

Minutes of a Meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 8 January 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Mr Chris Faircliffe (CF) - Chair
 Mr Roy Denney (RD) – Vice-Chair
 Mr Michael Miller (MM)
 Mr Peter Williams (PW)
 Mrs Sue Bicknall (SB)
 Mr Brian Sutton (BS)
 Mr Mike Gamble (MG)
 Mrs Alex Pyper (AP)

Officers, all representing the Council

Edwin McWilliam (EM), Access Manager
 Piers Lindley (PL), Senior Access Development Officer
 Emma Odabas (EO), Team Manager, Sustainable Travel
 Jessica Herbert (JH) Sustainable Travel Manager
 Karen Brown (minutes)

In attendance:

Julie Attard, Charnwood Forest Development Manager (JA) (agenda item 9)

		Action
1.	<p>The Chairman's Welcome by Chairperson and apologies received</p> <p>CF welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>CF asked those present to take a few moments of quiet personal reflection to remember Stan Warren who had sadly passed away. Stan was a long-time campaigner and advocate for the protection of public rights of way, a long serving representative of the Ramblers Association and had contributed so much to LLAF over the years.</p> <p>On behalf of the Forum CF conveyed their best wishes to Piers Lindley on his recent marriage.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from John Howells, Maggie Wright, George Keeping, Vicky Allen and Mike Bates.</p>	
3.	<p>Election of Chairman</p> <p>Chris Faircliffe indicated that he would be willing to continue as Chair for a further year. The nomination was proposed, and it was</p>	

	unanimously agreed by members of the Forum.	
4.	<p>Election of Vice-Chairman</p> <p>Roy Denney indicated that he would be willing to continue for a further year as Vice-Chair. The nomination was proposed, and it was unanimously agreed by members of the Forum.</p> <p>CF asked other Forum Members to reflect on their future participation in LLAFF by considering taking on the role of Chairman and Vice-Chairman next year.</p> <p>In response to a question from BS about recruiting new members to the Forum CF advised that a meeting had taken place to look at recruitment. Work was progressing on raising the LLAFF's profile and using other channels for recruitment in addition to the Council's website which has its own recruitment page for LLAFF.</p>	
5.	<p>The Chairman's opening remarks</p> <p>It was agreed to alter the order of the agenda for Julie Attard from the National Forest to present her agenda item next.</p>	
9.	<p>Guest Speaker – Julie Attard on the progress of the Charnwood Project</p> <p>JA gave an overview of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme and how the project is supporting work on the public rights of way network and encouraging people to visit and explore the natural environment in different ways.</p> <p>Key points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lottery funded project (extended to December 2026) with other partner contributions. • Partner organisations who are actively involved in the project shared at the meeting. JA stated that the project had received a lot of support from Members of the LLAFF for which they were very grateful, and long may it continue. • Work progressing on Charnwood Trails outlined and the work still to come. Accessibility mapping of at least 5 routes to be taken forward as funding available – JA would like to take forward with John Law as he had a lot of experience/knowledge in this area. RD to send contact details for John Law to JA. • Request for volunteers to survey all of the PROW network within the Charnwood Forest Geopark. LLAFF can assist by allocating someone from particular groups – walking, cycling and horse riding – that operate in different areas of the Geopark. • It was agreed for JA/RD to liaise on arranging a working group and for JA to provide a template to RD on what is required from volunteers to cascade to the groups. SB/MG offered their help and SB would look at the walks that the ramblers have prepared for JA to see if they need updating. 	<p>RD</p> <p>RD/JA</p> <p>SB/MG</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JH invited JA to attend the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Forum for Leicestershire in March as an opportunity to enlist more volunteers. JA to contact JH for further information. Plans are to make the Charnwood Forest Geopark sustainable for the long term. Guided and self-guided cycle rides around Charnwood Forest – anyone interested in helping to let JA know. MB expressed an interest. It was noted that many PROW were unofficially diverted when the forest was being developed. <p><u>Questions/comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RD stated that a lot of money had been collected as a memorial fund for Stan Warren and would like to take this forward in officially naming a path the Stan Warren Way, possibly the route linking Leicester into the Forest as he lived in the city. JA fully supported this. EM commented there were some upcoming works there and agreed to take this forward with JA. EM referred to the spine route through the park and asked about a theme name and promotion of it. JA commented that it was an important route through the geopark, and it will be something for the Steering Group to consider possibly referencing Tina Negus as one of the original discoverers of the Charnwood Fossil. SB asked about promoting Castle Hill Country Park as many local people have not visited it, or are even aware it exists. Volunteer groups could assist with this. JA reported that earlier on in the scheme there were discussions with the City of a joint focus project, but they pulled out. JA was willing to try again but would need the right people from the City to be fully on board as it makes doing joint events and activities a lot easier. MM reported on the archaeology excavation work carried out by the University and the successful archaeology open days held at the park. RD commented that the park would be ideal in the lower reaches to create more wet woodland which is a very rare habitat. <p>CF thanked JA for an interesting and informative presentation.</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>All</p> <p>EM/JA</p>
6.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The members confirmed that there were no declarations of interest.</p>	
7.	<p>Previous Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024 were agreed.</p> <p><u>Matters arising</u></p> <p><u>Update on Highway Design Guide</u></p> <p>RD had submitted a response to Andy Jackson on behalf of the Forum but not received a formal response. RD asked if Andy could be invited to a Forum meeting to ascertain whether the suggested comments</p>	

	<p>were incorporated into the document. EM has subsequently contacted AJ. EM added that the document itself was designed to be an online resource and is now available on the website to view and respond to. Members are invited to view the online resource and can comment and suggest further amends if something pressing is identified.</p> <p><u>Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans</u> JH reported that there will be a second round of consultation towards the end of the year for Leicester North and Melton. LLAF offered their knowledge base and support on this.</p> <p><u>Volunteer Footpath Maintenance</u> SB had contacted Ellen Senior who was going to look at a schedule to recruit volunteers for different activities. EM gave an update that Ellen had been in contact with a number of people including Forum members as they are required to complete various documentation as LCC volunteers. Agreed for Ellen to have an agenda item on 'Health and Safety' at the next LLAF meeting to explain the forms and training to be undertaken.</p> <p><u>Planning and Travel</u> MM gave an update on the emerging Stretton Hall Estate development proposals. A QGIS project which maps out and looks at development plans was produced. MM reported that with the help of Mike Bates it was discovered that there are so far 500 archaeological sites in and around the area where the Government wishes to develop so there are big implications for any new town/estate proposed there.</p> <p>The Government's New Towns Taskforce was set up in September and a consultation for this closed on 13 December. MM questioned whether the County Council put a submission into that task force, if so can the Forum have sight and if not, why not. EM to follow this up with the relevant officer. MM proposed that a working party was convened for the New Towns as Stretton Hall was not the only proposed development as there was also Isley Woodhouse.</p> <p>A presentation handout with extra text/information pages for each section in order to help Forum Members interpret the maps/QGIS screen-prints will be circulated following this meeting.</p> <p><u>Lost Ways</u> It was agreed the emails regarding the backlog of modification orders to the Chief Executive of Leicestershire and the response should form part of LLAF's formal record and shared with Members. To be discussed further at an appropriate meeting.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>EM/KB</p> <p>EM</p> <p>MM/KB</p> <p>KB</p>
8.	<p>To advise of any items which the Chairperson has agreed to take as urgent</p> <p>It was agreed SB could raise an item regarding communal areas on new developments.</p>	
10	<p>Reports from committees/working groups</p> <p>.</p>	

	<p>Planning and Travel Committee Previous discussions have covered this item.</p> <p>Unrecorded Lost Ways RD suggested that as the Unrecorded Ways Sub-group was becoming less relevant due to changes in legislation, that group could start meeting to act as a discussion group for the New Towns initiatives. The Forum agreed to this. However, EM emphasised that there may well be a continuing need to have group discussions about unrecorded and lost ways.</p> <p>It was agreed to continue with the committee for the time being as discussion still needed on the position regarding records, simplification of the system and working with the County going forward. It was agreed the committee time could also be used to discuss upcoming areas of work.</p> <p>EM talked about the Government's plans to cancel the cut-off date which will give the required time to assess whether paths meet the requirements to be added to the 'definitive map'. EM added there was still an amount of potential highways that are not recognised or recorded and the ability to apply for those still exists. Alongside this the Government will still continue with legislation changes which should make the processing of such claims simplified. Local authorities determine such cases but still leaves an amount of outstanding caseloads with new cases coming in. EM commented that the Chief Executive did take a full interest in this matter. Taking this into account with the concerns expressed regarding data management and retention of that information now and in the future EM suggested a meeting was convened to discuss further and possibly using the Lost Ways Committee as a transition stage. RD/EM to arrange a date for this meeting.</p> <p>RD reported that evidence had been gathered from a number of people that the path from Groby through Lawn Wood was widely used however there was no evidence that it was actually a public right of way so cannot make a claim due to timescales. PL was not aware of a cut-off date with regard to user evidence. PL/RD to investigate further.</p>	RD/EM PL/RD
11	<p>Reports from Outside Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership No report available - no longer needed. • National Forest Access and Recreational Group No report available as unsure if body still meets. • Charnwood Forest Regional Park Item covered under agenda item 9. 	
12	<p>Committees and their Chairmen for the coming year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Travel Committee 	

	<p>The Forum agreed for RD to continue as Chair of the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrecorded Ways Sub-Group The Forum agreed for RD to continue as Chair of the Committee 	
13	<p>Representatives on outside bodies for the coming year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership No longer needed. • Charnwood Forest Regional Park RD/JH to continue with this body. • Charnwood Geopark Charnwood Forest Regional Park will become a Geopark and representation will be confirmed then. • Community Archaeology Group Noted MM and MB are the representatives on this body. 	

14	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB raised the issue of communal garden, pavements, private roads, car parks and play areas in and around new developments which are managed by a landscape management company and residents pay a maintenance charge for. SB said there was an issue recently with residents and events being interrupted and clarification was needed as to which areas are private or public. SB to share the specifics with PL who will investigate further. • Standing items 'Correspondence' and 'Orders Update' to be on every Forum agenda. • Structure of Forum in terms of County Councillors to be checked by EM. • BS raised about the issue of the state of grass verges. BS also raised about developers using fences on the inside of the hedge leaving the hedge in limbo until it falls onto the highway. • PL gave an update on Slawston and there will be a hearing in February as to whether the whole of the route should be added to the Definitive Map as a Restricted Byway. • JH reported that there was to be an update on the Choose How You Move website and advertising of walks could potentially be added – to be discussed at the next meeting. 	<p>SB/PL</p> <p>EM/KB</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM/KB</p>
15	Future meetings	

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