

Report to LLAF Oct 2015 - Heart of the Forest Access and Connectivity Working Group

John Howells and I attended the meeting on October 1st.

The main priority at present is connecting Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre to Newfields Road via Newfields Woodland. Planning permission has been granted. They are also looking to connect Newfields Road to Measham Road either through a new development which has been granted planning permission for housing development or via the Incline. Quotes have also been received to extend this cycle route to Moira Furnace subject to landowner agreement and funding being found. In the longer term they also seek to extend in the other direction connecting Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre to Ashby de la Zouch, either through another proposed housing development or via woodland and a park off Ridgway Road. Once these links are completed, there is a planned diversion of the Ivanhoe Way promoted route, re-directing it via Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre and proposed Newfields Link.

Also on the agenda is a Multi-user route through Willesley Wood and along Pastures Lane to Oakthorpe, and also through Oakthorpe Picnic site to Willesley Lane. The Woodland Trust and Leicestershire County Council have agreed in principal to the creation of the multi-user route across their land. They are still identifying and approaching other landowners. One known landowner is refusing to respond and seems unlikely to agree the route. Much of the actual route is on land not registered as being owned by anyone. There is an alternate but far less beneficial link which could be created through the Trust land and they will be sounded out about this. The suggestion was made that the tracks could be County Roads not maintained at public expense.

A link from Church Gresley to Tunnel Woods has been completed. An extension of this route to Rosliston is now being progressed by Derbyshire County Council.

Another ambition which may become a real possibility is the creation of a route between Moira Village Hall and Maybury Wood. Planning Application has been submitted for a housing development off Ashby Road and as part of the planning comments the National Forest Company and Ashby Woulds Town Council are requesting that a route be provided from Sweethill into Maybury Wood.

The group are looking at possibilities for some cycle routes to be upgraded to bridleways and for a new bridleway to be created across land south of the A42 to Ashby Road and then onwards to Minorca. This would then link to the existing Public Byway between Ashby Road and Swepstone Road to link to Minorca. Discussions with the landowners are underway but safety concerns have been raised where it crosses public roads.

They are also looking for a suitable route to use for a Countryside For All project and a proposed surfaced route round Willesley Lake seems a strong possibility.

£180,000 has been obtained for signage and interpretation boards. A project development officer has been appointed and this element of the project is now moving forward. One element still to be

decided is the nature of the maps on information boards. Concern was expressed by user groups about suggested tube map style presentation and an OS type map was thought more informative.

It was pointed out that the OS had now released an updated version of the National Forest map but had not consulted the NF and as such much possible information was still missing.

A restoration plan for the waste disposal area adjoining National Forest lands near Boothorpe was not well received as it had errors and omissions and had not reflected overtures made to them about paths etc. It did not show any links into the neighbouring areas. Members were to lodge further comment to the County Planners to try and have them insist on improvements.

Ideas for the creation of a 15 mile bridleway circuit were presented involving largely then uplift in status of footpaths. It was agreed this would be explored further but as it went out of the forum area it would be referred to the NF Access Group for development.

Then LCC Ashby canal team have decided to create the towpath between Measham and Snarestone even though they cannot afford to re-water the actual canal. At this stage it will just be a mown grass track.

The car park at Hicks Lodge is to be extended

Roy Denney, Deputy

Representative