

**Notes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at  
County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 25 May 2011.**

**Present**

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

**Officers in attendance**

Mr. I. Vears, Mr. E. McWilliam, Mr. D. Myers and Mr. P. Hitchings.

**Action by**

**474. Chairman's welcome**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and in particular  
Danny Myers, a Partnerships Manager at the County Council, who was  
attending his first meeting of the Forum.

**475. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the following members and  
officers:

Mrs. L. A. S. Pendleton  
Mrs. R. Camamile  
Mr. H. Eppel  
Mr. P. Williams

**476. Minutes of the previous meeting**

**469: Open Access: Mountsorrel Common**

It was reported that the Forum had had sent a letter to the Parish  
Council, and no response had been received by the Forum, rather than  
specifically Mrs Allen, as had been indicated in the minutes.

**470: Orders Update**

It was reported that there had been a public inquiry into a footpath *map  
modification order* in Oadby, rather than a *footpath diversion* as had  
been indicated in the minutes.

#### **477. Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda**

##### 469: Open Access - Mountsorrel Common

Some concern was expressed about the maintenance of the Common. Not all areas of the Common had been mown, there were trip hazards in the form of small water valves in various locations and in particular near to Bond Lane and the Common's sign had been damaged. Mrs Allen had spoken to a workman in the area who had agreed to level off one of the valves to reduce the risk of people tripping.

The Forum expressed disappointment at not having received a reply from the Parish Council.

##### 469: East Midlands Road Users and Environment Committee

It was reported that the next meeting of the East Midlands Road Users and Environment Committee was scheduled take place at County Hall on 1 July 2011. No further details were available at this time.

##### 467: LTP3 Update – Oyster Cards

It was reported that the County Council had undertaken discussions with Leicester City Council regarding the introduction of electronic travel cards similar to the Oyster Card used by commuters to travel in London. It was likely that the City Council would take a lead on any project which aimed to introduce the technology, in partnership with the County Council. In doing so the City Council was likely to seek financial support from the Government.

There were however challenges facing the introduction of such technology; most significantly the technology was becoming relatively dated, particularly when compared to smart phone technology, which may be used to perform similar functions as an electronic travel card in the future.

##### 467: LTP3 Update – Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)

In response to a request made at the last meeting for ideas of projects which might benefit from funding made available through the LSTF, it was suggested that Leicestershire should adopt a service operated in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire called CallConnect, an on demand bus service that operated only in response to pre-booked requests (on a `dial a bus` basis). Such a service could benefit from financial support from the LSTF. A review of bus services within the County was scheduled to take place later in the year and presented an opportunity to consider support for such a service.

The Forum was advised that officers would be identifying and meeting with community transport providers in the future to discuss support which might be provided to them under the LSTF scheme.

The County Council would aim to meet the February 2012 deadline for LSTF bids. This provided an opportunity for the Authority to communicate with stakeholders and to undertake the above mentioned review of bus services within Leicestershire.

The development of disused railways on the Great Central Railway had been suggested as a possible project for LSTF support at the Forum's last meeting. It was suggested that if paths were developed on these sites then the paths should be for use by all users i.e. horse riders, cyclists, walkers etc.

Some members felt that, where a path which had been created on the site of a disused railway meandered across the railway line, an opportunity to create two transport corridors had been missed. It was suggested that paths should be created either side of the railway because this would provide two transport corridors; perhaps for use by different users. The Peak District exhibited examples of disused railway lines being developed in this way.

#### **478. Declarations of Interest**

Mr Kirby declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in items on the agenda as he had recently been elected to Barwell Parish Council.

The Chairman advised that other members of the Forum, who were also members of a Parish Council, had similar interests but that this did not prevent them from taking part in discussions.

#### **479. Urgent Items**

It was AGREED that the following items be taken as urgent:

- Public Footpath – Latimer Primary School – Mr S Warren;
- Dog Attack – Fox Covert Farm – Mr S Warren.

#### **480. Items Updates**

##### 463: Enable Restructure

The Forum received a presentation by Mr Myers the purpose of which was to update members on the restructuring of partnerships under Leicestershire Together.

He explained that a review of the previous structure had been necessary in order to respond to changes in legislation and to a reduction in the resources available to local authorities. The review placed emphasis on identifying ways of improving the efficiency of partnership arrangements and in this respect all areas of local government were scrutinised, including environmental partnerships such as ENABLE. The review concluded that there was scope for improving partnership arrangements in Leicestershire and recognised the importance of ensuring that all partnerships adopted a coherent agenda.

ENABLE had been disbanded and was likely to be replaced with an environment commissioning board supported by three coordination groups focussing on the Natural and Historic Environment, Climate Change and Waste. The Environment Board would inform the process of providing services within the County and would forward information to environment bodies operating nationally.

Alongside the Environment Board the following commissioning hubs would be established: Health and Wellbeing Board; Children's Board; Community Safety & Criminal Justice Board. These would exist alongside the Local Economic Partnership.

Transport had been identified as one of a number of 'cross-cutting' themes which would influence all of the commissioning hubs. Access would be considered an important element of this theme, and had been reflected as such in officer discussions.

Discussions were ongoing with regard to the waste function of the Environment Board, but it was expected that the Board would be established by the autumn. The first meeting of the Natural and Historic Environment Group was expected to take place during September, and the County Council was seeking a representative of the Forum to serve on the Group.

The Chairman indicated that he was willing to be the representative of the Forum on the Group. Mr Kirby indicated that, if it was appropriate for him to do so, he would be willing to act as a substitute for Mr Denney if he was unable to attend a meeting of the Group.

Members who wished to find out more information were requested to please contact Mr Myers:

Email: [Danny.Myers@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Danny.Myers@leics.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0116 3055501

AGREED:

- (a) That Mr Denney represent the Forum at meetings of the Natural and Historic Environment Group;
- (b) That Mr Kirby act as a substitute for Mr Denney when appropriate.

#### 463: Green Spaces

Officers within the Better Places Team had collated responses to the green spaces consultation undertaken by the County Council, and were analysing the results. The Team had suggested that it would be useful to report the findings to the Forum therefore a representative of the Team would attend a future meeting to update members in due course.

#### 465: Forestry Commission

Following significant public objection to Government proposals to sell Public Forest Estate land these plans had been halted. However, an independent review panel had been established to review the consultation and it was suggested that this might indicate that the proposals were not entirely defunct. The Panel seemed to have a broad membership.

The Woodland Trust was seeking comments via an online form; however it was not clear whether these comments would be taken account of as part of a wider review or a private initiative by the organisation to gauge opinion on the subject.

It was noted that members did not have any specific objection to the Government's earlier proposals subject to the protection of access rights. It was suggested that there was scope for Public Forest Estate land to be managed more efficiently.

#### Busting the Barriers

It was reported that the Farming Regulation Task Force, chaired by Mr Richard McDonald, had recently reported to Government on ways of reducing regulatory burdens on farmers and food processors. It was suggested that this report might have some implications for the way in which the Government would continue access arrangements, for example the report included requests for a cut off date to be enacted on lost rights of way. A copy of an extract of the report which referred to access was circulated at the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that the report had been produced in order to highlight a range of relevant issues which concerned farmers. The report would now consider, in detail, the recommendations of the report, which contained few references to access.

AGREED:

That the extract of the report be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

**PH**

#### Biffa Waste - Energy Recovery Facility

It was reported that, with regard to Newhurst Quarry, Biffa was appealing the decision to refuse its application for the development of an energy recovery facility on the site, whilst also submitted a new application for the development of an energy recovery facility at this location which addressed the reasons for the application's original refusal. Concern was expressed that opportunities to comment on such an application would be restricted.

The Forum was advised that any new application would require a consultation period to take place and that officers would be given an opportunity to comment on any new application which had been submitted; in which case the Forum's original comments would be resubmitted. The Forum had previously submitted comments which related to a locally popular ancient footpath which was not utilised in plans to develop the area.

**481. Recreational Use of Quarries – Event Feedback**

Mr McWilliam reported that the event had been successful in bringing together key stakeholders. A number of Forum members had attended the event and Mr Williams was collating responses for presentation to the Forum.

Following discussions with officers, an academic researcher had offered to undertake a study of current and decommissioned quarries in Leicestershire in order to review the potential value of creating recreational use quarries in the County.

Concern was expressed that the researcher had a background in ecological studies with regard to the recreational use of quarries. It was suggested that any review of the quarries in Leicestershire should take account of a broad range of user groups, including rock climbers, horse riders, cyclists and walkers. There were many local user groups which would be pleased to carry out a study at no cost to the County Council.

The current method for blasting materials from a quarry presented a significant challenge to developing the quarry into a recreational area following its decommissioning.

**482. Heart of the Forest Forum (HotFF)**

Mr Denney reported that the 'Heart of the Forest Forum' (HotFF) had been established in the Ashby Woulds area. The HotFF comprised local people from the area; it would be considering access matters which affected the area, for example identifying breaks in rights of way. The HotFF had recently held its first meeting, at which governance and possible funding streams were discussed.

Mr Denney had been asked to join the HotFF because of his work as Chairman of the LAF. If members wished the HotFF to consider any issues they were requested to contact Mr Denney directly.

AGREED:

That members who wished to bring issues to the attention of the HotFF contact Mr Denney.

**ALL**

**483. Deferment of Statutory Review of Open Country and Registered Common Land**

Mr Denney reported that the Secretary of State had indicated that the Statutory Review of Open Country and Registered Common Land would be delayed further. Members were reminded that Local Access Forums had been established as part of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act. One of Leicestershire Forum's first tasks was to identify areas of land in Leicestershire to which access rights should apply. Undertaking work to identify access locations had significant time and resource implications. It was therefore suggested that the Forum should await a decision by Government on when the Review might take place.

**484. Stepping Forward**

The Forum received a report updating members on the Stepping Forward Report and the developing of an approach to lost ways and anomalies by the County Council. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that further information would be presented at its next meeting. The matter will be the subject of discussion at a workshop prior to the meeting on the same day.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The Stakeholder Working Group was tasked with being unanimous in its support of any recommendations it made. This resulted in more contentious but more useful changes being disregarded;
- Road networks were now very busy and it was necessary to maintain more networks for people to use to travel locally;
- Legislation needed to be changed in order for these matters to be resolved more quickly.

AGREED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Forum be updated on the matter at its next meeting; **EM**
- (c) That a workshop be scheduled to precede the next meeting of the Forum to discuss the matter in more detail. **PH**

**485. Future LAF Annual Reporting**

Mr Denney reported that, due to problems with regard to the English Access Forum, the Government had indicated that it would investigate the content of LAF annual reports in order to identify comments from the LAF network.

Although this method of communicating with the Government was not ideal it would be necessary to take account of this arrangement when preparing future Annual Reports by the Forum. Annual Reports were currently designed to appeal to members of the public, however in future they would need to be redesigned to refer in more detail to the range of issues which the Forum's discussions covered. It may be necessary to produce this more comprehensive document alongside a public version of the Annual Report.

#### **486. Higher Level Stewardship**

The Forum received a note updating members on changes to grants for access under Higher Level Stewardship schemes. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

Mr McWilliam reported that the Lead Member and senior officers within the Environment and Transport Department had also received updates on this matter.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was due to be reviewed in 2013; this presented an opportunity for access to become a part of the Policy, although this was unlikely. It was more likely that when the condition of public finances improved in the UK the schemes would be reconsidered;
- Concern was expressed that a detailed investigation into locations might initiate problems rather than solve them;
- The reaction of landowners to this change was not clear. In some cases landowners might continue to provide access to save complications, in other cases the opposite might be the case;
- Defra had recently produced draft guidance for landowners which covered insurance requirements for access land. It was hoped that this guidance would undergo significant change in its final form as the current document would make landowners reluctant to operate such schemes;
- It was suggested that the best course of action might be to focus on a small number of locations where access was of particular significance, informing local stakeholders of the relevant circumstances and facilitating a discussion of some kind;
- It might be useful to involve Natural England in any discussions as the Natural England remained closely associated with Defra. This would depend on the availability of a Natural England representative.

AGREED:

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|--|------------|
| (a) That Mr Tame be requested to communicate with members of the farming profession to gauge the views of landowners as to whether they would continue or discontinue access arrangements on their land; | <b>PT</b>  |
| (b) That information regarding the location of various schemes and the dates at which they will be discontinued for the next 5 years be re-circulated to Forum members;                                  | <b>EM</b>  |
| (c) That members review the information above to identify locations of particular interest to access arrangements and submit these to Mr McWilliam.  | <b>ALL</b> |

**487. Leicestershire Walking Week**

The Forum considered a report updating members on the plans for Walking Week 2011. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- It was suggested that the event might benefit from a 'headline' event. For example the Climbing Club had suggested a 36 hours walk with an overnight stay;
- Parish Councils should be informed of the date of Walking Week and the events which would be arranged at the earliest opportunity in order for Parishes to organise events to coincide.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

**488. Changes to Natural England – Trailblaze**

Mr Denney reported on the establishment of Trailblaze, a national project whereby runners carried small timing tags and monitored the speed of their run by inserting these tags into checkpoint boxes which were located at regular intervals along the length of a specified route. Natural England was thought to be one of the financial contributors to this project.

Concern was expressed that the boxes involved, of approximately A4 size, were decorated brashly and might therefore negatively impact the beauty of the routes. Further information on the project was available at:

<http://www.trail-blaze.com/>

#### 489. Response to Review of Regulations

The Forum considered comments forwarded by the Chariman to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in response to its recently launched 'Barrier Busting' service. A copy of the comments marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

AGREED:

That the comments be noted.

#### 490. Correspondence

Richard Benyon

The Forum considered a letter sent to LAF Chairs by MP Richard Benyon. A copy of the letter marked 'F' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Mr Benyon should be thanked for contacting the LAF Chairs;
- Concern was expressed that, regarding Mr Benyon's suggestion for a seat on the Rights of Way Review Committee to be rotated, there would be no mechanism by which LAFs were able to formulate a view together;
- A training event was welcomed although it was suggested that this should take the form of informal workshops rather than a formal presentation.

AGREED:

- (a) That the letter be noted;
- (b) That officers be requested to draft a response to Mr Benyon taking account of the comments now made.

**EM**

Country Parks Review

The Forum considered correspondence between Mr Denney and Mrs Derrick, of the County Council's Property Services, regarding the County Council's Country Parks Review. A copy of correspondence marked 'G' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Concern was expressed that litter bins were being removed from parks in Leicestershire. Members were advised that the County Council had adopted a new approach to address littering whereby people were asked to take their litter home. The approach had been more successful than conventional methods to date.

- Parking charges had increased at country parks. The Forum was advised that one of the purposes of this increase was to encourage more people to travel using a shared transport arrangement or public transport. One of the problems associated with this arrangement was that some public transport routes had been reduced or discontinued. A review of public transport in Leicestershire was scheduled for later in the year. The Lake District was identified as an example of good practice, where it was possible to use public transport very cheaply;
- Issues with regard to transport were now, more than ever, being considered as part of a holistic approach to service delivery. This was made easier by partnership working with other agencies, for example, the PCT.

AGREED:

That the correspondence be noted.

#### **491. Orders Updates**

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 'H' is filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that local authorities regularly made representations to the Government requesting a review of the requirement to publish information in local newspapers about changes to the rights of way network, particularly to allow for online publication. The Government was reluctant to review these requirements because it was did not want to withdraw support from local newspapers.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

#### **492. Urgent Item: Public Footpath – Latimer Primary School**

Mr Warren reported that the Ramblers Association had recently received a letter from Latimer Primary School in Anstey notifying the group of the School's intention to apply for a Gating Order for footpath J84 which ran between the two school sites on Latimer Street and the Scout hut on Leicester Road, Anstey.

The application would be for gates on this footpath to be locked between the hours of 8.45am to 3.00pm, Monday to Friday during term time only.

The reason for the application was to make the environment safer for children, as on a number of occasions used hypodermic needles had been found on the footpath. The Police and local Parish Council were supportive of the application.

The Forum was advised that there was a detailed legal framework and policy documents covering the circumstances of the application, the application process was therefore likely to be a lengthy one.

Concern was expressed that the School would seek to seek a complete closure of the path in the future. In this case the Forum should be formally consulted.

AGREED:

- (a) That the letter sent to the Ramblers Association by Latimer Primary School be circulated to members with the minutes of the meeting for information;
- (b) That the forum had concerns regarding the application and could not support it in its current form.

PH

**493. Urgent Item: Dog Attack – Fox Covert Farm**

Mr Warren reported that a walker had recently been bitten by a dog on path R60, at Fox Covert Farm between Bagworth and Barlestone. The dog in question was thought to be a guard dog owned by the landowner.

The landowner had allegedly applied for a diversion of the path but it was thought that no application had been received by the County Council.

The Forum was advised that the matter would be referred to the Police and that the County Council would be writing to the landowner.

Regarding the altercation at Crown Farm the Police had no further evidence at present.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

**494. Agenda Items for the Next Meeting**

Members who had items which they wished to discuss at the next meeting were invited to contact Mr Denney or Mr McWilliam.

ALL

**495. Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday 4 August 2011. This would be preceded by a workshop.

6.00 – 8.35  
25 May 2011

Chairman