Chairman thanked Mrs Dann for providing the minutes of the last meeting promptly.

The minutes of the last meeting were discussed and agreed as a true record of the meeting.

The Chairman went through the minutes and the matters arising from the minutes.

Page 1

An item on East Midlands Regional Chairs meeting has been added to this agenda. With regard to the charitable status the documents produced to National Conference last year where there was a lengthy piece from Norfolk. A link to this will be provided in the minutes. This has also been added on the agenda for Tuesday's meeting.

Page 2

City Local Access Forum – Several meetings ago Mr McWilliam noted some concerns regarding the future of the City LAF. Mr. McWilliam met with officers from the City Council to discuss the possibility of more joint working in the future. Mr. Faircliffe suggested there be a move to the consolidation of these type of meetings.

Mr. McWilliam advised that if a joint forum were considered at a future point, this would have to start as a new body and go its own way.

Ms Allen suggested that it wouldn't be a good fit with the city being very urban and the County being made up of countryside and it may be difficult to pick up City LAF issues.

The Chairman asked that the discussion be on hold until further information was available.

The Chairman advised for information that due to copywrite laws the Chronicles of Charnia HLF bid would now have to be renamed.

Page 3 fine

Page 4

An update was received from Ms Allen to replace the 4th paragraph on Page 4 of the minutes, these will be updated accordingly. The new paragraph will read "The National Forest staff's energies had been concentrated in recent months on leading on the lottery bid for the Charnwood Regional Park which is probably why there had been no progress on the leaflets".

Page 5

Ms Allen also asked if item 5a on page 5 be replaced with "The OS is the information source for off-road routes but first the routes need to be put onto the Definitive Map so that OS can apply the relevant symbol".

The Chairman updated that the East Midlands Local Access Forum (EMLAF) Chairs meeting minutes, a summary of the minutes will be distributed at the next meeting.

Page 6

Item 7, Ms Allen updated that the event in Cambridge was not a conference but a training day on conducting historic research and making claims. The "Brexit – National England" workshop was actually entitled "Opportunities for Public Access" and was led by Pippa Langford of Natural England, the other workshops were not led by NE staff. Ms Allen confirmed that during the course of the afternoon session she attended, it was stated that in relation to Brexit that Defra are looking for schemes with significant "public benefit" when replacing the CAP funding; payments for access, existing or additional, would therefore qualify.

Page 7 okay.

Page 8 okay.

These changes will be made and the revised minutes will be submitted.

4. Declarations of interest and any items which the Chairperson has agreed to take as urgent

There were no declarations of interest.

Mr. Hillier-Fry asked that the Membership quorate be added to the next agenda (January 2018).

Ms Allen asked if any decision to join with Leicester City will be agreed by January 2018. It was agreed that this will be discussed for 10 minutes at the end of the meeting to get some ideas.

5. Reports from outside bodies

- (a) Planning and Travel (RD) – The Chairman advised that there was nothing more than the paper submitted by Mr Denney, apart from the Charnwood Forest HLF bid, he advised that he will give an update on this at the next meeting (January 2018).

Mr Denney continues to organise the Committee by email.

- (b) Network Opportunities (JL) - Noted

Ms Allen made a point for record - 4 Hicks Lodge there is some concern that some of the tracks are multi users, bridleways, and wondered how this would fit with the disabled. There was also concern about the disabled parking next to horsebox parking and there are issues with this mix, she felt that this would limit use. Ms Allen wanted it recording that she was concerned with the mix of users and the Connectivity Group wanted this raising as an issue.

Mr Denney continues to organise the Committee by email.

- (c) Unrecorded Ways (SW) – Noted

The Chairman confirmed that there was a lot going on and lots of volunteers wanting to help with the lost ways.

Mr Gamble stated that he felt the funding had not been sorted and wanted to know how it was going to be held, was it to be subdivided.

Mr Gamble asked about expense payments for memory sticks. Mr McWilliam stated that this money would be reimbursed. He stated that this process needs to be practical for people.

6. Reports from outside bodies

- (a) Heart of the Forest, Access and Connectivity Group (VA)

Ms Allen advised that there were no minutes as yet from the meeting on 28th September 2017.

She gave an update on the Hicks Lodge to Moira Furnace link and advised that this was half way to completion with a year to get to Moira Furnace.

An update was given on the Millenium Mile Post which had gone missing and was now found, which needs putting up.

An alternative route for Ivanhoe Way which goes through Hicks Lodge – café very good.

Concern was expressed for Reservoir Hill underpass as it exists between 2 bits of claywork, this seems threatened due to the underpass that is due to go under the road.

An update was given on the Bridleway circuit and the concerns about the work currently being carried out on the open cast coal mine. There were concerns about the mix as this would be a long-term viability for the disabled.

Ms Allen advised that the 'Countryside For All' trains people to assess routes for the disabled. Mr Kirby added that some training is given by Dementia Awareness. It was stated that the Heart of the Forest Access and

Connectivity Group are aware of this and the Forestry Commission are in control of this site. It was agreed that this needs raising at the next meeting.

- (b) River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership (JL) – the meeting is to be held on 11th October.
- (c) National Forest Access & Recreation Group (RD) – the next meeting is to be held on 8th November.
- (d) East Midlands Local Access Form (EMLAF) Chairs meeting update (JH) – This meeting will be on 10th October, report to be sent by 20th October on behalf of our group. Ms Allen will be attending.
- (e) Charnwood Forest Regional Park Group (RD) – waiting the outcome of the first stage of the HLF bid, the result will be sometime this month, when we can move it to stage 2.
- (f) Leicestershire Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Partnership (VA) – Ms Allen stated that this group had not met due to lack of time. An email link will be sent round but officers don't attend due to lack of time.
- (g) Other meetings and groups – nothing to report.

7. Name and brief for Network Opportunities Committee

It was agreed that there will be 3 sub-committees, as follows:

- Planning – distributed by email
- Unrecorded Ways – gaining momentum
- Network Opportunities – Very focussed, may need direction – Mr Law drives this committee forward and is excellent at what he does. Mr Faircliffe advised that this committee had drifted and that it used to have a broader brief. Its primary focus now is for access for the disabled. It was agreed that this would be added to the agenda for the next meeting or a meeting when Mr Law is in attendance.
Ms Edwards met with Mr Law at Watermead Country Park working with him on disabled access.
It was agreed that this will be added to the next agenda.

8. Correspondence

- (a) Responses advices and comments sent by LLAF
Mr Faircliffe advised that of an excellent response that was received and this showed that people can come together.
Ms Allen mentioned the British Standard draft of Gates and Stiles – she will respond on behalf of the LLAF.
Mr Gamble asked if we had agreed to record what was achieved in the year.
The Chairman agreed to speak to Mr Denney.
- (b) Received (EM) – Mr McWilliam stated that everything received by LCC is logged, saved and circulated.
- (c) Circulation of minutes and agendas - The Chairman thanked Ms Dann and her team.

9. Funding and Monitoring of Unrecorded Ways third-party funds

The Chairman agreed to hold a meeting and produce a usable process for this. He agreed to circulate a paper advising members how this will be controlled.

10. Orders Update (EM)

Mr McWilliam went through the report and highlighted page 37 and asked for questions.

Mr Hillier-Fry asked if there was approved access for Frisby Lakes and asked regarding a replacement gate for a stile.. Mr McWilliam advised that he would ask the case officer to investigate.

Bridleway crossing at Barrow

Ms Allen raised Sproxtton and Garthorpe an application has been with LCC for a very long time. Mr McWilliam advised that the list is on-line which will give the details.

11. Mailing List for 6 November 2017 – training event

If you know of any interested parties that haven't already been contacted please let Mr Warren have the details.

Ms Allen suggested the parish councils and the History Society.

The Chairman stated that he was looking forward to a positive meeting on 6th November.

12. Future Meetings

Dates were noted.

13. Any other items which the Chairperson has decided to take as urgent

Mr Hillier-Fry asked for a discussion on new/more members and reasons why members are not turning up to meetings. Mr McWilliams stated that he wasn't sure of the reasons, there was very little feedback.

Mr Faircliffe suggested an exit interview.

Ms Edwards suggested that it could be the breadth of the brief, time commitments. She went onto say that it is very difficult to get younger volunteers. The Chairman agreed that all members have different reasons for getting involved.

The Chairman stated that at this meeting there was no-one from farming, landownership at today's meeting. Ms Edwards suggested identifying the gaps in knowledge and target these areas. Mr Hillier-Fry stated that reports are needed from different groups such as landowners, horse riders, walkers, cyclists which would then give us power and a different point of view. The Chairman advised that it is important to let everyone have a say. It was agreed that when someone suggest

something new to the group that this is put at the top of the agenda to encourage discussion and contribution.

It was agreed that the jTerms of Reference be sent out with these minutes.

Ms Allen asked if this meeting was quorate. The Chairman confirmed that members had all sent apologies and gave reasons for their absence.

It was agreed that this needed discussion when the whole group is in attendance. It will be added to the agenda as "LLAF – the way forward".

Mr Howells sent his apologies for the next meeting in January 2018.

End of meeting.

REPORTS FOR LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Meeting Jan 2018

PLANNING AND TRAVEL COMMITTEE REPORT (Chairman - Roy Denney)

The major item receiving attention at the moment is the infamous Barrow crossing. Network rail were applied for an Extinguishment Order for the bridleway across the rail lines, something we have been fighting for years. We sent in an objection just repeating what we had said before. The Ramblers Association and the Leicestershire Footpaths Association had as well. Vicky Allen objected on behalf of the Bridleways Association and spoke personally at the hearing and John Howells our Chairman was in attendance. Despite a good debate LCC decided to make the order which now goes to consultation and we have prepared a formal objection which was hand delivered to County hall on December 13th. I would like to thank those members who contributed and checked it for typos etc.

We have studied a number of other issues and continue to monitor larger developments but this is the only action we have taken since our last meeting.

We have also made overtures to HS2 to set up a meeting to discuss the impacts on the R of W network. I now understand that they are working round the counties and after Derbyshire where they have met with the LAF, they will work on the issues affecting Nottingham which should not take long as the line does not enter that county. Our turn would presumably be next.

CHARNWOOD FOREST STEERING GROUP

John Howells and I were members of some of the working groups which worked up the lottery bid which has now been approved. I met with representatives of the Heritage Lottery 3 times in all to promote this project.

The individual projects within the bid include our suggested Access for All at a few sites which John Law has been promoting. Another is the improvement of connectivity which we have been campaigning for and this includes trying to promote additional bussing facilities. There will be an agenda item on this at the meeting. We have £250,000 for the development phase of about 18 months. Unless we fall down badly the rest of the funds will then be made available for this £3.9M project. They have been earmarked specifically for this.

A new Development Board is being set up to progress the projects and a Projects Development Officer is being recruited. I have invited to be on the board representing the public interests on your behalf and John and I offer ourselves again to be your representatives on the Steering Group. I have prepared a draft letter to go to the board outlining and putting some detail on our suggestions which I will seek comment on and agreement with at our meeting. One suggestion is that at the end of the process, the map we were instrumental in having produced should be updated and I have arranged that the head of the production company will come up in the new year to have a look rounds with me. He is also keen to bring out some form of walkers guide to the area and possibly a similar production for horse riders if the network is sufficient to make it viable.

The letter as written also invites Sam Lattaway who is heading up the project to attend our April meeting to both update us and agree how best we can assist.

Roy Denney Representative

NATIONAL FOREST ACCESS & RECREATION GROUP

Following a new structure being put in place at the Forest, Sam Lattaway is to Chair these meetings in future. An Access & Recreation Officer has been appointed to take some pressure off him

He informed us of the commercial management side of the NF and the tourism growth plan. This is becoming successful and generates valuable income for the NFC which has had its central government funding considerably reduced over the last year or so. It is also important because it strengthens the case for the provision of good access and recreational facilities. They are looking at providing more short access loops off the National Forest Way (NFW).

There was an update on the NFW and the rangers of whom there were now 25 covering every section of the Way carrying out much useful maintenance work over the summer months.

The next National Forest Festival event will be held on 6/7/8 July in 2018 - more information to come in due course.

The Forestry Commission representative was pleased to inform us that the present government had stated that the Commission woodlands would remain in public ownership; its future was safeguarded so its sites in the NF area would be safe for the foreseeable future and their present access arrangements secured. It would eventually be renamed Forestry England. This again is good news as the future of the Commission has been very uncertain at times in recent years.

Roy Denney Representative

NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES REPORT FOR

9th January 2018 LAF MEETING

COUNTRYSIDE FOR ALL

1. Forestry Commission

1.1. Countryside For All Leaflets

The Forestry Commission have identified three of their most accessible routes in Leicestershire as Hicks Lodge, Jaguar Lount wood and Sence Valley Forest Park. They are keen to have Countryside For All leaflets for these sites. We started auditing the Hicks Lodge loop but have been made aware that improvements will take place in March. The other sites together with the Zigzag route at Hicks Lodge do not have any planned improvements. The Forestry Commission will be able to fund leaflets produced prior to the end of March 2018. We will aim to get the audits completed by mid February so they can be printed and billed prior to the end of March. We will then discuss the options with the Forestry Commission on how we fund the production of the leaflets for the loop at Hicks Lodge.

1.2. Adapted Bikes for the disabled

Discussions have taken place with the Forestry Commission and the bike hire owner at Hicks Lodge. Both are in agreement that adapted bikes would be good for the site. A meeting will be arranged for March to see how we can take this project forward.

1.3. Changing Places toilets

Neither of the two disabled toilets at Hicks Lodge are big enough to be used as a changing places toilets. We will be investigating whether we can house some of the changing places equipment in each of the disabled toilets.

2. Joint meeting with the disability Officers and Community Forum

We agreed with Alison Barnes, Leicestershire County Council to include the Choice Unlimited event in the Leicestershire Local Offer letter, Spreading the Word. We were asked how the future is looking for the disabled in Leicestershire. Unfortunately from my relationship with different disability groups my answer had to be very bleak and getting worse.

3. Woodland Trust

The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF delivered the Inclusive Countryside Access training to 11 members of staff from the Woodland Trust as well as other organisations in November. This included members of the Woodland Trust staff who had the responsibility for sites in Leicestershire.

4. Relationship with other charitable bodies

The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF, in their Tesco Bags For Life funding application will be including a request for funding for flyers to promote the Mount Group Riding For The Disabled. Although this organisation is based in Leicestershire approximately 50% of their riders live in

Rutland, the balance from Leicestershire. These flyers will be used to promote Riding for the Disabled at the joint LAF display at the next Leicester Choice Unlimited event.

Helena Edwards and John Law have a meeting with the director of Mosaic in January to discuss how the LAF can help the promotion of their accessible narrow boat at the Choice Unlimited event. Discussions have also taken place with Gorse Hill City Farm on how we help promote them at the Choice Unlimited event.

5. **Changing Places Letter acknowledging LCC Changing Places Fund**

Below is a draft letter for approval to be sent out to districts:

Dear.....

DISABILITY ACCESS TO PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum recently received a presentation concerning appropriate accessibility for the disabled to conveniences and in particular those in local authority control. A current campaign by the Changing Places Consortium seeks to influence decision makers whilst conveniences are being planned in new buildings or during renovations so as to provide greater levels of access for those who require it.

A "Changing Places" facility provides a safe, clean environment with sufficient space and will be appropriately equipped and laid out to enable those who are limited in their own mobility, or have severe disabilities including profound and multiple learning disabilities and who need equipment to help them or may need support from one or two carers, to either get on the toilet or to have their continence pad changed.

Unfortunately, standard accessible toilets (or "disabled toilets") do not provide changing benches or hoists and most are too small to accommodate more than one person. Without Changing Places toilets, the person with disabilities is put at risk, and families are forced to risk their own health and safety by changing their loved one on a toilet floor.

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum consider it a necessity that future planning by authorities in Leicestershire takes into account the needs of those with disabilities to ensure that they can access public spaces and tourism centres in their communities. The campaign leaflet and other information is available at www.changing-places.org.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Leicestershire Local Access Forum to bodies concerned with providing or managing access as defined in Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, section 94.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that this advice is brought to the attention of the relevant officers in your organisation.

Organisations eligible to apply to Leicestershire County Council Community Grants, are now able to apply for the Shire Changing Places grant.

Yours faithfully

Chairman
Leicestershire Local Access Forum.

ACTION: LAF - Approve of amend the letter

Chair- Requested to sign upon approval

Secretary – Letters to go out to relevant district officers.

6. Choice Unlimited 2018

It will be fantastic if we can get the 3 Forestry Commission Countryside For All leaflets printed prior to the event. The Forestry Commission may have a display at the event in 2018 but if not we will be able to promote these sites. The date for the Leicester Choice Unlimited event has not been set yet. The joint LAF display with the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF gave us a greater presence this year with three tables, one funded by a private sponsor. It was felt that as the City parks and walks were promoted at the event, the City should be asked to fund a table for 2018. This year we had a table top mounted display, which took up all the space on one of the tables. We have agreement from Lincolnshire County Council that we can borrow their floor mounted display (approximately 8 foot by 6 foot). A private sponsor has agreed to fund the space for the floor mounted display . Discussions will take place in January with the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF to see whether they want a display at Leicester and if so whether they will fund a table for a joint display with the Leicestershire LAF. The other issues are whether Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City will each fund a table.

ACTION: John Law – Discuss with South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF whether they want to fund a table at Leicester and if so whether they would have a joint display with the Leicestershire LAF.

Ed – Will Leicestershire County Council fund a table at the event?

All – Who do we approach at Leicester City to see if they will fund a table?

7. Possible Leicestershire Countryside For All Routes

We were asked in the summer if we could provide a list of the most suitable sealed countryside routes. Information has kindly been supplied by Ed and Vicky. From the routes supplied it may be possible to produce Countryside For All leaflets. As we already have committed to carry out four audits in 2018. We could look at obtaining funding for 4 further leaflets in 2019 to include part of the following routes:

Green Route 1 north out of the city to Cossington
Great Central Way south out of city to Glen Parva
Ratby to Glenfield rail line

8. Watermead Country Park

As many of the visitors to our stand at the Choice Unlimited event did not know of Watermead Country Park and other issues had been raised about the Country Park, a site visit was carried out. The site visit was undertaken Monday 7th August by Helena Edwards and John Law from 11:45 for

approximately 1.5 hours. It was a fine sunny day and there were only 5 cars in the car park at John Merrick Lake, two of which were ours. Whilst at Watermead, we saw one person struggle to get through the kissing gate with a pushchair and a girl fall off her bike when struggling to get through a gate further round the site. Whilst there were cars on other car parks, the visitor numbers for a fine sunny day during the school holidays was disappointing. It did seem to indicate that the local authorities, which hold the view that the park is underused is correct. From our point of view we want to encourage more use of this fantastic green space, especially for the disabled, their carers and young families. It is obvious this country park does need promoting. To make it more accessible it does need a Countryside For All leaflet but it is clear the LCC does not wish to follow this route. This inaction makes this bit of countryside inaccessible. Not telling people how accessible a site is, means people with mobility issues are less likely to visit. The other key concerns in relation to the site are:

- The lack of visitors
- Awkward kissing gates
- Gates with Radar keys
- Removal of the tapping rail
- The mismanagement of the sensory area
- The lack of a decent/route into the sensory area from the tarmac path - preference would be a tarmac route
- More seating required in the sensory area together with passing places
- The protection/treatment of the braille sign
- More seats required along the route

The sensory area could only be described as a disgrace, although there was a seat in it, there was no way to access it easily due to the height of the undergrowth round it. The kissing gates and gates requiring radar keys are a real barrier in this Country Park and this has clearly been evidenced in the site visit.

To enable the above issues to be understood a copy of the management plan of the site is requested. The reason for the removal of the tapping rail would also be appreciated.

Other organisations are trying to make their green spaces with public access more accessible. It seems that even if it is not intentional the opposite is true of Watermead Country Park belonging to the County Council.

ACTION: LCC – A copy of the site management plan is requested.

LCC – A senior manager of the Country Parks and the County Councillor responsible for the Country Parks requested to attend a LAF meeting to explain the above issues, when the members of the LAF who undertook the site meeting are present. It is also requested that the Leicestershire County Councillor and Local Access Forum member Mrs. P Posnett be present at this meeting.

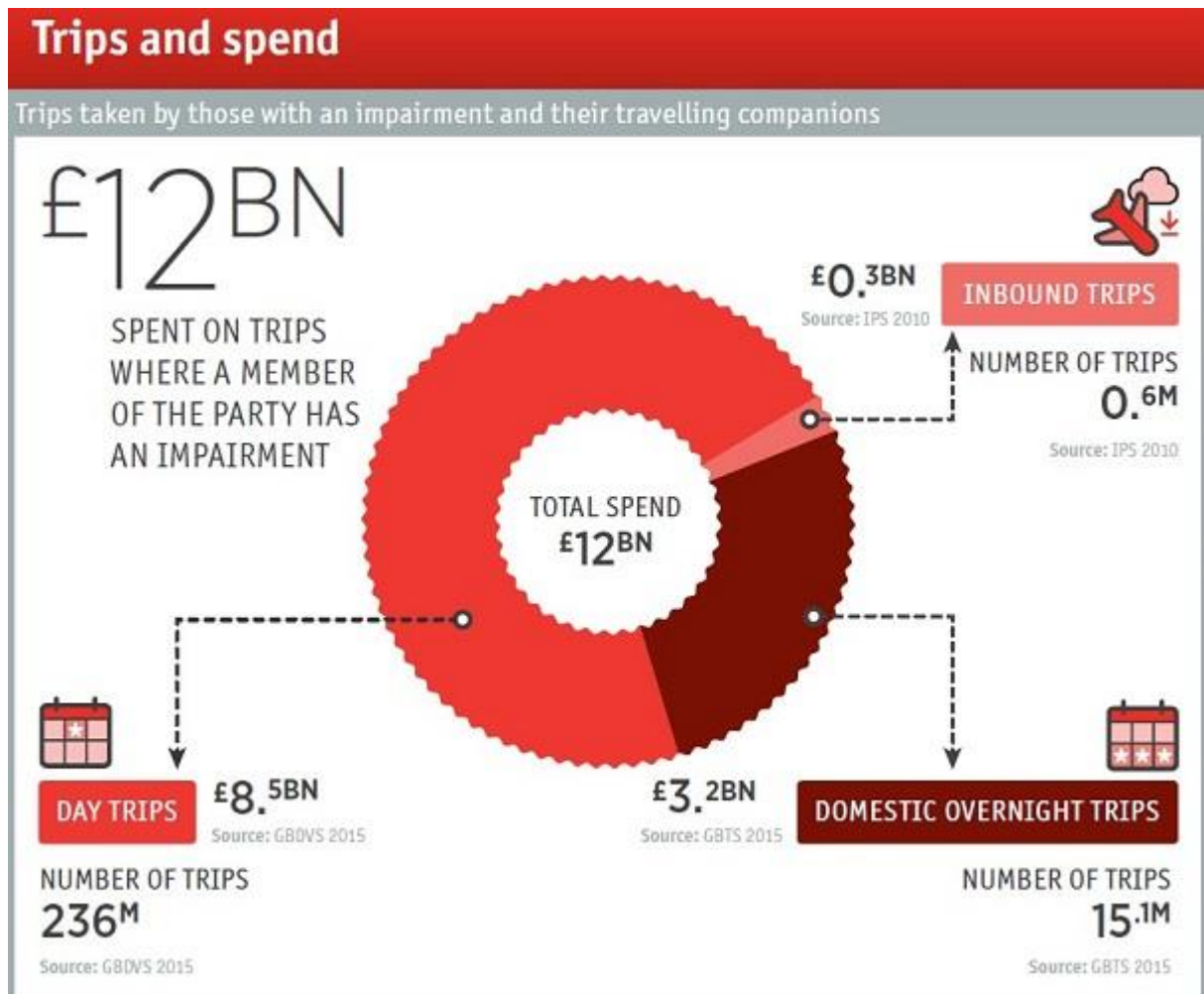
9. Visit England

VISIT ENGLAND PURPLE POUND

Discussions by email and phone have been taking place with Visit England, the reason for this was initially for enquiring for funding for a National Countryside For All web site. Visit England suggested we looked at their web site displaying “Understanding the accessible tourism market”. This certainly gives another reason for us to keep a focus on countryside for all. Details from the Visit England web site are from 2015 below and overleaf:

Understanding the accessible tourism market

Good accessibility benefits all visitors. Disabled people have the greatest need for accessible facilities and services but only around 8% use a wheelchair, with many more having other mobility, hearing or visual impairments. People with health conditions and impairments – and their travelling companions – spend £12 billion a year on tourism in England.



- In 2015, nearly one in five tourism day trips in England were taken by people with an impairment and their travelling companions, spending £8.5 billion.
- In 2015, 18% of all overnight trips by British residents in England were taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions, worth £3.2 billion.

- Over half a million people with a health condition or impairment visit England from abroad each year, spending around £3 million.

In addition to this, our research reveals that visitors who make up the accessible tourism market are:

- More likely to take longer trips
- Find seaside destinations particularly appealing
- Anecdotally very loyal

12. VISIT ENGLAND ACCESSIBILITY GUIDES

We have had discussions with Visit England about the new Accessibility Guides. These guides should help businesses to attract more visitors and money. The guides will also be an asset to people with disabilities and carers. In Rutland the LAF are delivering a one off session including a presentation and discussion to representatives of business organisations. It is then up to these organisations to decide how they wish to pursue this matter. This should be of value to Leicestershire businesses, people with disabilities and their carers. A presentation is available to highlight this issue.

Visit England Powerpoint/Youtube presentation

ACTION: LAF – Does the LAF want to pursue delivering a session to business representatives on the Accessibility Guide?

Unrecorded Ways Sub-Committee Report

The sub-committee has not held a business meeting since the last full LAF meeting, but will meet on January 9th at 1430 before the next full LAF meeting.

However, we have not been completely idle.

Firstly we now have a bank account under the umbrella of the Leicestershire & Rutland Area of the Ramblers' Association, with John Howells acting as our Treasurer; money is beginning to flow into and out of the account to support our aims. Hopefully, final accounting procedures will have been agreed at the meeting on January 9th.

We also ran a very successful Recruitment/Training event in Glenfield on November 6th, at which Roy Denney presented a series of slides modelled on the Bucks & Wadey Roadshow presentations, with hardware support from Mike Gamble and Barry Thomas, and in depth rights-of-way knowledge provided by Vicky Allen and myself. Several members of local history societies attended, and we were praised for our enthusiasm in presenting what was regarded as an important and worthwhile project.

Fortuitously, this was followed up on December 2nd by the full day intensive training delivered by the acknowledged authority on historical research – Phil Wadey & Sarah Bucks. This was over-subscribed, with 42 people packed into the Marlene Reid Centre in Coalville, although admittedly not all were from Leicestershire. This was rated as excellent by all whose comments I have received, and it was observed that the two events were complementary for relative newcomers to the strange world of rights-of-way – the first helping understanding the greater depth of the second. Many thanks to Vicky for the room organisation and catering – the number of laptops in the room probably caused lights around Coalville to dim.

The next crucial matter is to retain the enthusiasm of our researchers – 64Gb memory sticks holding all the information on the project so far accumulated will be distributed on request in January, if demand does not outstrip supply. We intend to ask the researchers what they feel they need next in terms of support, and set up a small Working Group to document a plan for carrying the project forward and maximise the number of DMMO Applications submitted before Jan 1st 2026. On this matter I am arranging a meeting with the LCC Rights of Way Team, including the two who attended the Coalville event, to discuss best practice and maintain our good working relationship.

Stan Warren
Chairman, Unrecorded Ways Sub-Committee
December 14th 2017

East Midlands Chairs LAF Meeting Notes

I attended my first East Midlands Chairs LAF meeting on the 10th October at the Nottingham City Council Office. I did not know what to expect from the meeting or its purpose. I came away from the meeting realising that all the groups including the Leicestershire Local Access Forum have similar challenges and opportunities in an ever changing political and economic environment.

It was good to hear from our colleagues that their local councils have been supportive and proactive in the main to encourage the LAF's to work continuing to improve access for all. These councils have made available administrative resources and have helped to facilitate guest speakers for their forums. There are issues with recruitment and retention of LAF member with new chairs.

Natural England was not in attendance which was unfortunate as the group wished to establish how Brixit was being planned for.

John Law agreed to pull together the minutes and the Chairs reports which when available will give a full and comprehensive picture of the activities across the East Midlands LAF

John Howells

Leicestershire Local Access Forum Round Up

During 2017 LLAF elected a new chair John Howells, the forum currently meets 4 times a year, with a membership of 15 covering the majority of interested access groups together with landowners and a representative of the NFU.

In addition to the main meetings we have 3 active sub groups who work on the following areas

Planning and Travel Committee chaired by Roy Denney (Vice Chairman of the LLAF), this group has responded on behalf of LLAF on all the main consultations, local plans. And a development across the Leicestershire, to ensure our voice is heard loud and clear. This includes Network Rail and the issues with crossings that we have, as the rail network is updated and improved to accommodate additional usage. We also are trying to re-establish a dialogue with HS2
We have been actively involved in a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £3.7 Landscape Partnership Scheme covering Charnwood Forest. It is likely we will be represented on the Board moving forward

Network Opportunities Committee chaired by John Law, this group has been championing the needs of people with limited abilities to ensure their voice is not lost when opportunities present themselves to improve access. Members supported an event at Leicester Tigers Stadium promoting countryside access for the disabled at the Choice Unlimited event. Work encouraging councils to be Dementia Friendly is also under way

Unrecorded Ways Committee chaired by Stan Warren, during the year this group has been very proactive meeting regularly, attending training sessions and hosting and delivering a presentation to like-minded groups to tap in to expertise in the areas of heritage and local history. We are working with several groups including Leicestershire and Rutland Ramblers, Leicestershire Footpaths Association and the British Horse Society to restore the record and protect the informal and unregistered network.

EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CHAIRS' MEETING**Summary**

Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 10:30am

Location: Nottingham City Council Offices, Loxley House, Nottingham

Attendees

Hugh McClintock	Nottingham LAF	East Mid's Chair
Ruth Thurgood	Nottingham LAF	
Alex Staniforth	Nottinghamshire LAF	
Terry Kirby	Leicestershire LAF	
John Law	South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF	
Vicky Allen	Leicester LAF	
John Thompson	Peak District LAF	
David Saunders	Nottingham CVS	
Kieran Lee	Sustrans	

Apologies for absence

Edwina Edwards	Peak District LAF
Marilyn Hambly	Derby and Derbyshire LAF

1. CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATIONS

David Saunders from Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service provided a presentation on Charitable Incorporated Organisations. It was agreed that the LAF representatives would bring back the results of those discussions to the East Mid's Chairs meeting in October 2017

2. UPDATE FROM NATURAL ENGLAND

- **National Trail funding:** The Trail partnerships were told on 26 January this year that for 2017/18, they would again receive a level budget.
- **Natural England's Conservation strategy** – this is a new overarching strategy for NE and will set the agenda for much of our future work.

- **Motor vehicle stakeholder group:** This group, comprised of user groups, anti-vehicle groups and access managers, had been proposed during the passage of the Deregulation Bill to look at issues arising around vehicle use in the countryside such as appropriate/inappropriate use, legal measures, good practice in route management, funding for maintenance of routes etc.

3. LAF ROUND UPS

Given by Nottingham, Leicester, Leicestershire, Peak District, Mid Lincolnshire, South Lincolnshire and Rutland full details in minutes

4. YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGIONAL TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting due to time constraints.

5. PERMISSIVE ACCESS

A number of letters/emails were discussed in relation to payment for access post Brexit.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK
STEERING GROUP HELD IN THE GUTHLAXTON COMMITTEE ROOM
ON WEDNESDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2017 AT 9:30**

PRESENT

Cllr Huw Williams, H&BBC	Cllr HW
Cllr P Posnett MBE, LCC	Cllr PP
Cllr E Vardy, CBC (Chair)	Cllr EV
Anna Low, LCC	AL
Vicky Cormie, LCC	VC
Fiona Walker, LCC	FW
Claire Install, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust	CI
Chris Traill, CBC	CT
Dr Julie Attard, University of Leicester	JA
Ian Nelson, NWLDC	IN
John Everitt, National Forest Company	JE
John Howells, Ramblers Association / Leicestershire Local Access Forum	JH
Mark Fennel, CBC	MF
Martin Peters, Leicestershire Promotions	MP
Neil Rudge, Natural England	NR
Paul Tame, National Farmers Union	PT
Peter Tyldesley, Bradgate Park Trust	PTy
Sam Lattaway, National Forest Company (Vice-Chair)	SL

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Trevor Pendleton, NWLDC	Cllr TP
Michael Jeeves, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust	MJ
Roy Denney, Leicestershire Local Access Forum	RD

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING 10TH MAY 2017

Members accepted the minutes of the meeting of the 10th May 2017 as a true record of the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr EV announced the good news that the bid had been successful and that everyone had played an integral part in delivering the bid. Special thanks to SL, JE and AL for all of their work.

5. HLF BID

SL had prepared a presentation (attached to minutes) regarding the HLF Landscape Partnership and how to move it forward.

SL delivered the presentation, including where the project is at now, the development phase, and the funding commitments.

While explaining the development phase, SL said that the partnership has gone from being challenged for not having strong partnerships in 2013, to being told that the strength of the partnership has been specifically highlighted as an important part of the 2017 bid's success. SL congratulated everybody. SL also said that they needed to drill down to the fine details of who's doing what and develop a fully costed business plan.

SL then went onto explain what this looks like and detailed the next key things to consider. A 'wow factor' interpretation project is among the projects that will need further development

SL advised that there were HLF forms to fill out in order to get permission to start the project and that confirmation of financial commitment to match funding was required.

With regard to match funding for the development phase, SL said that Local Authorities would need to provide written confirmation on headed paper that the money is committed in next year's budget and for 2019/20.

IN raised an issue in that, although an 'in principle' confirmation can be given, budgets can change during the year and that commitments made now are not necessarily guaranteed in the face of budget changes.

SL asked that everybody have as concrete confirmation of their match funding as they can get.

Cllr EV said that CBC would let him have that and CT confirmed this.

Cllr HW advised that it shouldn't be a problem.

AL agreed that LCC would be able to provide confirmation.

VC asked whether it made a difference who the confirmation came from.

SL said that it needed to be someone who has the power to make the commitment.

CT asked whether there was a holding account.

SL replied that it was easier to split contributions by financial year but that, if funding could only be secured in 2018/19, partners could give the whole payment in that year and the NFC would have to ensure that the correct amounts are carried across the two financial years.

CT then asked if they can contribute and add to the volunteer hours needed.

SL advised that they need to look at it in more detail but they can contribute volunteers and that these hours will need to be logged.

Cllr PP agreed with the budget and will remind the Cabinet later today to ensure that it is included in the forecast.

SL then went onto proof of ownership/leasehold requirements and asked that partners start this process as it may not be straightforward.

NR said that the implementation of works undertaken on protected sites needed to be processed early to avoid delays.

Cllr EV confirmed that CBC would provide proof of ownership

PTy said that it wasn't a problem for Bradgate. They'll just need to confirm ownership of land.

SL advised that the detailed project management structure would be the same as that presented at the 10th May meeting.

In regards to Governance, SL said that they will establish a Landscape Project Steering Group (LPSG). The members at the meeting today are strategic and the LPSG will be delivering the project. SL said that they will still have stakeholder and working groups but that the headings for the working groups will change to: (1) Community, History & Arts, (2) Natural Environment, and (3) Economy & Tourism sector.

SL then went on to say that to avoid confusion, they want to change the Steering Group name to 'Charnwood Forest Regional Park Board' to ensure a clear separation.

All were in agreement to change the name.

Members were then asked if they agreed to the establishment of the LPSG and to delegate the operational decision-making to the LPSG.

The group were all in agreement.

SL said that best practice was for the LPSG to have an independent chair. He said that the members should talk about any suitable candidates to approach.

Members were then asked if they were in agreement to have an independent chair and to delegate the recruitment of the LPSG chair to the Steering Group.

JE clarified that everyone was to think about potential nominees and that recruitment would be an open and transparent process.

Cllr EV replied that any ideas for someone independent and suitable should be fed back to AL, SL and himself.

SL added that the candidate having a strong link to Charnwood Forest would be especially good.

SL then moved onto the LPSG membership.

SL said that as CBC was the largest Borough Council, would NWLC & Hinckley be happy for CBC to represent District and Borough Councils as a whole.

IN and HW agreed.

JA, PTy, SL, MP all confirmed that they were happy for their areas to be included in the initial membership.

SL said that Charnwood Arts and Voluntary Action Leicestershire had been included as it was really important to engage the community of Leicester.

SL added that Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) also needed to be included. JH agreed.

SL then said that finding a single community representative for Charnwood Forest would be challenging and was something for the group to think about further before deciding on.

The group were asked if everybody agreed to the initial membership and for the Steering group to identify additional members as necessary.

The group were in agreement.

Cllr EV asked that if anybody had any ideas, then to let them know.

MP suggested that they keep the LPSG small.

JE said that it was a good starting point and that they needed to test the size and frequency of the group, how decisions are made and the communication between the groups.

SL then continued the presentation and discussed the Project Development Team, which would be hosted by the NFC. He advised that the job descriptions were already done and asked if the members were happy for the recruitment to be delegated to NFC and LPSG. He also asked if members agreed to provide desk space to project staff where possible for short-term 'hot desking'.

CBC and LCC confirmed desks would be made available. Other members of the group agreed that they would look into it.

SL then went through the remainder of the HLF Permission to Start form and said that a key element was about the procurement of goods and services. He said that the partnership would need to demonstrate value for money. The NFC's procurement policies would be used (as the hosting body) and have been approved by Defra. These require competitive tendering for all contracts. However, if there is only a single suitable trader and a clear case can be made for this, a single tender can be used.

CI asked if there was repeated work such as digging and the procurement has been done once, would they need to do it again or could they use the same.

SL advised that this was a delivery phase concern and that they will look at this nearer the time.

CT said that in the final meeting, they should be engaging people on a wider scale and look at joint communications.

SL said that they could look at publicising on lottery machines and giving discounted entry with lottery tickets; something to recognise and reward the contributions of lottery players.

PT asked if the survey of farmers and land owners would be after the event.

SL said that they were getting ideas of how grants can help land owners and that they will be a grant fund for this within the Delivery Phase. He said that the LPSG will talk to land owners in order to know how to shape this.

JE asked what the timeline was to get permission to start.

SL advised that it would take a few weeks to turn around and should be done by Christmas or New Year. He said that in anticipation, they would get recruitment packs ready for the New Year. He also advised that they hoped to stagger the interviews for the two posts and to have them both start from April 2018.

Cllr EV asked SL to send the presentation to everyone.

6. STAKEHOLDER FORUM EVENT

AL advised that she and SL had discussed the Stakeholder forum event and that they had a draft proposal.

AL said that the proposed timeline was January or February 2018 and that the event would be from 9:00-12:00 noon.

AL asked the members if they had any volunteers who could facilitate the workshops.

MP said that half an hour for the workshops was not long enough if there are to be large groups.

Cllr EV suggested that the end time is amended to 12:30pm so that the workshops can run for longer, if required. AL agreed to amend this and advised that attendees will also have the opportunity to put their ideas forward in a post-it exercise.

Cllr EV asked if everyone was happy with the proposal if the times are amended.

The group were all in agreement.

7. LAUNCH EVENT

JE said that there are a few reasons behind having a formal launch including: raising our profile with the general public; engaging stakeholders including potential candidates for the Independent Chair; engaging different partners; getting match funders involved; and getting HLF excited about the project.

JE then said that there was merit in a media focused launch event and that we should try to get Sir David Attenborough involved if his calendar allows.

JE proposed that a date is set and an A-lister like Sir David approached to increase publicity.

MP asked which bit we were launching.

JE advised that the project is live now. He then asked if they want a politician such as Michael Gove to be involved. JE said we need to consider what we are trying to achieve, how time critical it is and the scale of work involved.

Cllr EV suggested that a letter is sent to Sir David as soon as possible as this will steer the next actions such as setting a date.

Cllr EV also asked that everyone give it some thought and make any suggestions.

SL then stated that NFC will be leading the communications and media and that it would be better to have one point of contact.

Cllr EV asked if was all partners were happy with NFC being the one point of contact.

There were no objections.

JE summarised that NFC would write to Sir David as a starting point to getting a date for the launch or to determine whether it was a non-starter and move forward from there.

Cllr EV asked if everybody was happy with this.

The group were in agreement.

8. DATES AND VENUES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Cllr EV said that he, AL and SL would discuss and come back with the date of the next meeting in order to move forward.

Cllr EV asked if that was OK with everybody and there were no objections.

9. AOB – WEB PRESENCE

AL said that LCC would continue to administer the Board meetings so it made sense for these minutes to be published on the county council's resources website; <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/local-partnerships/charnwood-forest-regional-park>. She suggested the minutes from the LPSG could be published on the NFC project website and that the two sites should link to each other.

CI asked whether the project would have its own website. SL confirmed that it would have a dedicated website in due course.

Cllr EV said that it had been a good meeting with decisions made and thanked members for attending.

The meeting concluded at 10:40.



Director of Law & Governance
 Leicestershire County Council
 County Hall
 Glenfield
 LE3 8RA

Date: December 13th 2017
contact: Leicestershire Local Access Forum,
 c/o Room 700, County Hall,
 Leicester, LE3 8RJ
Email: information@leicslaf.org.uk

Hand delivered to reception

**PROPOSED EXTINGUISHMENT OF BRIDLEWAY I 20 (PART), Reference PP/NTWR/7
 SILEBY ROAD AND ACROSS THE RAILWAY LEVEL CROSSING, BARROW UPON SOAR**

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) wishes to object to the extinguishment of this crossing.

As an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, existing to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access, we feel that the loss of amenity to the general public is not justified when alternatives are available.

Before it was closed on apparent safety grounds it was a major link in one of the best bridleway circuits in the area, keeping riders mostly off the busy roads. It was also a pedestrian route popular with both locals and leisure walkers giving access to the wider countryside and network of rights of way. With the construction of a new estate by Jelson off the Melton Road, the I 24 footpath to this crossing becomes even more essential for foot travel into the village. It would provide a good route for people from this area to access the bus route and it would again provide for children from Sibleby going to school in Barrow, who at present have to use the narrow and dangerous footway along the busy road.

We remain to be convinced by suggested usage figures produced by Network Rail (NR) and question their methodology. We do not see how they could have counted the number of users if those users had not chosen to make themselves known to NR. Alternative routes are currently being used by the public due to the closure of the crossing giving them no other choice, but that is not a relevant factor.

The LLAF does not believe NR has adequately pursued what we considered to be constructive suggestions for a safer crossing of the railtrack. Without an alternative being provided it creates a significant length of dead-end bridleway and a footpath (between Melton Road and the railway) which is contrary Public Policy for achieving a joined-up PRow network

When the initial suggestions were floated by NR we engaged with them to consider the various alternative solutions they had tabled and accepted that a bridge, suitable for riders, would be an eyesore and impinge unreasonable on nearby residents. It would have involved the probable compulsory purchase of at least one residential property.

We do feel that there is a perfectly feasible solution with a bridge located just off the present line of the route which could have satisfied the foot traffic. We are given to understand that NR does already have Permitted Development Rights (CBC ref P/10/0730/2) for a stepped pedestrian bridge beside Pingle Nook. Riders can however accept a more lengthy diversion and the bridleway rights could have been satisfied as well. It would keep horse riders and cyclists, off the busy roads in Barrow.

We see no reason why the existing rights should not be protected by two solutions if a one-fits-all solution is not available and, bearing in mind their original comments, it seems to us that the only reason why NR are not going down this route is one of cost. There is precedent for bridleway rights being extinguished but footpath rights being accommodated but in this case we believe that both sets of users can be accommodated by two different solutions.

We have over recent years tried to engage constructively with NR on several occasions as regards their plans for level crossings. The suggestions put forward by NR to close a number of level crossings have been explored and we have agreed some diversions or alternative routings by bridge. However some proposals are not acceptable, the alternatives being unsuitable because they are too long; removing a sense of directness of purpose and taking users of a particular route too far out of their way. This is especially true where the route is used more for everyday utilitarian transport rather than recreation or because the alternative involves walking or riding on a busy road, especially if it has no footway or useable verge. With the new housing development this would increasingly be the case with this crossing were it to remain available.

We see ourselves as critical friends offering constructive advice based on our breadth of local knowledge and rarely object as such, but on this occasion we feel we must.

BACKGROUND

The LLAF sees as a major part of its role, the need to facilitate and encourage the general public to walk or ride more. There is increasingly strong evidence of the health-benefits of walking in particular. e.g. the fact that brisk walking improves circulation and the performance of the heart and lungs. Walking can lower blood-pressure; it can reduce risk of stroke and of heart disease. It can improve control of blood sugar in type-two diabetes and it has an important role in cardiac rehabilitation. Walking and riding also promote mental health and general well-being, and have the potential to be as effective as anti-depressants or psychotherapy in treating depression. The loss of this route has reduced the opportunities for residents to get out into the nearby countryside. Widespread take-up of walking and riding generally could massively lighten the economic burden on the NHS caused by physical inactivity and provide a boost for rural economies. Walkers and riders spend literally billions of pounds in the countryside and it is calculated to support a quarter of a million jobs.

It can be demonstrated therefore that such activity in the country can reduce the nation's health-bill and boost the opportunities for rural diversification. In the Barrow case, with new development on the far side of the tracks, the route in question can provide a link into the main part of the village and discourage the use of a vehicle. There is thus a need for a rights of way network which encourages walking and riding; a network which connects people with their communities to their local amenities; with their history and with the wider natural environment.

BARROW

This closure, if permitted, would sever the network and provide unacceptable alternatives. The LLAF urges the Authority and any subsequently appointed Inspector to bear in mind the potential effects of the closure not least because walking and riding along dangerous and inconvenient ordinary roads is the alternative.

We do not believe in many instances the risks involved in the use of level crossings is any greater than the risks taken regularly in daily life, including crossing roads. It seems to us that most accidents at crossings are at vehicular crossings and that other fatalities are quite often suicides. The perceived danger of crossings should not be an excuse for closures to satisfy operational or economic aims. We have seen suggested closures of crossings with no records of accidents, with diversions on to dangerous roads with a history of accidents. Where there is a greater degree of danger on the suggested alternatives then we believe this can often be a good reason to refuse a request for an extinguishment and the issue can often be addressed by providing pelican style warning lights, CCTV observation, and telephone contact.

In the case of Barrow we are unaware of any accidents although there was a narrow escape which triggered the proposed closure. With Barrow, which will become an increasingly high speed high frequency line, the track

operation will be a profitable enterprise and we believe that the building of a footbridge can be considered a reasonable financial solution. The provision of a diversion for riders would be of modest cost in the greater scheme of things.

We are able to suggest in more detail how such solutions could be provided - See app1 for details of these suggestions.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

We understand that the Secretary of State or Highway Authority “...shall not confirm such an order unless he, or as the case may be, they, are satisfied that it is expedient so to do having regard to all the circumstances, and in particular to: - (a) whether it is reasonably practicable to make the crossing safe for use by the public.....” etc.

The legislation for the diversion of public rights of way allows for some subjectivity, but requires an Inspector, in deciding the expedience of confirming a public path diversion order, to have regard *inter alia* to the effect that a diversion would have ‘on public enjoyment of the path or way as a whole’

There are a number of different laws relating to potential extinguishments each having slightly different implications but there is a common agenda that authorities should not extinguish any public right of way over land unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that a suitable alternative right of way has been or will be provided, or that the provision of an alternative right of way is not required.

There was a case in 1990 which confirmed it was necessary to bear in mind whether the way had to be unnecessary for the public; the convenience of the landowner was not a relevant factor. Lord Justice Woolf (as he then was) said that where there was evidence of use, it would be difficult to properly come to the conclusion that a way was unnecessary unless the public were, or were going to be, provided with a reasonably suitable alternative way. Woolf further held that when deciding whether an alternative way was reasonable, it was necessary to be satisfied that the alternative way was suitable, or reasonably suitable, for the purpose for which the public were using the existing way.

We take some comfort from a recent Inspector’s comments in connection with diversion orders under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 made in respect of paths on the playing-fields of Harrow School. In that matter, objections had included the undesirability of a zigzag route replacing a direct one, and the loss of sense of walking an old-established route. The Inspector generally accepted both matters as relevant factors. She commented “*The straightness of the route gives walkers a sense of purpose which is lost on a route which turns at angles to avoid modern, man-made features*”

We also note the recent decision made by Grahame Kean an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in respect of a crossing in Derby:
(ROW/3169391 under Section 118 of the Highways Act 1980 known as the Derby City Council Megaloughton Lane, Extinguishment Order 2014 - Decision date: 29 November 2017)

We do not quote these as if we think they set some sort of precedent, since every case must be judged on its merits but they do support our case that where practical, a direct route should not be extinguished in circumstances like the ones faced at Barrow.

National policy to reduce rail journey times and maximise the safety of crossings are relevant considerations. However we feel there is insufficient evidence that such benefits outweigh the primary consideration of the use of this historic route by the public and argue that there are acceptable diversions and a practical bridge construction and would ask that the likely extent to which the route would, apart from the Order, be likely to be used by the public be given prime consideration.

Leicestershire County Council has a Rights of Way Improvement Plan which we helped them produce. Amongst its aims, to paraphrase, is promoting a sustainable transport network including, for walkers and riders, travel on

mainly traffic-free routes. Given that there would be inconveniences and risk arising from using any alternative routes, especially in terms of more vulnerable users, with longer routes and their proximity in places, to fast moving traffic, it is clear that confirmation of the Order would act contrary to fulfilling the objectives of the plan.

John Howells, Chairman, Leicestershire Local Access Forum,
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APPENDIX 1

Bridleway rights could be created between routes I 4 and I 20 which is at present dysfunctional. British Gypsum has land reserved for the creation of sidings but they have had that permission for many years and never seen the need to actually create these sidings. It should be possible to negotiate the use of this land given that it is now highly unlikely to be seen as economically viable to use such sidings for what is left of their mining permission. As a last resort the land could be compulsorily purchased. This route is too long to be of any practical assistance to pedestrians wishing to cross the line but could be a solution for riders.

We do of course speak for the general public and our soundings suggest that the popular local solution for a bridleway is to re-open Hayhill Lane (Underbridge 55) which has been filled in. This would provide an alternative bridleway and additional footway. There would be a need to provide an equestrian route to the north of the proposed Network Rail loop next to the Up Slow line to link the existing Bridleway with Hayhill Lane and this might require a CPO. The engineering works do not appear to be very challenging although the underbridge may flood. Such a route would provide access directly into a support area for the quarrying activity but we do not consider this to be a safety concern given appropriate fencing.

There is a track down to Hayhill Lane from footpath I 23 just to the north east of where it intersects bridleway I 20; Hayhill Lane could then be used for a short distance to a headland route down to cross the Gypsum service road and link up with I 4. If this route could be agreed, I 20 could be downgraded to a footpath between I 23 and the railway to maintain the local village circuit. The footbridge would then be an extension of footpath I 24.

Footpath rights can quite easily be satisfied by a slight diversion to allow the creation of a stepped bridge. Ideally we would wish to see ramps but if that is not deemed possible at this location then a stepped bridge satisfying the needs of most users on foot would be acceptable. Given the constraints of the footprint within which solutions for a pedestrian route have to be created, we concede that steps will be required as there does not appear to be room for a ramp. This unfortunately will be disadvantaging some of the less able, but this should not be an excuse for depriving the majority of users of their legal rights of way. Legislation requires Network Rail to take all reasonable steps to accommodate less mobile people but difficulties in this area do not justify failing to maintain the rights of the many.

The exact location of such a bridge could be explored further and there are possible slight variations but our preferred option is to remove a broad hedge of conifers which is about three metres wide. This location would require a short stretch of trackside land on far side which may take a CPO. On the Barrow side it would involve a stepped bridge at Pingle Nook but to the side of existing drive on the edge of Jelson's land replacing the hedge and thereby not taking up any useable land on Jelson's property.