

Minutes of a Meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Mr Chris Faircliffe (CF) - Chair
 Mr Roy Denney (RD) – Vice-Chair
 Mr Peter Williams (PW)
 Mr Brian Sutton (BS)
 Mr Mike Bates (MB)
 Ms Vicky Allen (VA)
 Mr Dave Pollard (DP)
 Mr Steve Charlsh (SC)
 Dr Jack Matthews (JM) – in part

Officers, all representing the Council

Edwin McWilliam (EM), Access Manager
 Karen Brown (minutes)

		Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions CF welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Sue Bicknall, Michael Miller, Mike Gamble, Alex Pyper, John Howells, Piers Lindley, Jessica Herbert and Janina Holubecki.	
3.	Declarations of Interest The members confirmed there were no declarations of interest.	
4.	Presentation from Dr Jack Matthews, Geoheritage Conservation and Interpretation Officer for Charnwood Forest Geopark The Forum welcomed Dr Jack Matthews to the meeting. JM shared a presentation and explained that the Charnwood Forest Geopark is the public-facing name for the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme which received approximately £3million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund starting in 2021, with funding set to expire at the end of next year. The project is supported by 18 founding partners including local authorities, the National Forest and third sector organisations. JM highlighted the region's exceptional geodiversity, including more than 40 rock types and internationally significant fossils, such as Charnia, the first fossil described from the Precambrian. The Geopark	

	<p>features local minerals such as Bobkingite and includes information about biodiversity and cultural heritage, highlighting rare species and historical sites.</p> <p>JM reported that the team had invested in new interpretation panels and visitor information hubs at key sites. These installations share geological and cultural knowledge, encourage hiking and direct visitors to less crowded areas.</p> <p>Significant capital works undertaken working closely with the County Council, including the new roadside footpath that links the Outwoods with Beacon Hill and development of new trails in collaboration with Loughborough University and local estates. The project also supports the creation of new permissive footpaths and the rebranding of walking routes.</p> <p>Efforts are underway to improve public transport access to the Geopark. This includes providing updated maps and developing a new website that will serve as a central information source for visitors, teachers and volunteers. The Geopark website will have information on sites, walks, local businesses whilst supporting sustainable economic development.</p> <p>The Geopark has received approval from the UK National Commission for UNESCO to apply for Global Geopark status in November. The evaluation process will take place in 2026 and a decision expected around April 2027. Achieving this status would provide international recognition and support ongoing conservation, education and economic initiatives.</p> <p>CF invited attendees to share any comments/questions.</p> <p>RD commented that phase 3 of the footpath programme aims to create a through route from Leicester to Loughborough via Charnwood and highlighted the addition of vantage points at Bardon Hill. The Forum also discussed the dissemination of new educational maps to local schools, facilitated by the National Forest education officer.</p> <p>Suggestions were made to name the routes from Loughborough up to the top of Beacon Hill as the Paula Radcliffe Way and the route from the area to the City as the Stan Warren Way. These proposals are under consideration with further discussions planned with relevant authorities.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the long-term security of permissive paths especially those established under time-limited schemes. JM explained the challenges of legal covenants and emphasised the project's focus on working with public-facing institutions to reduce the risk of access being withdrawn. The Geopark team has assisted local councils in securing public access, as demonstrated by their involvement in preserving the Jubilee Path in Shepshed through legal research and support, ensuring its continued availability for public use.</p>	
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	<p>The Forum highlighted the effective inclusion of Charnwood Forest maps and local stories in the school curriculum, promoting map skills and community involvement.</p> <p>CF thanked JM for his informative presentation.</p>	
5.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2025 were agreed.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
6.	<p>To advise of items which the Chairperson has agreed to take as urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Traffic Regulations Orders 	
7.	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>No correspondence to discuss.</p>	
8.	<p>The Isley Woodhouse New Town/The Proposed Stretton Hall New Town</p> <p>The Forum discussed the scale and distribution of current and proposed housing developments across Leicestershire noting the pressures on local authorities to approve new sites due to insufficient housing and the resulting impact on open spaces and rights of way.</p> <p>Members emphasised the importance of engaging with planning officers and developers at the earliest stage to influence the inclusion of open spaces and footpaths in development plans. The Forum agreed that early input is critical to ensuring that public access and environmental considerations are not overlooked.</p> <p>Members discussed ongoing issues with the Highways Agency and local planning authorities such as lack of communication, inconsistent enforcement of conditions and the use of satellite imagery over site visits. The Forum resolved to increase the use of formal correspondence to ensure their concerns are recorded and addressed.</p> <p>It was proposed to form a sub-committee to monitor and address issues related to these developments. This was agreed by the Forum, led by MM and RD, and the committee would develop a set of principles to guide their work and ensure consistent support for public access.. Any Forum members who wished to be involved should contact RD/MM.</p>	<p>RD/MM</p> <p>M</p> <p>All</p>
9.	<p>Reports from committees/working groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Travel Committee Discussed under previous agenda item. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrecorded Ways Noted deadlines removed but still have knowledge and lists should anything arise. It was noted that there were a group of volunteers working on historical research and site surveys for unrecorded ways. MB is part of this group and agreed to ensure any updates are reported to the Forum. 	MB
10.	<p>ROWIP Update and Consultation Feedback</p> <p>EM reported that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan underwent a 12-week public consultation, resulting in changes to the document and a focus on the action plan, which will be reviewed annually by the Forum. The plan is scheduled to go to Cabinet for approval on 28 October 2025 with increased funding secured for implementation.</p>	
11.	<p>AOB which the Chairperson has decided to take as urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Traffic Regulations Orders (TTRO) Discussion took place on the use and communication of TTROs. EM reported they are used to temporarily close minor and unsealed highways particularly during wet months or construction periods to prevent damage from vehicular traffic. Forum members expressed concerns about the lack of effective communication regarding TTROs with user groups not being aware of closures. EM pointed out the One Network system for public notices but some Forum members felt it was not user-friendly. <p>It was suggested including the use of gating orders for recurring seasonal closures and improved signage at affected routes. EM explained the legal and practical limitations of these approaches, including the reluctance of district councils to implement gating orders.</p> <p>The Forum members talked about the management of long-term closures during major construction projects and process for extending TTROs through the Secretary of State. Also the need for better co-ordination and information sharing with user groups was emphasised.</p>	
12.	<p>Future meetings</p> <p>The Forum meeting dates were agreed as:</p> <p>Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 2.00 pm Wednesday 7 January 2026 at 2.00 pm</p>	