

Contributions to Annual Report of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) 2019

Chairman's report

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.

We have an ongoing dialogue with HS2 and also the early stages of one with the potential new Rail/freight interchange by Burbage Common.

We also occasionally invite large organisations and developers to our meetings to see how we can assist them and members of the Planning and Travel Committee do site visits where justified. We comment on substantial planning applications which could impact on rights of way or afford opportunities to improve the network.

Three members while not directly representing the Forum do have ongoing meetings with the bus companies.

We continue to monitor the Network Rail crossings situation and await a public enquiry into one at Barrow upon Soar which we have vigorously opposed.

The Network Opportunities Committee and its Unrecorded Ways Sub Committee work to enhance the network of the public rights of way as opportunities arise and monitor open access land and higher level stewardship schemes. The sub-committee was created to organise a project to identify unrecorded ways and seek sufficient historic evidence to submit an application for a route to be recognised as a permanent public right of way. We set up the processes and collected the base data and have staged training taster events to encourage volunteer researchers. This was done by the sub-committee during this period of intense activity but has now been returned to Network Opportunities for the ongoing progress. 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 working party who 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.

Charnwood Park Regional Park

The Forum are represented on the steering group of a landscape partnership project funded to date by the Lottery. This is a major project that will enhance and protect the regional park, boost the local economy and improve access for all. The unique natural and cultural heritage features of Charnwood Forest will be managed and promoted on behalf of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park and one member of the LLAF is on the board of that

organisation. The aim is that the Regional Park be recognised as an essential asset of the growing communities in the Derby, Leicester and Nottingham areas now and in the future. Funds have been provided to pay for professional support to work up the project and unless something goes wrong in this stage another £3.000.000 should be coming our way from the Heritage Lottery Fund

Forum Recruitment

During the last 12 months we have lost 3 valued members and working with Officers of Leicestershire County Council we are actively looking to recruit new members to complement the Forum.

The Forum seeks to be representative of all interested in the countryside; including land owners and managers, user groups, casual visitors and environmentalists but whilst we can have up to 21 members some sectors are not represented. We have three elected members (local authorities) and 18 other interests. Members the Forum wear many hats and we are all interested in the environment and many of the aims of the Forum but there are gaps. We do not have anybody particularly interested in motor sport, members of the ethnic minorities or the younger members of society.

The Leicestershire Forum meets 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.

John Howells

An old hand

We occasionally invite large organisations and developers to our meetings to see how we can assist them and members of the **Planning and Travel Committee** do site visits where justified. We comment on substantial planning applications which could impact on rights of way or afford opportunities to improve the network. Our work often entails us doing legwork and encourages us to get out and about

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

Having served on this Forum since its inception I appreciate the doors it has opened and the many people I now know working to similar ends in various organisation. This cross fertilisation helps all bodies whether within the membership or outside groups.

Roy Denney

A new girl

As a relatively new LLAF member I have been interested to see the breadth of the work it undertakes. This year the depth of local knowledge that exists in the membership, and the sheer amount of work put in by key committees and leaders, has been most obvious in the highly detailed response to the HS2 route through Leics.

Behind the scenes, the research of historical records, done in particular by Stan Warren and his helpers, has been interesting, and something I hopefully may be able to learn more about, and join in with.

Helena Edwards