

NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES REPORT FOR

9th January 2018 LAF MEETING

COUNTRYSIDE FOR ALL

1. Forestry Commission

1.1. Countryside For All Leaflets

The Forestry Commission have identified three of their most accessible routes in Leicestershire as Hicks Lodge, Jaguar Lount wood and Sence Valley Forest Park. They are keen to have Countryside For All leaflets for these sites. We started auditing the Hicks Lodge loop but have been made aware that improvements will take place in March. The other sites together with the Zigzag route at Hicks Lodge do not have any planned improvements. The Forestry Commission will be able to fund leaflets produced prior to the end of March 2018. We will aim to get the audits completed by mid February so they can be printed and billed prior to the end of March. We will then discuss the options with the Forestry Commission on how we fund the production of the leaflets for the loop at Hicks Lodge.

1.2. Adapted Bikes for the disabled

Discussions have taken place with the Forestry Commission and the bike hire owner at Hicks Lodge. Both are in agreement that adapted bikes would be good for the site. A meeting will be arranged for March to see how we can take this project forward.

1.3. Changing Places toilets

Neither of the two disabled toilets at Hicks Lodge are big enough to be used as a changing places toilets. We will be investigating whether we can house some of the changing places equipment in each of the disabled toilets.

2. Joint meeting with the disability Officers and Community Forum

We agreed with Alison Barnes, Leicestershire County Council to include the Choice Unlimited event in the Leicestershire Local Offer letter, Spreading the Word. We were asked how the future is looking for the disabled in Leicestershire. Unfortunately from my relationship with different disability groups my answer had to be very bleak and getting worse.

3. Woodland Trust

The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF delivered the Inclusive Countryside Access training to 11 members of staff from the Woodland Trust as well as other organisations in November. This included members of the Woodland Trust staff who had the responsibility for sites in Leicestershire.

4. Relationship with other charitable bodies

The South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF, in their Tesco Bags For Life funding application will be including a request for funding for flyers to promote the Mount Group Riding For The Disabled. Although this organisation is based in Leicestershire approximately 50% of their riders live in

Rutland, the balance from Leicestershire. These flyers will be used to promote Riding for the Disabled at the joint LAF display at the next Leicester Choice Unlimited event.

Helena Edwards and John Law have a meeting with the director of Mosaic in January to discuss how the LAF can help the promotion of their accessible narrow boat at the Choice Unlimited event. Discussions have also taken place with Gorse Hill City Farm on how we help promote them at the Choice Unlimited event.

5. **Changing Places Letter acknowledging LCC Changing Places Fund**

Below is a draft letter for approval to be sent out to districts:

Dear.....

DISABILITY ACCESS TO PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum recently received a presentation concerning appropriate accessibility for the disabled to conveniences and in particular those in local authority control. A current campaign by the Changing Places Consortium seeks to influence decision makers whilst conveniences are being planned in new buildings or during renovations so as to provide greater levels of access for those who require it.

A "Changing Places" facility provides a safe, clean environment with sufficient space and will be appropriately equipped and laid out to enable those who are limited in their own mobility, or have severe disabilities including profound and multiple learning disabilities and who need equipment to help them or may need support from one or two carers, to either get on the toilet or to have their continence pad changed.

Unfortunately, standard accessible toilets (or "disabled toilets") do not provide changing benches or hoists and most are too small to accommodate more than one person. Without Changing Places toilets, the person with disabilities is put at risk, and families are forced to risk their own health and safety by changing their loved one on a toilet floor.

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum consider it a necessity that future planning by authorities in Leicestershire takes into account the needs of those with disabilities to ensure that they can access public spaces and tourism centres in their communities. The campaign leaflet and other information is available at www.changing-places.org.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Leicestershire Local Access Forum to bodies concerned with providing or managing access as defined in Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, section 94.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that this advice is brought to the attention of the relevant officers in your organisation.

Organisations eligible to apply to Leicestershire County Council Community Grants, are now able to apply for the Shire Changing Places grant.

Yours faithfully

Chairman
Leicestershire Local Access Forum.

ACTION: LAF - Approve of amend the letter

Chair- Requested to sign upon approval

Secretary – Letters to go out to relevant district officers.

6. Choice Unlimited 2018

It will be fantastic if we can get the 3 Forestry Commission Countryside For All leaflets printed prior to the event. The Forestry Commission may have a display at the event in 2018 but if not we will be able to promote these sites. The date for the Leicester Choice Unlimited event has not been set yet. The joint LAF display with the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF gave us a greater presence this year with three tables, one funded by a private sponsor. It was felt that as the City parks and walks were promoted at the event, the City should be asked to fund a table for 2018. This year we had a table top mounted display, which took up all the space on one of the tables. We have agreement from Lincolnshire County Council that we can borrow their floor mounted display (approximately 8 foot by 6 foot). A private sponsor has agreed to fund the space for the floor mounted display . Discussions will take place in January with the South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF to see whether they want a display at Leicester and if so whether they will fund a table for a joint display with the Leicestershire LAF. The other issues are whether Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City will each fund a table.

ACTION: John Law – Discuss with South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF whether they want to fund a table at Leicester and if so whether they would have a joint display with the Leicestershire LAF.

Ed – Will Leicestershire County Council fund a table at the event?

All – Who do we approach at Leicester City to see if they will fund a table?

7. Possible Leicestershire Countryside For All Routes

We were asked in the summer if we could provide a list of the most suitable sealed countryside routes. Information has kindly been supplied by Ed and Vicky. From the routes supplied it may be possible to produce Countryside For All leaflets. As we already have committed to carry out four audits in 2018. We could look at obtaining funding for 4 further leaflets in 2019 to include part of the following routes:

Green Route 1 north out of the city to Cossington
Great Central Way south out of city to Glen Parva
Ratby to Glenfield rail line

8. Watermead Country Park

As many of the visitors to our stand at the Choice Unlimited event did not know of Watermead Country Park and other issues had been raised about the Country Park, a site visit was carried out. The site visit was undertaken Monday 7th August by Helena Edwards and John Law from 11:45 for

approximately 1.5 hours. It was a fine sunny day and there were only 5 cars in the car park at John Merrick Lake, two of which were ours. Whilst at Watermead, we saw one person struggle to get through the kissing gate with a pushchair and a girl fall off her bike when struggling to get through a gate further round the site. Whilst there were cars on other car parks, the visitor numbers for a fine sunny day during the school holidays was disappointing. It did seem to indicate that the local authorities, which hold the view that the park is underused is correct. From our point of view we want to encourage more use of this fantastic green space, especially for the disabled, their carers and young families. It is obvious this country park does need promoting. To make it more accessible it does need a Countryside For All leaflet but it is clear the LCC does not wish to follow this route. This inaction makes this bit of countryside inaccessible. Not telling people how accessible a site is, means people with mobility issues are less likely to visit. The other key concerns in relation to the site are:

- The lack of visitors
- Awkward kissing gates
- Gates with Radar keys
- Removal of the tapping rail
- The mismanagement of the sensory area
- The lack of a decent/route into the sensory area from the tarmac path - preference would be a tarmac route
- More seating required in the sensory area together with passing places
- The protection/treatment of the braille sign
- More seats required along the route

The sensory area could only be described as a disgrace, although there was a seat in it, there was no way to access it easily due to the height of the undergrowth round it. The kissing gates and gates requiring radar keys are a real barrier in this Country Park and this has clearly been evidenced in the site visit.

To enable the above issues to be understood a copy of the management plan of the site is requested. The reason for the removal of the tapping rail would also be appreciated.

Other organisations are trying to make their green spaces with public access more accessible. It seems that even if it is not intentional the opposite is true of Watermead Country Park belonging to the County Council.

ACTION: LCC – A copy of the site management plan is requested.

LCC – A senior manager of the Country Parks and the County Councillor responsible for the Country Parks requested to attend a LAF meeting to explain the above issues, when the members of the LAF who undertook the site meeting are present. It is also requested that the Leicestershire County Councillor and Local Access Forum member Mrs. P Posnett be present at this meeting.

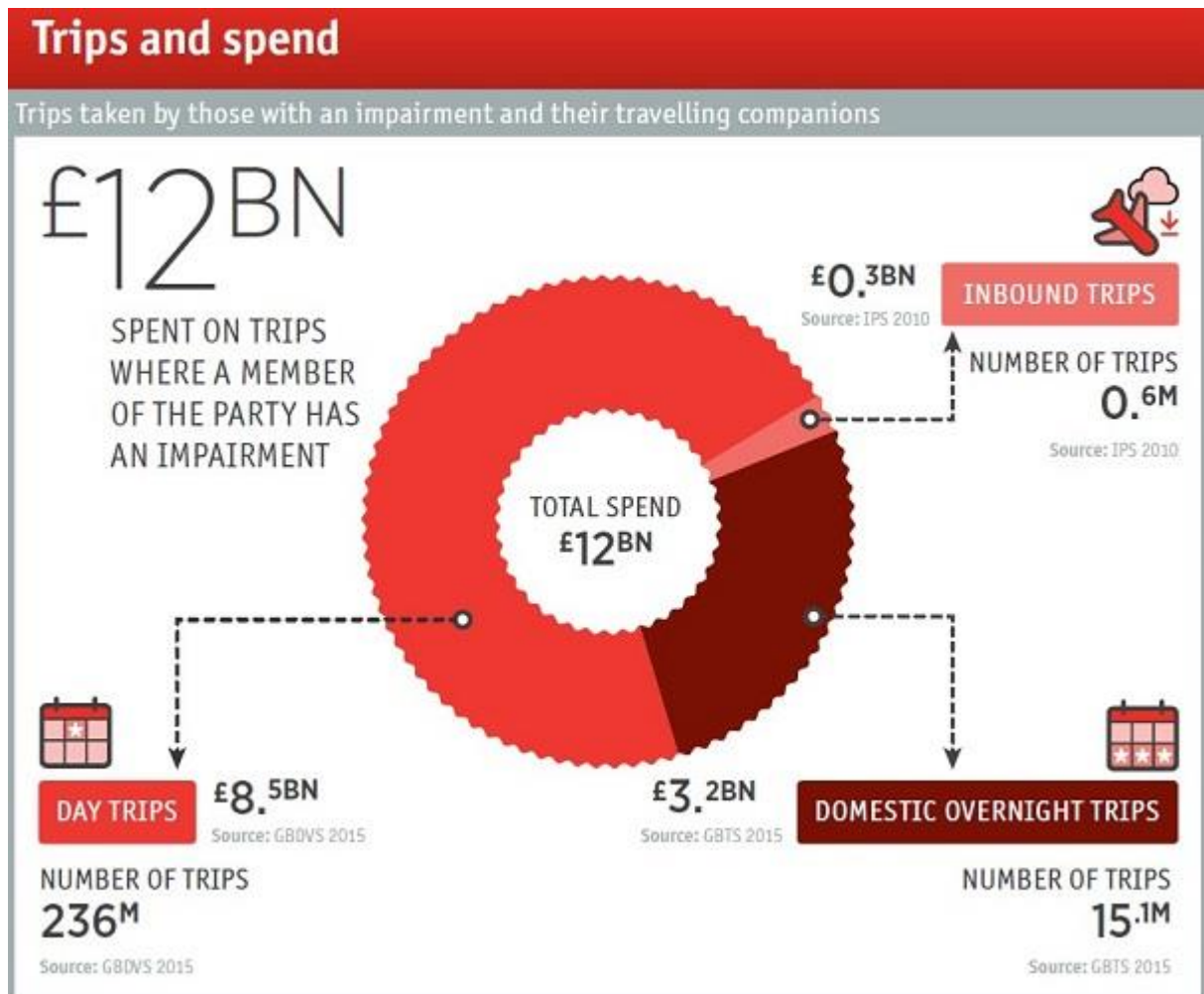
9. Visit England

VISIT ENGLAND PURPLE POUND

Discussions by email and phone have been taking place with Visit England, the reason for this was initially for enquiring for funding for a National Countryside For All web site. Visit England suggested we looked at their web site displaying "Understanding the accessible tourism market". This certainly gives another reason for us to keep a focus on countryside for all. Details from the Visit England web site are from 2015 below and overleaf:

Understanding the accessible tourism market

Good accessibility benefits all visitors. Disabled people have the greatest need for accessible facilities and services but only around 8% use a wheelchair, with many more having other mobility, hearing or visual impairments. People with health conditions and impairments – and their travelling companions – spend £12 billion a year on tourism in England.



- In 2015, nearly one in five tourism day trips in England were taken by people with an impairment and their travelling companions, spending £8.5 billion.
- In 2015, 18% of all overnight trips by British residents in England were taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions, worth £3.2 billion.

- Over half a million people with a health condition or impairment visit England from abroad each year, spending around £3 million.

In addition to this, our research reveals that visitors who make up the accessible tourism market are:

- More likely to take longer trips
- Find seaside destinations particularly appealing
- Anecdotally very loyal

12. VISIT ENGLAND ACCESSIBILITY GUIDES

We have had discussions with Visit England about the new Accessibility Guides. These guides should help businesses to attract more visitors and money. The guides will also be an asset to people with disabilities and carers. In Rutland the LAF are delivering a one off session including a presentation and discussion to representatives of business organisations. It is then up to these organisations to decide how they wish to pursue this matter. This should be of value to Leicestershire businesses, people with disabilities and their carers. A presentation is available to highlight this issue.

Visit England Powerpoint/Youtube presentation

ACTION: LAF – Does the LAF want to pursue delivering a session to business representatives on the Accessibility Guide?