



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 28 January 2016.

PRESENT

Ms. V. Allen	Mr. A. Hillier-Fry
Ms. H. Brown	Mr. J. Howells
Mrs. R. Camamile CC	Mr. T. Kirby
Mr. R. Denney	Mr. J. Law
Mr. M. Gamble	Mr. S. Warren

1. Election of Chairman.

The Committee Officer invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum for the period ending January 2017.

Mr Terry Kirby nominated himself for the position and was seconded by Mr Michael Gamble to be elected Chairman of the Forum. There were no further nominations.

AGREED:

That Mr Terry Kirby be elected Chairman of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum for the period ending January 2017.

MR. T. KIRBY IN THE CHAIR

2. Election of Vice-Chair.

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice Chair for the period ending January 2017.

No nominations were received for the position of Vice Chair.

RESOLVED:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

3. Welcome by Chairman and apologies received.

The Chairman welcomed those present and welcomed Mr Graham Cameron who would be observing the meeting. Apologies had been received from Mr. P. Tame, Ms. A. Pyper, Mr. C. Faircliffe, and Mr. B. Sutton.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2015.

Members were advised that arising from minute 21, the Midlands Road Users Group had ceased to exist, but Highways England would agree to reinstate the Group if enough

interest was expressed. Members were encouraged to contact any other groups they are members of, such as the Ramblers and British Horse Society, to express an interest.

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2015 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

5. To advise of any items which the Chairperson has agreed to take as urgent.

The Chairman took one item as urgent which was discussed elsewhere on the agenda (minute 18 refers).

6. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

Members were invited to declare any interests in respect of the items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

7. Presentation on the maintenance of grass verges.

The Forum received a presentation on the maintenance of grass verges. A copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that urban grass cuts were undertaken on a safety basis only and were not done for aesthetic purposes. Where grass was cut for aesthetic purposes this would usually be undertaken by the parish council.

Over the previous few years the number of urban grass cuts had reduced down to five per annum. However 2015 was the first year which grass cutting had been brought back in-house and a number of issues had been experienced in relation to vehicle maintenance, and ideal weather conditions causing grass to grow much longer than usual. Furthermore as a result of the issues faced during the year, the financial savings envisaged from decreasing the number of cuts had not been met due to the increased cost in equipment maintenance and repair.

As a result of the issues and a significant increase in enquiries from the public, it had been agreed by the Cabinet to increase the number of urban grass cuts from five to six per annum. The Environment and Transport Department would also adopt a more flexible approach to grass cutting by increasing the number of cuts during the peak growth season, and responding appropriately to public enquiries.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Rural verges were cut in 2 x 1 metre splays, plus any additional cuts needed to improve safety and visibility of the highways. Members of the Forum expressed concern that this was not enough for walkers and horseriders to use the verge as a highway when a path was unavailable;
- (ii). The highest number of complaints regarding grass cutting had been from North West Leicestershire due to ongoing discussions regarding the possible handover of grass cutting responsibilities to the district, which already exists with Blaby

District Council. By the time negotiations had finished the Council was significantly behind on grass cutting in the area;

- (iii). There were a number of variables to consider in grass cutting operations such as the location of depots containing the necessary equipment, potentially adverse conditions such as weather, and any areas where visibility and subsequent safety was a particular concern;
- (iv). Arising from queries from members, officers advised that despite the mild winter it was not possible to transfer resources saved from less gritting to grass cutting and highways maintenance operations. This was due to the need to save resources for any future winters where the weather could be much colder and therefore take up more resource.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation on grass cutting be noted.

8. Confirmation of Sub-Groups.

The Forum was asked to consider what sub-groups they would like to continue operating to the period ending January 2017. Members requested that the current sub-groups in existence continue to work, and that a meeting on public health be set up with the potential of setting up a sub-group for health related activities.

RESOLVED:

That the following subgroups for 2016 be agreed to continue:

- Network Opportunities Committee
- Verges Committee
- Planning and Travel Committee

9. Annual Report 2015.

The Forum considered the draft Annual Report 2015. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9, is filed with these minutes.

Subject to an amendment to dates in the Network Opportunities section, members were content to approve and circulate the annual report. Suggestions were made regarding to the drafting process in the following year, and indicated that the report needed to be more attractive and engaging for members of the public.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report 2015 be approved.

10. Reports from committees and working groups.

The Forum received updates from the committees and working groups. A copy of the updates, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Changes to First Bus service provision would be implemented in April. It was anticipated that Glenfield would experience significant change in bus service provision;
- (ii). Members were advised that the authority had no plans to dedicate any rights of way other than those already existing on Hall Farm. The Forum requested that officers consider committing to legally enforcing a route should the land ever be sold off;
- (iii). It was requested that officers look into the feasibility of a 20 mph speed limit implementation on Hospital Lane to allow for safe crossing to Hall Farm;
- (iv). The Forum received an update regarding County Council policy on items published by the LLAF, a copy of which is filed with these minutes;
- (v). There would potentially be future training provided by the BHS available for Forum members subject to an appropriate venue being made available.

RESOLVED:

That the updates from committees and working groups be noted.

11. Reports from representatives on outside bodies.

The Forum received updates from members sitting on outside bodies relevant to the Local Access Forum. A copy of the update, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The minutes of the meeting of the Heart of the Forest Access and Connectivity Forum were circulated amongst those present, a copy of which have been filed with these minutes;
- (ii). At the latest Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Group there had been some discussion regarding the use of allotments. Whilst this fell out of the remit of the Forum, it was nonetheless promoted where possible as a means of encouraging people to go outside, and some allotments would include right of way access;
- (iii). The next EMLAF meeting was to be held in March. The Forum was asked for their views on Huddle which could be taken to the meeting. It was requested that the Chairman find out how many licenses were available for Forum members, and if members not on Huddle could have 'read only' access;
- (iv). The Forum was informed that there were some spaces on outside bodies for Forum members. It was agreed that John Howells become the Forum representative on the Heart of the Forest Access and Connectivity Forum, and that Mr John Law represent the Forum on the Canals and Waterways Group.

RESOLVED:

That the updates from representatives on outside bodies be noted.

12. Network Rail - Electrification of Midland Mainline (Edwin McWilliam)

The Forum received an update on the electrification of the Midland Mainline as proposed by Network Rail. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

The electrification of the line may cause some changes to access and rights of way due to the need for some bridges to be elevated in order for the electrification to take place. The Forum was also advised that a number of rights of way crossings had already been subject to replacement bridges.

Network Rail, who had closed off a footpath crossing in Market Harborough, have now informed the Authority that the company intend to press ahead with a bridge replacement.

Members queried whether or not the Forum would be engaged regarding HS2. Officers advised that due to the lack of information on HS2 so far it was not possible to make any representation.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

13. Proposal for Future Permissive Access in Stewardship Schemes (John Law)

The Forum considered a report outlining the proposal to request that the government fund future permissive access. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13', is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was asked to fill in the consultation questionnaire attached to the report, which the Chairman agreed to fill in on the Forum's behalf.

RESOLVED:

a) That the contents of the report be noted;

b) That the Chairman fill in the consultation questionnaire on the Forum's behalf.

14. Funding Countryside Access (John Law)

The Forum received a report outlining potential options for funding projects relating to rights of way across the County. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 14', is filed with these minutes.

The report explored the possibility of setting up a Community Interest Organisation which would allow the LLAF to apply for funding bodies. The Forum was advised that the Norfolk Local Access Forum was in the process of setting up a Community Interest Organisation.

The Forum was advised that this would require support from the Appointing Authority to act as the 'bank account' for the organisation. Concern was expressed that this would also require significant input from LAF members.

It was suggested that the Chairman raise the issue at the next EMLAF meeting which would allow the Forum to see the progress from other local access forums who were investigating becoming a Community Interest Organisation.

RESOLVED:

That the item be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

15. Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (Edwin McWilliam)

The Forum received an update on the Government's proposed Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 15', is filed with these minutes.

The document recently published by the Government indicated a timetable for developing the strategy and how the strategy could be funded. The Forum had previously responded to the proposals for a Strategy and would respond when the draft Strategy was produced.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

16. Orders update (Edwin McWilliam).

The Forum received an update on the latest public path and modification orders. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 16', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the update be noted.

17. Correspondence sent and received since the previous meeting.

The Forum received an update on correspondence sent and received since the previous meeting. A copy of the various correspondence, marked 'Agenda Item 17', are filed with these minutes.

The Chairman would be attending the LAF Conference in Bristol on the 23 February on behalf of the Forum.

The Forum considered the future administration of the Google Group for correspondence following the departure of Herbert Eppel. Michael Gamble volunteered to continue maintaining the Google Group.

RESOLVED:

That the items of correspondence be noted.

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

The Forum discussed the recent updates to the National Gazetteer. There were a number of changes being introduced which would include rights of way.

It was suggested that some routes be granted dual status such as shared routes. However officers advised that the Gazetteer is subject to specific standards and guidance.

19. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 27 April at 5.30pm.

5.30 - 8.05 pm
28 January 2016

CHAIRMAN