

**Notes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at  
County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 16 February 2011.**

**Present**

Mr. R. Denney (Chair), Mr. B. Sutton, Mr. A. Hillier-Fry, Mr. S.J. Warren,  
Mr. H. Eppel, Mrs. V. Allen, Mrs. H. Brown, Mr. T. Kirby, Mrs. L. Forman,  
Mr. C. Gordon, Mr. J. Law, Dr. G. Mason, Mr. M. Parr and Mrs. R.  
Camamile.

**Officers in attendance**

Mr. I. Vears, Mr. E. McWilliam, Mr. P. Williams, Mr. P. Hitchings.

**Action by**

**458. Chairman's welcome**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

**459. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the  
Forum:

Mrs. A.F. Pyper  
Mr. P. Tame

**460. Minutes of the previous meeting**

**433: Matters Arising**

It was reported that reference made throughout this minute to 'National  
Rail' should read 'Network Rail' apart from resolution b).

**452: Urgent Item: Altercation at Crown Farm**

Mr Warren had reported that, after some investigation, the Ramblers  
Association was confident that no one associated with the Leicestershire  
Footpath Association was involved in the altercation, rather than the  
Local Access Forum which had been reported in the minutes.

**461. Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda**

**433: Matters Arising - Railway Crossings**

Regarding Frisby on the Wreake, the County Council had received  
confirmation that Network Rail had removed the stiles in this location and

replaced them with hand gates.

Regarding resolution b), following investigation it appeared that it would be more appropriate to raise such an issue at a County level rail network meeting. This was because the National Rail Group was a meeting between transport providers and the Police which dealt with confidential, non-public issues.

#### 448: ROW Policy Groups – Continuation of Subgroups

It was reported that the County Council had undertaken some trials with regard to chemical grass growth retardant. A report on these trials was not yet available. When available further information regarding this issue would be reported to a future meeting of the Forum.

#### **462. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **463. Items Updates:**

##### 447: Enable Restructure

The Forum received a presentation by Mr Williams the purpose of which was to update members on the restructuring of ENABLE. A copy of the slides of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

Mr Williams explained that work was now being undertaken to ensure that all partners shared a common agenda. It was Mr Williams' intention to seek the support of the Forum for the arrangements highlighted in the presentation.

One aim of the Hubs was to improve access; Local Access Forums were clearly valuable to the process of delivering such outcomes. Perhaps the most positive aspect of the restructure was that the six strategic commissioning hubs, including the Environment Hub, had been placed equal to the Local Economic Partnership.

Arising from discussion the Forum was advised of the following:

- The County Council had recently launched its public consultation asking residents in Leicestershire to identify local green spaces of value. This was in response to the Coalition Government indicating plans to introduce a new designation of spaces of community value, called the 'Community Assets Register', as part of the new Localism Bill;
- As part of the consultation: letters had been circulated to local councils; plans were being presented to the 27 Community Forums operating in Leicestershire; and a website had been launched which gave members of the public an easy to use online tool for identifying green spaces of value in their community.

Information about the consultation had also been communicated to many local newspapers including the Loughborough Echo and Leicester Mercury;

- The consultation exercise covered only areas of Leicestershire, but not Leicester. However, the County Council was working on a local development framework strategy which included discussions with Leicester City Council;
- The County Council hoped to ensure that information collected by the consultation exercise would be taken into account in future local design and development frameworks and various other local council plans.

AGREED:

- (a) That the presentation be noted;
- (b) That the presentation slides be circulated to members of the Forum.

**EM/PH**

#### 447: Invitation to Shape the Nature of England

The Forum considered the Forum's draft response to the Invitation to Shape the Nature of England consultation exercise being undertaken by defra. A copy of the response marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

AGREED:

That the Forum's response to the 'Invitation to Shape the Nature of England' be approved.

#### **464. The Future of the East Midlands LAF Chairs Meetings**

The Forum considered minutes of the East Midlands Local Access Forum Regional LAF Chairs meeting held on 4 January 2011. A copy of the meeting minutes marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

Mr Denney reported that the East Midlands LAF Chairs Meetings was unlikely to continue in its current form, it was increasingly likely that the support of paid workers would be withdrawn. The LAF Chairs wished to continue meeting, as it was valuable to share relevant information and good practice, but this would be made significantly more difficult in future without financial support. Despite these difficulties the LAF Chairs were optimistic that organisations would be increasingly active with LAFs in the future due to Government localism proposals.

Mr Gordon gave a brief update on the current circumstances of Natural England explaining that there would be a reduction of staff in the organisation of approximately one third of all staff. It was expected that 400 jobs would be cut during spring 2011 with a further 400 jobs cut by 2013/14. Nottingham was likely to retain a Natural England office.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the East Midlands Local Access Forum Regional LAF Chairs meeting held on 4 January 2011 be noted.

**465. Forestry Commission – Sale of Land**

The Forum considered a consultation document regarding the Forestry Commission's proposals to sell Public Forest Estate land. A copy of the consultation document marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that should members wish to meet outside of the Forum to discuss a response this could be arranged, otherwise members of the Forum were requested to contact Mr Denney by email, copying in Mr McWilliam, to pass on comments to include in the response. These comments would be collated by Mr Denney and Mr McWilliam and, if there were a large number of comments, then it may become necessary to arrange a meeting to discuss the content of the Forum's response.

The Forum was advised that, although there were low proportions of Public Forest Estate land in Leicestershire it should be borne in mind that residents of Leicestershire may also often visit Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire which contained large areas of Public Forest Estate owned land.

AGREED:

(a) That members who wished to make comments with regard to the Forestry Commission's proposals forward these to Mr Denney by email, copying in Mr McWilliam;

**ALL**

(b) That, should there be a large number of comments received from members, Mr Denney and Mr McWilliam be requested to consider arranging a meeting to discuss the content of the Forum's response to the consultation.

**RD/EM**

**466. Leicestershire Walking Week 2011**

The Forum considered a briefing note on proposals for future arrangements of the County Council's Walking Week. A copy of the briefing note marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

It was reported that at the workshop held before the meeting members had discussed proposals for the future of Walking Week. The workshop group had reached the conclusion that, although Walking Week had achieved elements of success the event was not sufficiently achieving its aims.

In summary the workshop group decided that Walking Week should continue, albeit in a changed format. Walking Week should include a number of 'headline walks' and those officers involved should go about

signposting people to relevant local walking groups and further opportunities to develop their interest in walking which were scheduled for different times in the year. With greater emphasis placed on helping people to get involved in walking activities who would not usually do so. The Walking Week should be scheduled from 4 June to 12 June 2011.

Regarding suggestions to offer free parking at Walking Week events the County Council had deemed this inappropriate because it may encourage greater private vehicle use. The County Council did however work alongside bus guide companies to inform them of events which would be taking place in Leicestershire, in an effort to increase visitors and sustainable travel. It was suggested that no charge should be made for taking part in walks associated with Walking Week.

AGREED:

That the Forum supports the arrangements, outlined above, for Walking Week 2011.

#### **467. Service Updates**

##### Environment & Transport

Phase 1 of the restructuring exercise being undertaken in the Environment and Transport Department of the County Council had been completed. With regard to the Transport area the number of Group Managers had been reduced.

The Rights of Way function had been reorganised under a different area of the Department and it was believed to be unwise to make significant changes to the Team whilst the function was new to this area. Further reviews were likely to be undertaken in around six months.

It was noted that Leicestershire was managing Rights of Way issues well compared to many other Local Authorities.

##### LTP3 Update

The final version of Leicestershire's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) would be published at the beginning of April subject to County Council approval. Cycling and Walking were two significant themes identified in the Plan.

Officers of the County Council had recently met with representatives of the Department for Transport to discuss the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). The LSTF amounted to £560m which would be made available to over 80 local transport authorities. Bids could only be submitted on 18 April 2011 or 2 February 2012. If a bid submitted on 18 April was unsuccessful it was not possible to submit a further bid on 2 February. Therefore bids made on the earlier date risked being rushed, but were likely to meet reduced competition than bids submitted to the later date which had more time to prepare but risked increased

competition.

Two funding options were available. Authorities were able to submit bids for up to £5m to be spent over three and a half years or four years, or up to 50m for larger projects. The LSTF was split into money available for revenue and capital projects; one third was to be directed towards revenue and two thirds were to be directed towards capital. This was an effort by the Government to encourage authorities to do more with the assets that they already had. There was an unknown level of match funding associated with bids.

There were a number of limitations placed upon applications for funding including; projects were required to be in addition to authority Transport Plans and funding should not be used to replace services which had been cut due to efficiency savings. Further information regarding the aims and requirements of the funding were read from a briefing note which would be circulated to members following the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

It was likely that the County Council would bid for small amounts of funding to be used in rural locations in Leicestershire, more specifically within Market Towns, then submit a bid for larger amounts of money, possibly alongside other transport authorities, to be used in larger urban locales. Officers had already taken part in preliminary discussions with the Ramblers Association in order to identify possible projects which required funding. It was likely that the County Council would attempt to meet the February 2012 submission deadline

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- A project stood greater chance of receiving funding if bids could demonstrate evidence that there was a requirement for such a project as they proposed;
- The County Council had been undertaking discussions about the introduction of travel cards similar to the Oyster Card used by commuters to travel in London. Unfortunately there was currently an issue with the technology used in such devices becoming redundant. In principle the County Council was interested in pursuing the introduction of such devices;
- The development of disused railways on the Great Central Railway was identified as a potential project which would benefit from funding;
- Members of the Forum were invited to contact officers if they felt that they had a good idea for where there was a project which could benefit from the LSTF.

AGREED:

- (a) That the update be noted;
- (b) That information regarding the LSTF be circulated to members following the meeting;
- (c) That members able to identify projects which would benefit from LSTF funding be requested to contact Mr McWilliam.

EM/PH

ALL

### Country Parks

The Forum considered a letter sent by Elaine Derrick, Estates Practice Manager for the County Council, the purpose of which was to consult key stakeholders on proposals to make changes to the management of Country Parks within Leicestershire. A copy of the letter marked 'F' is filed with these minutes.

A draft response by the Forum had been prepared prior to the meeting and was read, verbatim, to the Forum.

Members felt that the letter should include a request to be consulted on any recommendations which arose from the review.

It was suggested that the letter should indicate areas of particular importance which should be prioritised, given that it would be unproductive to wholly disagree with the proposals identified within the letter.

AGREED:

That subject to any further minor amendments the response be sent to Ms Derrick. A copy of the letter is filed with these minutes.

EM

### **468. Environmental Partnerships in Leicestershire**

It was agreed that this item had been dealt with earlier in the meeting (minute 463 refers).

### **469. Correspondence**

#### Recreational use of Quarries

The Forum was advised that letters of invitation had been sent to relevant stakeholders regarding an event to be held on 4 April 2011 to discuss the recreational use of quarries. The meeting was to take place in the County Council's Council Chamber. The event was sponsored by Leicestershire County Council, the British Mountaineering Council and various quarry companies. It would comprise of a morning information

session and afternoon workshops. The event was free to attend by invitation.

It was intended to arrange a date for the Forum to discuss any proposals which arose from the event in due course.

AGREED:

That members interested in attending the event be requested to contact Dr Mason on the email address below, including within the email their name and who they would be representing:

**ALL**

[g.mason.lboro@ntlworld.com](mailto:g.mason.lboro@ntlworld.com)

#### Open Access - Mountsorrel Common

The Forum was advised that Mrs Allen had sent a letter to the Parish Council regarding this issue. Although there seemed to have been action taken by the Parish Council Mrs Allen was disappointed that she had received no response to her letter.

#### East Midlands Road Users and Environment Committee

The Forum was advised a letter had been sent to the Forum regarding the East Midlands Road Users and Environment Committee. The Committee discussed issues related to rights of way crossings of the motorway network and the trunk road network. Organisers of the Committee were looking for more input from Local Access Forums and had invited a representative of the Forum to attend its meetings.

The next meeting of the Committee was due to be held at County Hall, not at the offices of emda where it had previously met.

AGREED:

That Mrs Allen represent that Forum at meetings of the East Midlands Road Users and Environment Committee.

**VA**

#### **470. Orders Update**

The Forum received a report advising of the current position with regard to various Public Path and Modification Orders. A copy of the report marked 'G' is filed with these minutes.

It was reported that there had been a public enquiry into a footpath diversion in Oadby which had resulted in the Inspector ruling that he was not satisfied that the order had been proven. Anyone wishing to obtain further information regarding the case was requested to contact Mr P Lindley, Senior Definitive Map Officer at the County Council.

The Forum was advised that should anyone wish to raise objections or concerns to draft orders they were encouraged in the first instance to

contact officers of the County Council. This was because formally raising objections involved a case being presented to the inspectorate, the process of which was time consuming and expensive for the taxpayer and objector. In the past the Forum and County Council had made representations to the Government highlighting these failings of the current system. Officers were always happy to speak to potential objectors before the making of formal orders to see if any issues could be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

The Forum was advised that no formal request had been made for a path extinguishment of paths R66 or R67 from the landowner at Crown Farm (minute 452 refers).

The situation with regard to path L87 parallel to the motor racing circuit in Castle Donington would be investigated and reported back to a future meeting.

AGREED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Forum be updated regarding the status of path L87 in due course.

EM/PL

#### **471. Subgroups and Members' Updates**

##### Programmes – City/County Walking Corridors

Mr Denney reported that he had been working alongside a colleague representing the Leicester City LAF in undertaking an investigation into walking corridors between Leicester City and Leicestershire. At present they were considering presenting an application to divert a path near to the Western Park golf course. Mr Denney had already been in contact with the relevant officers regarding the possible diversion.

##### Planning – Planning Seminar

The Forum received a briefing note the purpose of which was to provide information regarding the recent planning aid workshop held on 1 February 2010 (minute 447 refers). A copy of the briefing note marked 'H' is filed with these minutes.

AGREED:

That the briefing note be noted.

##### Planning – Melton

A consultation had begun on the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Melton District.

## Planning – Charnwood Green Infrastructure

Mrs Allen reported that efforts were being made to encourage Charnwood Borough Council to reinstate the closed bridleway off Sibley Road, Barrow upon Soar, which had previously been refused. The Council's refusal had been on the basis of obtaining more information on the issue and it had since been provided with the information. Arrangements for a footbridge to be installed by Network Rail were delayed because the original footbridge plan had not allowed sufficient space for users with a disability to access it. There were major planning applications under development in the area nearby and Mrs Allen was pressing the planning authorities to impose a solution to the crossing problem as a condition of any approval.

## Glenfield Planning Application

Mr Denney provided an update on the major planning application around Glenfield.

## Voluntary and Community Sector

It was agreed that this matter had been dealt with earlier in the meeting (minute 463 refers).

## **472. Countryside Stewardship – HLS Questionnaire**

Mr Law gave a presentation to the Forum on responses which he had received to a questionnaire which had been circulated to all Forum members regarding possible courses of action in response to Government plans to cease funding of HLS agreements. Mr Law distributed a summary of the responses he had received. A copy of the summary responses to the questionnaire and a copy of the electronic information presented to the Forum regarding individual HLS scheme end dates within Leicestershire are filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The majority of responses received agreed that the Forum should send a letter to affected Parish Councils alerting them to the fact that these schemes were due to end in their area. It was suggested that in some cases it may also be appropriate to inform neighbouring Parishes;
- It was suggested that a subgroup should be formed in order for members of the Forum to consider the matter in more detail including possible alternative funding arrangements. However, it was felt that, subject to Parishes being made aware of the existence of schemes in their area, it was the responsibility of Parish Councils to choose how they wished to respond to the planned changes;
- It was suggested that in contacting Parish Councils the Forum

should advise against irresponsible use of schemes;

- The County Council's website included links to a range of organisations which facilitated outdoor activities, including the Leicestershire Footpaths Association, Ramblers Association and British Horse Society. A review of the County Council's website resources was being undertaken, as part of this review it may be necessary to update these links.

AGREED:

That a draft letter be prepared to send to affected Parish Councils alerting them to the fact that HLS agreement schemes were due to end in their area.

**473. Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Wednesday 25 May at 6pm.

Mr Sutton and Mrs Camamile CC indicated that they would be unable to attend this meeting.

6.05pm – 8.35pm  
16 February 2011

CHAIRMAN