

Meeting: **Leicestershire Local Access Forum**

Date/Time: **Monday, 6 January 2020 at 5.30 pm**

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

Contact: **Jason Watson**

Email: **0116 305 8308**

Membership

Mr John Howells (Chairman)

Mr. R. Denney

Ms. H. Brown

Mr. C. Faircliffe

Mr. M. Gamble

Mr. T. Kirby

Ms. H. Edwards

Mrs. A. Pyper

Ms. V. Allen

Mr. O. O'Shea JP CC

AGENDA

Item

1. The Chairman's welcome and opening remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Election of new Chairman and Vice Chairman
4. New Chairman's comments
5. Declarations of interest
6. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd July 2019
7. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda
8. Requests for urgent items to be debated at the Chairman's discretion
9. Guest speakers - Chairman of Forest Bid (Mr Attle) - TBC
10. Reports from committees and working groups
 - a) Planning and Travel Committee (Roy Denney)

b) Unrecorded Ways Committee

11. Reports from representatives on outside bodies.

- a) River Soar and GU Canal Partnership (Helena Edwards)
- b) National Forest Access and Recreation Group (Roy Denney)
- c) EMLAF Chairs meeting (Vicky Allen)
- d) Charnwood Forest Regional Park Group (Roy Denney)
- e) Heart of the Forest, Access and Connectivity Forum (Vicky Allen)

12. Committees for the coming year and their brief

- a) Planning and Travel
- b) Unrecorded Ways

13. Appointment of representatives to outside bodies

- a) Heart of the Forest, Access and Connectivity Forum
- b) River Soar and GU Canal Partnership
- c) National Forest Access and Recreation Group
- d) Charnwood Forest Regional Park Group

14. Correspondence

15. Access to LCC records

16. Annual Report

17. Recruitment and Quoracy

18. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (30 mins)

19. Open Access Surveys (Heather Brown)

20. Future work programme

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

22. Dates of future meetings (previously agreed subject to room availability)

FORUM

Wednesday April 1st 2020 – 5.30pm – 7.30pm (4pm workshop) County Hall

Tuesday 21st July – 5.30pm – 7.30pm (4pm workshop) County Hall

Wednesday 21st October – 5.30pm – 7.30pm (4pm workshop) County Hall

Thursday 7th January 2021 – 5.30pm – 7.30pm (4pm workshop) County Hall

UNRECORDED WAYS

Tuesday 28th Jan 2020 – 5.00pm – 7.30pm County Hall

Tuesday 3rd March 2020 – 2.00pm – 4.30pm County Hall

Thursday 14th May 2020 – 5.00pm – 7.30pm County Hall

Tuesday 16th June 2020 – 2.00pm – 4.30pm County Hall

Wednesday 19th August 2020 – 5.00pm – 7.30pm County Hall

Thursday 24th September 2020 – 7.00pm – 9.00pm Glenfield PC
Wednesday 25th November 2020 – 2.00pm – 4.30pm County Hall



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 3rd July 2019

PRESENT

Members

Mr R. Denney (DC, Vice Chair)
Ms. V. Allen
Mrs. H Brown
Mr. C. Faircliffe
Mrs. H. Edwards

Officers

Mr. E. McWilliam (LCC)
Mrs. J. Attard (National Forest)
Mrs. S. Dann (LCC)
Mrs. A. Adams (LCC)

1. The Chairman's welcome and opening remarks

Mr. Denney will be chairing the meeting due to Mr. Howells being unwell. He welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr. D. Nicholls, Mr. M. Gamble, Mrs. A. Pyper, Mrs. C. Radford CC, Mr. T. Kirby and Mr. J. Howells.

It was discussed that Mr. S. Warren be removed from the distribution list as it is unlikely he will be returning to the Group. It was also proposed to remove Mr. B Sutton due to his unattendance for the last 2 years.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were unable to be approved due to the meeting not being quorate.

4. Declarations of interest

The members confirmed that there were no declarations of interest.

5. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda

There were no matters arising not otherwise on the agenda.

6. Requests for urgent items to be debated at the Chairman's discretion

None.

7. Reports from committees and working groups.

a) Planning and Travel Committee

Mr. Denney discussed the Rail Freight Interchange. Ms. V. Allen said that a consultation is being set up in today's Leicester Mercury with the intention to consult on a new level crossing at Narborough.

b) Network Opportunities Committee

An update was made on the Unrecorded Ways Group.

8. Reports from outside bodies.

a) Heart of the Forest, Access and Connectivity Forum

Ms. Allen updated on this item. She said that they now require volunteers for this project due to there being no funding, they would be putting up signs to advertise.

b) River Soar and Grand Union Partnership

There was no update on this item.

c) National Forest and Recreation Group

Mr. Denney advised that the group hasn't met since last June, there is no meeting planned until the autumn. Mrs. Attard updated that the funding had ended for the Black to Green project, a bid was submitted for more funding but was unsuccessful. They require funding for staff help, Mrs. Attard will report back to the NFC to see if they can assist.

d) Charnwood Forest Regional Steering Group

Mrs. Attard updated that she had attended the mid-point review meeting with the HLF. The development phase will end in September. The final submission will go to the London Committee and they will know in March if they have been successful or not.

Mrs. Attard also explained the Development Phase. This will be evidence based and they will get consultants in to work on the plans. She also spoke about the Landscape Conservation Action Plan, Mrs. Attard asked the group if anybody could write anything for submission in this, Ms. Allen will have a look at putting some wording together.

9. HS2 Update

Ms. Allen updated that there have been some changes to the plans around Ashby de la Zouch, they are planning to move the line further away from the A42, there may be some old mines at the site, so plans have changed several times due to this.

Mr. Denney mentioned Belmont Way and the plans for HS2 regarding this.

Ms. Allen had an article from the Leicester Mercury that explained that there was going to be a compound built as a permanent infrastructure base between the A511 and A522.

10. Rights of Way Improvement Plan Update

Mr. McWilliam had circulated an update prior to the meeting. Several items were relating to policy creation agreements. They are working with developers and need to be prepared to discuss this. The group discussed a major issue that happened last year regarding access between Barrow to Cotes.

Mr. McWilliam spoke about setting up a group to discuss the document proposals. Mr. Denney said he was happy to be involved in this. Mr. McWilliam said he would come up with some dates and suggest them to the group, preferably around early August in the morning.

11. Barrow Rail Crossing Update

A Public Inquiry has recently taken place regarding the Barrow Rail Crossing that was attended by some members of the forum. Ms. Allen commented that they have been informed that the legislation did not require a diversion, just a closure. They will continue to progress this and keep the forum updated.

12. Forum Recruitment

The forum discussed how they could recruit new members to the LLAF. Mr. Denney asked if LCC could do an advert. Mr. McWilliam suggested that they could put an advert in the Leicester Mercury within the jobs pages but make it clear that it is a voluntary post or advertised as a vacancy on the EMSS website where all County Council jobs are advertised.

The group discussed which areas they need representation from the most. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to recruit someone from the farming community.

Mrs. Attard said she may know people that could be interested but depends on the time commitment, but she will ask around.

13. Correspondence

There was no additional correspondence to consider.

14. Any Other Business

The Chair went round and asked members for any other business.

Ms. Allen informed members that the LLAF Chairs Report is required by 1st October 2019 ready for the meeting on the 8th October 2019.

15. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 28th October 2019 (5.00pm for 5.30pm) – Forum County Hall (Workshop from 4.00pm).

Future dates are confirmed as follows:

- 6th January 2020 - FORUM

The meetings of the Unrecorded Ways Group are as follows:

- 13th August 2019 (2.30pm to 4.30pm) – Room tbc
- 12th September 2019 (7.00pm to 9.00pm) – Glenfield Parish Rooms
- 26th November 2019 (2.30pm to 4.30pm) – Room tbc

NATIONAL FOREST ACCESS & RECREATION GROUP

A lot of their endeavours continue to be the Charnwood Forest project and there has been no recent meeting to report on.

Roy Denney, Representative

CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

I continue to serve as a member of the board of the regional park which will continue whatever the outcome of the current bid for lottery support. I am also on the steering group of the Local Nature Partnership which is fronting that bid for funds to protect, promote and enhance the park.

There have been a series of workshops with the new independent chairman Atul Patel hopes to attend our next meeting and can give us a brief update. The bid document was submitted in September and we expect a visit shortly to raise any outstanding queries and the final decision should be made by March.

Roy Denney, Representative

NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES / UNRECORDED WAYS

The URW sub group has identified literally thousands of unrecorded and therefore unprotected routes. There are still about 60 of these we have classed as priorities from which volunteers can pick things of interest or convenient locality.

We have 23 volunteers interested on working on cases to varying extents but they need more direction and we must continue to try and visit most of them in small groups which is more fruitful than trying to get them all to one meeting. VA & JH met with 10 from the Lutterworth area in November. We also had our annual September evening meeting to which several came and at which an officer of the Ramblers from London came to explain what they are doing centrally. They are to launch a public app to get information about missing links and lost ways etc but we pointed out that in Leicestershire we had completed that exercise and it was help with research we really needed.

We still await the outcomes of our claim for Barrow/Cotes and another at Islay Walton.

MG has been working on the master index and we have shared the priorities with active volunteers.

There is nothing else to report on Network Opportunities at this stage.

Roy Denney

PLANNING AND TRAVEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Rail Freight Terminal near Hinckley is moving towards an actual planning application and we continue to monitor the process having made recommendations to the developers. We continue to monitor the Network Rail crossings situation and study all Map Modification Orders.

We have recently responded to a consultation by Charnwood Council but otherwise it has been a quiet period.

Chairman - Roy Denney

localplans@charnwood.gov.uk

Core Strategy Policy CS15 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation'

Formal sports provision is laid down by various guidelines and depends on the size of a development and the existing nearby facilities. Informal and semi natural open space is also needed and paths make an important contribution to people's opportunities to enjoy informal recreation and take exercise. Paths linked villages to other communities, to other paths and roads, to the mill or the pub, to shops or to the fields they worked but nowadays leisure walking is widespread and we are increasingly encouraged to use this free facility both for exercise and a means to get out into the countryside for our general health and wellbeing. Walking is inexpensive but a major health benefit.

Any development must take note of existing paths through, beside or near to the site and consider adequate and attractive access points to use them. Cycleways should also be introduced whenever practical and in more rural areas, bridleways. When we talk of existing paths they are not necessarily recorded rights of way. There are many historic rights of way not recorded yet and numerous informal desire paths which should also be accommodated. Even where any development cannot provide access to the wider path network due to different ownerships, the design and location of open spaces should be such that any future link is not precluded

The planning and design process is always well served by pre-application discussions with officers of the authority but also user groups, and the Leicestershire Local Access Forum brings many of these together and is always happy to comment constructively which can down the road, avoid objections to the final plan. As an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, we 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. Access includes the provision of satisfactory means of travel to, from and through locations. We are therefore concerned with local travel by public transport.

Section 94 of the CRoW act makes it a statutory function of the Forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities, on access issues in respect of land-use planning matters. Ministers have advised that in particular forums were asked to focus on the impact and options for minimising possible adverse effects of planning policies and development proposals in respect of future public access to land and identifying and expressing support for opportunities to improve public access, or associated infrastructure, which might be delivered through planning policies or new development.

Paths if to be walked for pleasure should not be contained within high fences, nor should they be alongside a hedge which is bound to grow out over the path. Any proposed building near a path should not be of such mass as to be oppressive. Paths in urban areas should not have dog legs where people can be out of sight as that encourages wrong-doing.

Paths should wherever possible be in green corridors making them more attractive but also assisting the migration of wild species. These should link open spaces to the wider countryside where possible. Public open space that is attractive and safe to use can help facilitate more active lifestyles. Green infrastructure is an essential part of any modern development including paths and parks, playing fields and woodland. It should have environmental benefits and facilitate walking and cycling. Trees and shrubs also help remove CO2 and particulates from the air improving public health.

We are generally supportive of this draft document which addresses most of our concerns but would expect planning officers to adhere to these guidelines fairly robustly. Ultimately we are looking for well connected walking and cycling routes linking a number of multi-functional open spaces encouraging people to walk rather than drive.

John Howells, Chairman Leicestershire Local Access Forum
Roy Denney, Chairman Planning & Travel Committee



LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – January 2019
New Themes For Revised Rights Of Way Improvement Plan.

Purpose of Report

To seek initial Forum views on new ROWIP themes and invite responses before the next meeting.

Background

The County Council is proposing to produce a new Rights Of Way Improvement Plan in the first half of 2020. The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan was produced by the authority in 2006. A further Improvement Plan was then published in 2011 featuring a revised Action Plan.

Below are six items of current consideration. In each instance the views of the Forum are sought.

Path Hierarchy

The last ROWIP did distinguish between urban and rural paths. However, the routes were not formally put in categories that would dictate frequency of inspection.

The authority has produced a Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan that sets out how best to maintain the highways asset and any infrastructure along it. At the time of publication, most of the Rights of Way network was not formally included in the hierarchy.

The hierarchy reflects stakeholder expectations of use and importance. Accordingly, it also considers how best to allocate resources. A surfaced path with street lighting in an urban area, represents a greater asset investment than a cross field path in a rural area.

How best to define hierarchies of the Rights of Way network is not straight forward. The simplest model is to split the network into two, surfaced urban and unsurfaced rural. Sadly, not everything fits into this model. There are other requests such as village to village, promoted routes, most used routes and recognising routes that fulfil little function, in some areas.

One possibility is to simply split the network in two. The surfaced urban and just beyond with surfaced cycleways being included with the wider network. The rest of the Rights of Way network being either lumped together or including any justifiable hierarchies. Promoted, status, surface, popularity, village to village, being just some of the possible considerations.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Lost Ways

In 2026 it is proposed to extinguish historic highways that are not included on the Highway record. Government is also proposing further changes through Deregulation.

This will lead to the closure of the Definitive map other than routes claimed through usage over a period. It has left a period during which any missing routes can be claimed. The time available has now dropped to 6 years.

The authority resources tend to be consumed by undertaking the order making process from applications, including the almost inevitable public inquiry. The authority is grateful for the work undertaken by the Forum in this area and supportive of the efforts made.

The value of the routes under threat varies enormously. The authority research time is limited but proposes to focus on those gaps in the Highway record that would result in parts of the network being separated from others. In addition, the authority will continue to process applications from other parties. A wider historic research programme is not capable of being resourced and the voluntary work is invaluable.

Should the Forum wish to continue research routes then more support is needed from the authority. This is proposed to also include the release of data sets that would assist the group more effectively.

Should Deregulation come into force then the revised process will be implemented. This includes notices to occupiers from the authority and interim and final decisions being processed more rapidly due to changes.

The authority currently, will focus on obvious missing sections of the Highway network.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Unsurfaced County Roads & Byways

The authority continues to face challenges on a number of routes in the county that have carriageway rights but are not sealed with asphalt. The popularity of certain routes with 4 x 4 vehicles and some cases heavy farm machinery results in damage to the highway. The mud and rutting can also make the routes unusable to horse riders and walkers.

Closure, even temporary, to allow routes to recover are expensive. The route also needs some form of repair. This will only assist in the short term and the process will repeat itself. Although not legal, some of the routes are also ploughed from time to time. Others are remote and not driven.

A preliminary proposal is to schedule the routes concerned and draw up a list to routes that may be suitable to reclassify as bridleways. This would protect some routes from further damage and ensure their availability as well as showing them on the map. This would only proceed with the full support of respective occupiers and local councils.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Vegetation

More than 40% of the reports the authority receives is related to vegetation or crops. This last year has been a particularly challenging due to so many wet periods and the warmth.

There is a set programme of cuts based around previous requests and other individual reports. The programme consists of two cuts, one in May and one in September. The amount of vegetation cut by the authority on the path network is the equivalent of asking someone to strim a route between Glenfield and the Scottish border.

Customer expectations have changed, especially in built up areas but it is also recognised that even with the current efforts' paths will have considerable growth between the two dates. Some of the urban paths are now within the carriageway cuts which are more frequent.

With finite resources the question arises of the best way to allocate cuts and what percentage of budgets is reserved for it. Parish Councils also have to power to cut footpaths and bridleways.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Planning

The authority does make responses to many applications every month affected by rights of way. Currently the authority has produced separate guidance for developers regarding Rights of Way.

The authority is seeking to integrate more effectively, all responses, associated with Highways, Travel Planning, Sustainable Travel and Rights of Way. It is proposed to integrate the information into a single resource, a revised online Design guide for Developers.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Performance Indicator for Rights of Way

Having a yearly comparable figures for the Rights of Way network that allows for year comparisons has always been a challenge. For a number of years, the authority has measured the ease of use of the network based on a process developed to measure a former Best Value Performance Indicator. Each section of path needs to pass a series of measures such as if it has a fingerpost, it is signed, if there are any obstructions etc.

This produces an output but no outcome. It measures the state of the path not if anyone is using it or how many. Although open paths are likely to lead to more users. The authority would like to consider if there are other methods of measuring the network on a yearly basis.

Views from the Forum including more formal responses after the meeting are sought.

Officer To Contact

Edwin McWilliam, Access Manager

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