

EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CHAIRS' MEETING**MINUTES****Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 10:30am****Location: Nottingham City Council Offices, Loxley House, Nottingham****Attendees**

Hugh McClintock	Nottingham LAF	East Mid's Chair
Ruth Thurgood	Nottingham LAF	
Alex Staniforth	Nottinghamshire LAF	
Terry Kirby	Leicestershire LAF	
John Law	South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF	
Vicky Allen	Leicester LAF	
John Thompson	Peak District LAF	
David Saunders	Nottingham CVS	
Kieran Lee	Sustrans	

Apologies for absence

Edwina Edwards	Peak District LAF
Marilyn Hambly	Derby and Derbyshire LAF

1. CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATIONS

David Saunders from Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service, provided a presentation on Charitable Incorporated Organisations. The presentation is attached to these minutes. Following the question and answer session, the LAF representatives agreed to take back the information David had provided to their LAFs for discussion. It was agreed that the LAF representatives would bring back the results of those discussions to the East Mid's Chairs meeting in October 2017. David was thanked for the help and clarification he had provided.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

3. UPDATE FROM NATURAL ENGLAND

- **Local Access Forum conference 2017:** We had planned this for the 21st March but due to speaker difficulties and planning logistics we, as you know, had to postpone. We appreciate that this was very short notice and apologise if it has caused problems but expect to let you know the revised date this week. This postponement will give us more time to organise a useful, high quality event which, this year, we will be themes around access for everyone, removing barriers to access and equality of opportunity with key speakers, updates from Defra/NE and workshops
- **National Trail funding:** The Trail partnerships were told on 26 January this year that for 2017/18, they would again receive a level budget – i.e. same as they have received since April 2013. In total this amounts to £1.8m - £1.67m for the existing family and £0.13m which is what we estimate the commenced (and soon to commence) stretches of ECP will require for maintenance. We remain committed to supporting the trails explore alternative sources of funding which will ultimately mean that they are less reliant on the public purse and are supporting them – through our external funding team – to look at options.
- **Natural England's Conservation strategy** – this is a new overarching strategy for NE and will set the agenda for much of our future work, (and just as importantly how we carry out that work). It has a strong people focussed commitment within it and former people and access staff are part of the implementation team and will be looking to ensure that public access/greenspace/health and engagement interests, are a major part of that future work. We hope that this more people-focussed element will be demonstrated in the better integration of the range of NE's work with the public, stakeholders and partners.
- **Motor vehicle stakeholder group** : This group, comprised of user groups, anti-vehicle groups and access managers, had been proposed during the passage of the Deregulation Bill to look at issues arising around vehicle use in the countryside such as appropriate/inappropriate use, legal measures, good practice in route management, funding for maintenance of routes etc. NE organised the first meeting in Crewe and set the initial agenda but the group is now largely autonomous and will set its own agenda and actions, and will meet again on April 6th in our offices in London.

4. LAF ROUND UPS

4.1. NOTTINGHAM LAF

Nottingham LAF currently has 15 members, including 3 councillors. One of our most experienced members has recently retired and many of the others are spread quite thinly across a number of other interest groups they represent. As a result we are about to start a round of recruitment to attract new members with a range of skills (we have no horse riders at present) to breathe some new life into the Forum. We are also looking to re-energise existing members by asking them to talk about their experience and any skills they can share to progress our agenda of protecting and promoting rights of way at LAF meetings.

The Chair, Hugh McClintock, stood down in January after three years' service and following elections we now have a new Chair and two Vice Chairs. We decided the dual Vice Chair approach was a good way of bringing one of the newer members of the Forum into a committee leadership role. The Vice Chairs are Hugh McClintock and Katie France. The Chair is now Ruth Thurgood (formerly Vice Chair).

We have a number of subgroups:

- The Planning subgroup is ready for a new injection of resource and enthusiasm to continue the important work of scrutinising planning applications. We will be covering training and development in this area at our next LAF meeting.
- The Clutter Busting subgroup has not yet fully taken off (it was sponsored by a retired member) however a “clutter busting” walk was held at the start of the October meeting and we will be following up with some training on appropriate use of street signage etc
- The Self Guided Walks group has moved more slowly this year, but the third walk is ready to be launched (with a walk!) in May. Two more walks are nearing completion, bringing us closer to our target of one for each of the eight areas in the city
- Claims Subgroup: There has been limited progress on claiming rights of way in recent months, so this is another area we are looking to bring back on the agenda, with support from one of our experienced members. One of the routes is required for a self guided walk, so this should provide the impetus to make some progress.

The LAF has closely followed the progress of the work on a proposed new cycle/pedestrian bridge over the River Trent, mainly as a result of the hard work being invested in this by two of our members. Sustrans issued a revised economic report in January and we await next steps.

We continue to have excellent support from Nottingham City Council, including the Rights of Way Officer John Lee and his team.

4.2. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LAF

Summary of the Minutes of the two previous meetings of the Forum

Tuesday 18th October 2016

Via (East Midlands) Ltd – Cathy Gillespie

Cathy gave the LAF an update on the Via contract. Rights of way maintenance will now be undertaken by Via, while the Definitive Map, Enforcement and some other functions remain with the County Council (including the LAF). Initial contract with Via is for 10 years with an option to extend for a further 15 years. So far there have been teething problems but generally everything within Countryside Access is continuing pretty much as it always has, with staff shortages being a major problem.

It was agreed that a quarterly update would be given and a representative of Via invited to attend at least once a year to keep us informed and allow any issues to be raised.

Seasonal Traffic Regulation Order - Update

Nottinghamshire County Council is to seasonally close seven Byways in the Bassetlaw area (to vehicular traffic) to protect their surfaces from damage. The seasonal closure is due to come into force on the 1st November and will be in place for six months of the year. The LAF and other legitimate users support this. The LAF will be kept updated on how successful the closure is and will be consulted on any future proposals.

Is it the end of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme?

A brief introduction to this was given by the Chair, Alex Staniforth at our April meeting outlining the fact that permissive routes could be lost once the financial incentives to landowners come to an end. After brief discussion it was agreed that the best way forward with this would be for a sub-group meeting at Trent Bridge House (Thursday 17th November) to look at all the HLS funded access in the county (33 sites) and assess which schemes are of most value, and most threatened, then decide what we can do about it. It was decided that a link to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme will be added on NCC Countryside Pages.

Accessibility in the Blidworth area

Neil Lewis outlined to the LAF an access issue involving a disabled gentleman resident in the Blidworth area, who is currently unable to access many local areas due to barriers put in place to prevent illegal use. It was agreed that a site visit to Blidworth to look at the issues would be a good first step (and a training opportunity for newer LAF members). A date for this has now been arranged (Thursday 10th November).

Tuesday 25th January 2017

Network Rail – Level Crossing Closures – Suzanne Bedford and David Shorrocks

Suzanne (Liability Negotiations Manager) and David (Liability Negotiations Advisor) outlined the level crossings in the county which are currently being considered for closure. These are:

1. Barrel Lane Crossing – Straightforward, no public access beyond crossing
2. North Muskham – David Shorrocks advised that he was meeting with a local resident and had been in discussions with landowners on possible diversions to enable the crossing to be closed.
3. Newark Whitehouse Lane – (closed with TTRO in 2015). Diversion proposals were put forward which, along with a retainer on the underbridge 300 metres to the North of the crossing, was acceptable to members, although we have emphasised to Network Rail that in future acceptable diversions should be in place prior to closing crossings.

Additionally Three level crossings at Attenborough-

Network Rail is currently consulting on proposals to close all three crossings.

1. Barratt Lane No.1 (No.2 was diverted a couple of years ago) - Footpath
2. Long Lane - Footpath
3. Meadow Lane/Nature Reserve Crossing - Bridleway

Suzanne explained that there had been issues with the consultation locally, delays and poor coverage and that the consultation had been extended. The LAF would oppose these closures unless very good alternative routes and bridges were in place. Meadow Lane Crossing is considered particularly important as it is bridleway, leads directly into Attenborough Nature Reserve and to the riverside, and is used extensively by walkers and cyclists.

Proposals by members for added safety measures at the crossings instead of closure were dismissed by Suzanne and David as inadequate for protecting public safety. There is a public meeting in Attenborough on 8th February which Mary and other members will be attending.

Positive work with Network Rail at Aslockton – the LAF were shown before and after pictures of some path improvement works which were undertaken by Network Rail on Aslockton Footpath No.11. Network Rail hope that the public will use the new surfaced route to the road level crossing rather than using the footpath crossing.

HS2 Proposal in Nottinghamshire

HS2 is back on the agenda again – plans for the route through Nottinghamshire have changed slightly. There is a Consultation Event taking place in Trowell and Long Eaton 27th and 28th January – Mary Mills will attend.

Miner2Major Project

Neil Lewis had received brief details of this project which is being funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. One of the aims is to survey, improve and promote the existing network (of paths?) between Bestwood, Mansfield and Edwinstowe. Neil will investigate further and if the project is of interest, arrange for someone to come and brief us at next LAF meeting.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Mary Mills agreed to obtain addresses for landowners with Stewardship Access and produce a standard letter for sending out to them inquiring if they were prepared to keep their existing permissive route when funding runs out. Some assistance from other LAF members may be sought for this task.

Accessibility in the Blidworth Area

A site visit by members to the Blidworth area failed to identify any barriers to accessibility for mobility scooter users. The issues may be further afield towards Sherwood Pines. Neil Lewis will contact Robert, the gentleman who raised the issues, to arrange a visit with him. A LAF cycle ride may be necessary to reach the Sherwood Pines area. Ongoing.

4.3. LEICESTER LAF

4.3.1. Leicester City LAF is "in abeyance" - apparently whilst the City copes with its budget crisis. We are awaiting the verdict of the relevant Assistant Mayor. There is only 1 officer in the City dealing with PRow. The Parks Dept also has fewer staff and pounds than before.

4.3.2. It is developing its Definitive Map (as a county borough in 1949 it did not HAVE to create one - Hugh said Nottingham is "in same boat".) It is able to put the jitties and ginnels on the Map by dedicating or creating them as the landowner, by virtue of being the highway authority. But where there are contentious items legal resources are scarce also so progress is even slower now.

4.3.3. Stan Warren is surveying local routes with a council-funded officer in order to encourage health-giving walking, either in formal groups or otherwise.

4.3.4. Vicky Allen is helping surveying a S-N horse/walk/cycle route through the City, mainly based on the old Gt Central Railway track from Glen Parva to the centre, which is now a formal bridleway. Near De Montfort University the route reaches and crosses the busy A47, sharing traffic light controlled road crossings for cyclists. It then reaches another old railway - the Ralli Park - and finds its way through housing estates to the vicinity of Glenfield Hospital. From there we are working out a route NE wards, on verges, cycle routes and bridleways to and through Castle Hill Country Park. From there we hope to turn eastward to Watermead Park beside the R.Soar using a bridleway to be provided in a new development. Eventually a route AROUND the City is hoped-for, to which some of this work will contribute.

4.3.5. In the centre of the city there is increasing concern about air quality and more streets are being altered under the Mayor's plans to give priority to walkers and cyclists with some streets becoming traffic-free. Inevitably, restricting traffic is a contentious matter and it will be interesting to see the effects of some schemes currently under construction.

4.4. LEICESTERSHIRE LAF

LAF's last meeting was in November. A 'pre meeting' dealt with Unrecorded Ways, funding control matters and a previous Ramblers' Association seminar in Birmingham.

The main meeting considered farming matters post Brexit, Network Opportunities and Unrecorded Ways, and considered a report from me on the Highways England event at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) under the heading 'Highways Under Threat'.

Major issues we deal with regularly cover Network Rail crossings (we have a lot of level crossings), Unrecorded Ways (we have hundreds of them) and the effects of major planning applications, of which a number are ongoing. We're also looking to work on, e.g., Dementia Friendly walks, following the example of South Lincolnshire & Rutland LAF. And we're looking to work with neighbouring LAFs on cross border issues.

We've lost our Secretariat, due to funding cuts at Leicestershire County Council, though they still support us with officer time and use of County Hall for main meetings. But we've had problems booking it for sub group meetings, and have had to find an alternative venue once or twice.

Our Annual General Meeting was postponed from earlier this year, and is now booked for 03 April.

We've attracted some interest from possible new members, and we have one or two new ones. We've introduced them to our meetings, and arranged suitable training for them and our existing members.

We will be represented at the National Conference, whenever that is, and we will carry on with our work and, hopefully, achieve positive results.

Other specific projects we have worked on with some success, in conjunction with colleagues in other organisations, include the Charnwood Forest Project, a Black to Green scheme looking at transforming some parts of the National Forest and Watermead Park, a Sustrans led project in Leicester which won national funding in a television programme a few years ago.

4.5. PEAK DISTRICT LAF

Introduction

Edwina Edwards will sadly be stepping down as our Chair in September 2017 after seven years doing a great job with the LAF. She will be a very hard act to follow. Members of the LAF have volunteered hours of their time to respond to consultation documents and provided advice on access and rights of way issues. They benefit from support from the CEO at the Peak and excellent officers there and at Derbyshire CC who report and advise us so well.

The Access Fund was launched in September 2014 as part of the celebrations for the 10th Anniversary of open access in the Peak District. It is ring fenced for access improvements throughout the National Park and includes funding such items as new gates, access points, improvements to paths and signage.

Meetings of the Forum in 2016

There were 4 formal meetings as well as site visits, Sub Group Meetings - Access and Green Lanes over the year. In 2016, the Local Access Forum introduced [audio webcasting](#) for its meetings so people could listen in live and follow the meeting.

Issues discussed at the formal meetings included:

Access - the LAF considered access improvements and future initiatives for the Access Fund. Other matters discussed included landscape partnerships and proposals for the Authority's woodlands, trails and estates.

Accessibility - In September the Forum welcomed the PDNPA's proposals to identify and promote "Miles without Stiles" routes and celebrated in December the culmination of Accessible Derbyshire's 3 year 'big push' to promote accessibility, the PDNPA's award of Organisation of the Year and its first accessibility report.

Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan - The County Council has provided the LAF with regular updates on progress with the Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and work towards its ten year review in 2017 - we have a Joint Sub Group with the Derby and Derbyshire LAF. During 2016 emphasis has continued on cycling through the continued expansion of the multi-user Greenway network; Pedal Peak II and the Pennine Bridleway National Trail.

Ramblers Survey Findings about the good condition of rights of way in the Peak District NPA were most welcome

Green Lanes - The Forum was consulted on three possible traffic regulation orders and repairs on two routes during 2016. The LAF also carried out site inspections on priority routes in the Kirklees and Sheffield parts of the National Park.

National Park Management Plan review - key document and good to be involved and contributing ahead of consultation on a Draft this Summer.

The Year Ahead - Priorities will be in are Annual Report out soon and include:

- Developing opportunities for inclusive access
- Involvement in landscape partnerships
- Developing green lanes as a resource and managing recreational motorised use
- Seeking further expansion and improvements to horse riding routes and opportunities, including Lost Ways. In this case working jointly with Derbyshire CC, Derby and Derbyshire LAF and hoping to hear about experience in Leicestershire LAF
- Pursuing completion of the Pennine Bridleway around Glossop, and sustaining funding for the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway

4.6. MID LINCOLNSHIRE LAF

Our activity tends to be taken up with routine matters, such as monitoring the progress by the two highway authorities we serve on their definitive map modification work and path orders, maintenance problems etc.

We suffer from a shortage of members, not great in actual numbers, but we have a significant turnover and constant struggle to find adequate good new candidates.

We continue to take a great interest in lost ways, but while our members are very keen that we should take part in active practical steps towards claiming lost ways, we suffer from a shortage of members with the necessary skills time and aptitude.

An appreciable part of our work is carried out through joint committees with the South Lincs and Rutland LAF, or by members we appoint to represent the LAF on other bodies, sometimes ones on which both LAFs have representation. I believe we have had very useful input through this for the interests of disabled users, and also on the Lincolnshire Coastal Countryside Park working groups.

We also take a particular interest in the health aspect of rights of way, not just as an obvious good purpose in its own right, but because this is one area of rights of way promotion where there is some prospect, in the current political climate, of funding being put forward from various sources. At our last meeting we had a presentation from Sport England, on their Getting Active Outdoors programme. We see contacts of this kind useful from both sides, and we are always looking for ways of extending understanding of the opportunities which the PROW network offers, and why these opportunities are not being adequately exploited or supported by government.

4.7. SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE AND RUTLAND LAF

COUNTRYSIDE FOR ALL (this sub group includes members of the Mid Linc's LAF)

Countryside for All routes - Lincolnshire

The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust has agreed to provide funding for another route at Whisby. We were hoping to have the five new routes printed at the end of March but have had some issues on two routes that have delayed the process.

We attended the Activities For All event in Lincoln to promote our Countryside For All routes. It was a Lincolnshire Sports event for the disabled. This was very poorly attended, we believe only 40

people attended. The population of Lincoln is 95,000, when including the attached urban areas the population rises to 130,000 approximately.

Countryside for All routes – Rutland

The Rutland Water Nature reserve leaflet has been printed.

The sub group are in discussions with the Woodland Trust in relation to a new route in the County.

Dementia Friendly walks - Rutland

An additional dementia friendly inclusive walk leader training course has been arranged for April.

Rutland Choice Unlimited event

The Rutland event was a success and we had 300 visitors. The event was held near Oakham which has a population of approximately 11,000. We are now planning the 2017 event which will be held in the Autumn.

Leicester Choice Unlimited event

The Lincolnshire, Rutland and Leicestershire LAFs are putting on a joint display at the Leicester event at the Tigers stadium 26th April.

Funding Bids

We are approaching organisations for funding 300 I-Spy in the countryside booklets. We will be giving these to children at the Choice Unlimited events. This is to encourage disabled children and their parents to venture out and enjoy the countryside.

There are now over 10 delegates from a number of external organisations wishing to attend the Inclusive Countryside Access course. We are now looking to obtain funding for this course.

The Countryside For All route surface improvements and other site improvements at Chapel Six Marshes will be going out for funding during the year. We will initially apply for funding this from the East Coast Community Fund. This fund is for the coastal communities in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and North Norfolk and is provided by the off shore wind farms.

Accessibility Ambassadors

Unfortunately we had very little response to our request for expressions of interest for the roles Accessibility Ambassadors for Lincolnshire. The Rutland and Leicestershire roles will be promoted at the Rutland and Leicester Choice Unlimited events.

5. BENNERLEY VIADUCT

Kieran Lee from Sustrans delivered a presentation on the Bennerley viaduct. The presentation was circulated previously but will also be circulated with these minutes. The LAF delegates at the meeting, agreed to discuss the viaduct project with their LAFs and seek agreement for their support for the project. The outcome from the individual LAFs, to be forwarded to Hugh McClintock (East

Mid's Chair), to enable Hugh to write the letter of support to Sustrans. Kieran was thanked for the presentation he delivered.

6. YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGIONAL TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting due to time constraints.

7. PERMISSIVE ACCESS

A number of letters/emails were discussed in relation to payment for access post Brexit. These included the Yorkshire and Humber and Leicestershire LAFs emails to Government. It was agreed that the delegates would take the examples back to their LAFs for discussion. The individual LAFs would then have the opportunity to use these examples as templates should they wish to email ministers or Government departments.

8. SPEAKER AT THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the LAFs would decide on a speaker for the next meeting prior to the end of May.

ACTION – ALL: Feedback topic to be discussed, the speaker and contact details.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that when the draft minutes were circulated any corrections should be notified within a week. The final minutes would be circulated after the corrections were made.

10. DATE, VENUE, CHAIR AND MINUTE SECRETARY OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place at Loxley House , Nottingham 10th October 2017. It was also agreed that Hugh McClintock would continue in his role as chairman and John Law continue in his role as minute secretary.