

NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES REPORT FOR**4th July 2017 LAF MEETING****1. COUNTRYSIDE FOR ALL****Woodland Trust**

- 1.1. We are currently having meetings with senior managers of the Woodland Trust to improve accessibility to the countryside. We have also requested a meeting with the Woodland Trust CEO to influence the Trust to adopt the Countryside For All route leaflets countrywide. Further details of the outcome of these meetings will be reported at the next LAF meeting.
- 1.2. A number of documents have been received in relation to Willesley Wood. Information relating to this will be provided at the next LAF meeting.

Visit England

Visit England is very interested in the work we are doing with Countryside For All route leaflets. This is a very important step forward. Details of this work will be reported at the next LAF meeting.

Changing Places Toilets

The Lincolnshire and Rutland LAFs Countryside for All sub group have recently been made aware of the lack of knowledge about Changing Places Toilets. A number of funding bodies, including district and county councils have provided funds to organisations to build toilets but have not included Changing Places Toilets. The sub group are now in the process of making funding bodies aware of the need of these toilets, through a YouTube clip from the Leicestershire Ash Field Academy. It would be helpful if the Leicestershire LAF could also promote the need for these toilets.

ACTION: The LAF consider writing to the districts and County Council's funding departments to promote Changing Places Toilets in Leicestershire

2. DEMENTIA FRIENDLY STROLLS

All the training has been completed. The next LAF report will include the information from the final summary report presented to the funding body.

3. CHOICE UNLIMITED**3.1. THE EVENT**

We had three tables at the event, one funded by Leicestershire County Council, one funded by Rutland County Council and one funded by a private donor. Thanks must go to Stan Warren for helping to set up the displays and John Howells who spoke with the people visiting our display. The purpose at being at the event was to encourage disabled people, their carers and the elderly to visit and enjoy the countryside. Our aim was to engage with the visitors, talk about their interests, talk about countryside activities and signpost them to the relevant leaflets or organisations which could help them pursue their countryside interests. The activities we promoted included countryside for all

routes, Walking for Health, Dementia Friendly Strolls, horse riding, carriage driving, cycling and sailing as well as some other activities. We also had a number of park leaflets. We were kept busy for most of the day, although there were times when we were waiting for visitors. At times we could have done with three of us working at the display. The location of our display within the hall was excellent. We used a TV, laptop computer and a static display. Part of our remit was to attract potential accessibility ambassadors, we used the computer display to promote this as well as a screen show by LCIL. Next year we will be able to use all our display tables and equipment to focus on all aspects of promoting countryside access for the disabled. There were a number of areas we felt we could improve on:

A banner stating what we represent

Only allow leaflets on our display which represent our message

Seek funding of a table from Leicester City Council via the Leicester City LAF to promote Leicester parks

Ensure district councils promote their Walking for Health and Dementia Friendly Strolls

Use the large screen for the promotion headlines

Use the computer screen to promote details of individual activities. This is currently being reviewed by the Lincolnshire and Rutland LAFs Countryside for All sub group.

There is a necessity to work harder to get "Countryside For All" route leaflets for Leicestershire sites.

ACTION: LAF members – Can any of the organisations LAF members represent, fund two banners (One for either side of the display)?

3.2. Extract from the email sent to all districts and Leicestershire County Council Public Health, in relation to feedback from the Choice Unlimited event.

Good morning

I hope you have enjoyed your break. On copy is John Howells, Chair of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LAF) and Stan Warren who represents the Leicester City and Leicestershire LAF. Both John and Stan worked on the display with me at the Choice Unlimited event. Also on copy is John Costor from LCIL and Sandra Pugh from Ellesmere College. LCIL deliver the Choice Unlimited event. I am providing you with feedback from the event, to enable the local access forums and yourselves deliver an even better event for the disabled, their carers and the elderly next year.

Dementia Friendly Walks/Strolls

We only received leaflets from Rutland which displayed the Rutland programme. There was a lot of interest from individuals and representatives of carers organisations. Whilst some of the people lived in the Rutland area, there was disappointment from many who had picked up a leaflet to find there was nothing for Leicestershire. We asked those outside Rutland to send us their email address to enable us to forward the relevant programmes to them. To date we have not received their contact

details. This does stress the importance of having the relevant promotional material available on the day of the event.

Walking For Health

We received leaflets from Rutland and Leicester City displaying the Walking For Health programme. Once again these leaflets were taken quickly but there was disappointment that no districts had provided their walks programme.

Trips, Slips and Falls

This set of leaflets was provided by North West Leicestershire. This leaflet did not really belong on our display however the leaflets were soon picked up by individuals and care organisations. There were many good comments from all sectors about the information on the leaflet. Two people did say when they had rang the phone number on the leaflet, they never received a response. These leaflets and other questions from the public did show the need for the districts, City and County Council to have a display and answer questions from those who attend the event in the future.

Countryside For All route leaflets

The leaflets for Rutland and Lincolnshire were quickly taken up by individuals and organisations examples of the route leaflets can be seen at: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside/visiting/visiting-the-countryside/countryside-for-all/120947.article> We were also asked for Countryside For All leaflets for Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk. This information will be fed back to the relevant LAFs. There was tremendous disappointment that there were no leaflets for Leicestershire. We spent a fair amount of time with 17 people explaining the Countryside For All leaflets and showing them the access information. All were asked, "If you had these type of leaflets for Leicestershire would it encourage you to get out in the countryside? All replied yes to this question. Some other comments from those we spoke to in relation to the lack of Countryside For All leaflets in Leicestershire are displayed below:

Many said they did not visit country parks or the countryside as they felt it may not be accessible

Many did not know of Watermead Country Park

Three said they visited Bradgate Park as it was the only accessible countryside they knew. Two stated they liked Bradgate Park but as it was the only place they could go, they did tend to get fed up of it.

Many asked why there were no route leaflets for Leicestershire

One said it was shameful Leicestershire had no route leaflets

Two said it was disgusting that Leicestershire had no route leaflets

Lincolnshire has 16 Countryside For All leaflets and will have a further 5 by the end of the year. There are also organisations in Lincolnshire budgeting to produce these leaflets in the future. Rutland currently has 3 leaflets with three organisations aiming to add further route leaflets for the County.

The funding for the route leaflets initially came from council funds for both counties. Funds for the leaflets have since been provided by charitable bodies, private sponsorship, Anglian Water and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. It will be a great shame if we have no Leicestershire route leaflets of Countryside For All standard available for next year's Choice Unlimited event. Leicestershire has many very accessible countryside routes. The lack of promotion of these sites/routes in the Countryside For All format, makes accessible sites inaccessible. Please contact me for further information if you are interested in providing Countryside For All leaflets for your most accessible sites.

Cycling

A number of enquiries were received in relation to cycling for the disabled at Rutland Water. I believe Wheels For All were also received a lot of interest. One member of the public who was disabled told me that hiring a bike at Rutland Water had encouraged him to buy his own bike and he now cycles on a regular basis. Both Lincolnshire CC through Lincolnshire Sports and Rutland CC have purchased bikes for the disabled and these are hired out through cycle hire centres. It would be useful if Leicestershire CC and Leicester Shire and Rutland Sports could investigate whether this is a possibility at Hicks Lodge.

School children

There was a noticeable lack of disabled school children at the event. At the Rutland event, although it was in school holidays, they contributed to the event in a number of ways. I believe that this encouraged other disabled children to join the clubs which were promoting the activities. There is no reason why disabled children cannot take part and visit these events in school time. It is important that they are aware of the opportunities from an early age. I realise that Ellesmere College and Birkett House do a very good job in helping their students but seeing things in a different environment can generate interest. Both Ellesmere and Birkett House sites are close to the City Choice Unlimited venue. Creating a display for Ellesmere and Birkett House and helping out at these displays at Choice Unlimited would be a valued experience for the students. Encouraging other disabled school children to attend with their parents or as a party would also prove useful. I have to admit that I have not managed to attend the Local Offer Live event. I believe this has been a good showcase for disabled children. The Choice Unlimited event provides another opportunity for disabled children and they should be encouraged to take part and attend.

If you wish to discuss how you could benefit from a display at Choice Unlimited next year please contact John Costor (on copy).

The local access forums promote many aspects of countryside access. Whilst the feedback above has covered some of our observations, a full report will be provided under Countryside For All at the next LAF meeting, this will then be available as a public document. As mentioned in the opening paragraph we are looking at how we can improve the local access forums display at the next Choice Unlimited event to encourage disabled people to enjoy activities in the countryside.

One closing thought which touched me, was a girl in her late teens or early twenties who was in a wheelchair and looking for places to go in the Leicestershire countryside without being dependent on other people to go with her. She had recently been to some "wheelchair friendly" routes, to find they

were definitely not suitable for her. My thoughts are, if we do not provide route leaflets in Countryside For All format for Leicestershire, even the disabled who are very determined in venturing out into the countryside will give up.

Should you have any queries in relation to the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

John

John Law

Member of the Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forums

The email was sent to 3rd May to all the districts and Leicestershire County Council Public Health. We have only had one response. This was from Blaby District Council. They have requested four weeks notice in future to enable them to provide us with leaflets and walk programmes. We will take this comment on board for the next event.

ACTION: Leicestershire County Council - Investigate whether cycles for the disabled could be made available at Hicks Lodge

3.3. GOOD NEWS

3.3.1. The next Leicester Choice Unlimited event will include the Local Offer Live event. The Local Offer has been ran as a separate event by Leicester City and Leicestershire County Council for families who have children with disabilities or special educational needs. We were concerned with the lack of children at the Leicester event. However it does mean we have to work harder to get sponsorship to pay for I – Spy books or similar to give out at these events.

3.3.2. Whilst at Chambers Farm Wood (between Wragby and Bardney in Lincolnshire) in May, I met a disabled couple who lived in Leicestershire, who visited the woods due to picking up the Countryside for All leaflet from the event. Whilst they were very pleased they had found out about the site and enjoyed there morning at the site, they were very concerned about the lack of information on accessible sites in Leicestershire.