

Agenda Item 7.F

Leicestershire Local Access Forum – 16 April 2015

East Midlands Local Access Forum Chairs Meeting

This started at Lincolnshire County Council (LiCoC) offices, Lincoln, on 25/03/15 at 10.55. 11 people were present at the start. Mandy Sims (MS), the Regional Coordinator, leaves her post next week.

Apologies

There were 5, including from Northamptonshire LAF.

Minutes

These were approved.

Matters Arising.

Northamptonshire LAF members were sacked by Northamptonshire County Council (NoCoC), who are now recruiting replacements.

The Deregulation Bill is relevant, and could be confusing. It's supposed to make identifying Lost Ways easier. But what's contained in it? What effects will it have?

It needs someone who understands the process to give relevant advice. Leicestershire County Council (LCoC) will have a debriefing session from their Rights Of Way (ROW) Officers after the Bill becomes law. Other local authority (LA) areas need to decide what they will do.

This will be taken back to Natural England (NE) for their attention. An easy to understand guide for LAFs and relevant LA officers would help.

Political forces are at work here.

Huddle was found to be difficult to use. Don't feel hidebound by the extent of it. Open it, then open the file and scroll through the list of folders to start with. Make the best of it for what it is.

Update from NE (*Chris Robinson (CR)*).

We will lose MS, our Coordinator, from next week due to funding cuts. But the work will continue as much as possible, being covered by NE officers. NE's remit remains the same. They hope to continue to support LAFs.

The crunch will come with, e.g., organising meetings like this. There will be more work for members, and we'll need meeting facilities by courtesy of LAs.

NE no longer have suitable meeting room facilities. Kristina Gould (KG) will be our NE contact, based at their Nottingham office. These meetings are very important, and potentially very useful. NE's Nottingham office is in the former East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) building, Apex Court, 5 minutes walk from Nottingham station and the Broad Marsh Bus Station. Would Northamptonshire LAF be better suited to the South East or the East Midlands? This needs sorting.

How do you contact Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)? They have no money. How do we get through to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)?

NE see contact with LNPs as being the way to get through to LEPs. A letter is going out from NE to all LNPs, informing them of the work of LAFs, this week.

The LEPs' role is to boost economic growth.

We may receive a copy of the relevant letter once it has gone out to LNPs.

LAFs have very limited resources, so need to prioritise accordingly. The health agenda may be more appropriate, at least to start with.

Re coastal access, £5 million over the next 5 years has been awarded. A large internal and external recruitment process is ongoing to recruit up to 70 relevant staff for this.

A relevant map was published and circulated. The nearest sites to us are The Wash and the Lincolnshire Coast.

If individual LAFs need an NE representative to attend a meeting for a specific reason, they should invite them. Leicestershire LAF don't get much NE support.

Terry Kirby (TK) can take this up.

Leicestershire LAF report relevant Open Access issues to LCoC for their attention.

KG said that NE are still very keen to continue working with the LAFs. KG can forward us contact details of relevant NE staff. Please inform NE of any relevant developments. This includes work with LNPs, etc.

The final Paths For Communities Report is now on Huddle. Now try to find it!

Update from Regional Coordinators (MS)

MS has found it a pleasure and privilege working with us.

When contacting NE, please cc. Rob Leek (RL) into the correspondence, except for National and Huddle matters, which only need to go to RL.

The LAF toolkit is now being updated.

The deadline for completion of the 2014-15 report form is 30/06/15. Send it direct to RL. His contact details are rob.leek@naturalengland.org.uk.

Future of Public Access Instewardship Schemes (John Law(JL) (South Lincs and Rutland LAF)

A response the Minister, Dan Rogerson, was mentioned. They looked at a report from South Lincs and Rutland LAF, and have formulated a discussion document to go to other LAFs for their comments.

Network Rail's Railway Crossing Diversions/Closures and the LAF Response (Chris ?)

This is a major issue. Lincolnshire have gone to a Public Enquiry over one such crossing, and other LAFs should take an interest. NR were very reasonable until they employed a confrontational barrister.

NR would like to close every rail crossing in the UK. This would have huge implications for communities affected and the work of LAFs.

Lost/Unrecorded Ways

South Lincs & Rutland and Leicestershire LAFs are looking at these jointly, with a meeting scheduled for a few weeks' time. We don't know what's happening in Leicester City, although Stan Warren (SW) shares his considerable workload and expertise between County and City.

Nottinghamshire and Derby and Derbyshire (DAD) LAFs are doing some relevant work, but District Councils don't always keep them informed on relevant planning matters.

Because of the huge size of their area, Mid Lincolnshire LAF can only deal with major issues.

Leicestershire LAF have created a relevant sub group, helped greatly by SW's excellent work. We want to make more progress before the Deregulation Bill becomes law.

It's not such an issue in Nottingham City.

But it's a huge issue in the Peak District, with 6 or 7 highway authorities involved.

NCoC Highways Department - Outsourcing

NCoC are considering outsourcing their Highways Department. And their ROW office mover a year ago from Environment to Highways. We don't know what effect this would have.

The theory is that NCoC can compete on, e.g., highways contracts, etc. It's been voted through. Cornwall did something similar a few years ago.

What will happen to the Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)? Such things need to be written into the contract. There will be huge implications for the staff affected.

To what extent will all this bring in new people? Or will it be just the same old faces, recycled?

Countryside for All (JL)

Handouts were given out. This was developed by South Lincs & Rutland LAF, with suitable information for, e.g., disabled people, etc.

This could be rolled out further afield. Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) are producing a relevant document which is due out at the end of April. Training has been given to a range of relevant organisations.

Handouts detail the training. Some funding was secured, but more will be needed.

Other organisations will be producing more walks, using standard formats and symbols.

Dementia Adventure walks in Leicester were attended by JL and SW. This is a completely different area from Healthy Walks. The Dementia Walk Leader training course was so popular it could have been booked 4 times over.

In Lincolnshire, LiCoC's Public Health Manager is very helpful in things like this. LCoC's response is completely different, and much less helpful. This has all been mentioned before.

Good work has been ongoing in the National Forest and with Oadby & Wigston Borough Council (OWBC), but some things in Leicestershire are hard work.

The Alzheimers Disease Society have been very helpful, but Age UK have proved much more variable. Dementia Café work is ongoing.

Whatever we do we must promote. The aim now is to get relevant DVDs, etc., out to GP surgeries in the areas covered by Dementia Walks.

LAF ROUND UPS

Peak District LAF

The wish list of access to sites is extensive. But money needs to be found for them. A local brewery wants a beer tested, with proceeds to go the LAF.

The 10 year review of the Access Plan, due last year, will now be postponed until circa 2019. Not good.

LAs disposing of their land assets is an issue. So the LAF got the Peak District National Park Authority to dedicate all their woodland under section 16 of the Countryside & Rights Of Way Act 1981, which guaranteed access in perpetuity.

Nottingham City LAF

Reviews are ongoing. There's a very active guided walks sub group. Historic ROWs in Nottingham City Centre are being looked at.

Guest speakers attend most meetings. 'Shared space' is the next theme. They're trying to get street to be more 'human' in concept.

The bridge at Colwick Park is now in at the city end, but there's a 12 meter gap at the county end.

A new foot and cycle bridge at Colwick Park is being looked into, but Trent Bridge needs urgent repairs, so funding can't be guaranteed. However, Nottingham City Council (NCiC) and others are interested. NCiC showed the potential at the recent MIPIM Conference in Cannes, France.!

Sustrans have given some relevant advice and lobbied the Department for Transport (DfT) for some extra funding for the bridge.

Leicestershire LAF

Brief details of recent activities were given. Almost all members of Leicestershire LAF are also members of other relevant organisations, which helps with teamwork and networking.

County Farms, owned by Leicestershire County Council (LCoC) were mentioned, and the creation of ROWs on school land. Another issue is how to prepare for the possibility of LCoC selling off some of those farms.

Mid Lincolnshire LAF

Horse riding and horse driving are strongly represented on the LAF, and are concerned about threats to ROWs, Green Lanes, etc. Maps have been lost in Lincolnshire for various reasons.

Unless relevant documents are officially transferred when necessary, they're always at risk.

Nottinghamshire LAF

Level crossings on the East Coast Main Line are a big issue. Colwick Bridge, mentioned previously, is also important. Another possible extension to the tram line could see it serve Eastwood.

Dualling of the A453 is ongoing. If it's anything like the job done on the A46, positioning of relevant signage and other infrastructure may be an issue.

All new roads should be accompanied by suitably upgraded pedestrian and other infrastructure (bridges, etc.)

Leicester City LAF

The Greyfriars area has achieved some fame recently due to the reinterment of King Richard III. The Waterside area is the subject of major development plans.

There's a lot of scepticism about some aspects of LCiC's plans for 'Shared spaces' in places like Belgrave Road.

Controversially, LCiC are now selling one of their two municipal golf courses.

South Lincolnshire & Rutland LAF

Some help has been obtained from, e.g., the Royal National Institute for the Blind, schools, etc., on acceptable specifications for Countryside For All activities. Details should be downloadable in time.

They want a similar format to be adopted countrywide. They've been in touch with relevant organisations about this. Adoption of standardised symbols countrywide would help.

Any other business.

Thanks to MS for all she's done.

Next meeting.

This has now been booked for NE's new offices in Nottingham, on Wednesday 09 September 2015, between 1100 and 1500 hours.

The meeting then finished.

Terry Kirby