

Annual Report of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) 2018

During the last year we have offered advice to a number of local authorities and major developers to try to secure the best possible outcomes for all users of rights of way and open spaces. We continue to be represented on various relevant organisations, widening our sphere of influence and invite major organisations, developers, etc., to our meetings to facilitate positive discussions.

Our advice to local government is on their strategic plans and substantial planning applications which could impact on rights of way or afford opportunities to improve the network

We have also continued to promote and encourage more people to use rights of way and open spaces for their general health and wellbeing, and sustainable travel to the benefit of the environment.

Most of this work is dealt with by our **Planning and Travel Committee**. A lot of its work can be tedious and time consuming but it is important to pick up on and react to potential threats to the network.

We continue to monitor the Network Rail crossings situation and have objected formally to a number of potential closures and await a public enquiry in to one at Barrow. We have sent suggestions to HS2 and have met with them on two occasions and they continue to engage with us as the project unfolds and whatever individual members think of the overall project it is important to work with them to mitigate the impacts as it will cut over 40 rights of way in Leicestershire.

We have also given advice to major freight interchange developers speaking at public enquiries when necessary

We also have a **Network Opportunities Committee** and for the last year also an **Unrecorded Ways Committee**. The Network Opportunities Committee works to enhance the network of the public rights of way as opportunities arise and monitors open access land, county owned farms and higher level stewardship schemes. The unrecorded ways project was created to identify unrecorded ways and ensure sufficient historic evidence is available to submit an application for a route, to enable it to become a permanent public right of way. We set up to set up the processes and collected the base data and have staged training taster events to encourage volunteer researchers. Thus was during this period of intense activity dealt with by a separate committee but has now been returned to Network Opportunities. We have a team of volunteers researching specific areas or routes and these people have been recruited from various user groups and organisations. The main players have been co-opted onto a sub group to meet from time to time.

This group has a budget for research purposes made up of donations from several user groups with a contribution from the County Council. One member of the LLAF acts as the archivist to this project another provides the secretarial requirements and a third is responsible for the funds. Payment from the fund requires the authority of 2 from 5 named members of the LLAF.

The Deregulation Bill was passed in 2015, but are still awaiting the guidelines from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural which may well simplify the process for claiming routes but with the cut off date approaching we are proceeding under the old regulations.

The Forum seeks to be representative of all users of the countryside and landowners and environmentalists but whilst we can have up to 21 members some sectors are not represented. Members the Forum wear many hats and we are all interested in the environment but we do not have anybody directly involved with groups working in that field. We are also short at the moment of people particularly interested in motor sport; members of the ethnic minorities or the less able sector.

We meet about five times a year formally so it is not a great demand on members' time although members with the time do work between meetings on the various projects and work of the committees