

**Notes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at
County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday 8 September 2010.**

Present

Mr. R. Denney (Chair), Mr A. Hillier-Fry, Mrs. A.F. Pyper, Mr. S.J. Warren, Mr. H. Eppel, Mrs. V. Allen, Mrs. H. Brown, Mr. T. Kirby, Mrs. L. Forman, Mr. C. Gordon, Mr. P. Tame and Mrs. R. Camamile.

Officers in attendance

Mr. P. Sheard, M. I. Vears, Mr. E. McWilliam, Mr. P. Lindley, Mr. P. Hitchings.

Action by

419. Chairman's welcome

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed, in particular, Mr Martin Whittemore, a member of the public who had attended the meeting in order to speak to the Forum.

420. Apologies for absence

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

Mr. J. Law
Mr. M. Parr
Mr. G. Mason
Mr. B. Sutton
Mr. A. Yeomanson
Mr. A. Poole
Mrs L. Pendleton

421. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

422. Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda

Minute 401: Encouraging more people to walk

Mr Gordon reported that the insurance policy held by Natural England (NE) was specifically for people who had undergone training with NE, and who would be running Walking for Health groups. He recommended that the Forum contact the John Muir Trust, an organisation which

recruited conservation volunteers, in order to find out about their insurance arrangements. It may also be useful to contact local Tree Wardens in order to ascertain their insurance arrangements. Mr Gordon circulated a leaflet which contained details of the John Muir Trust, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

Mr McWilliam advised the Forum that the County Council had a volunteer coordinator whom he would contact for further information.

EM

Minute 401: National Forest Trail Update

Mr McWilliam reported that the National Forest were pursuing various avenues of funding to maintain finance for the project. Main stakeholders had discussed the proposed route and were in the process of sending responses to the National Forest. The Forum would receive a further update in due course.

Minute 401: Future Recreational use of Rock Quarries

Mr McWilliam reported that Mr Mason had met with the County Council's Development and Control team to discuss his proposals. The outcome was positive; the Development and Control team agreed to keep Mr Mason's proposals in mind when dealing with quarries in the future. The Head of Environmental Management, Peter Williams, was interested in progressing Mr Mason's proposals. Mr Mason had also met with more representatives of various quarries to present his proposals.

Minute 431: Bardon Hill

Mr McWilliam had met with the applicants; as a result some amendments had been made to the application. The application was a substantial document and therefore the process for finalising the application would take some time. Members would be updated in due course.

423. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

424. Urgent Items

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

- Hospital Lane Development, Blaby – Mr. M. Whittemore
- Pigs at Beacon Hill – Mrs. V. Allen
- Launch of Walking for Life – Mr. C. Gordon

As a member of the County Council's Development Control & Regulatory Board, Mrs Camamile indicated that she may be involved in future consideration of the Hospital Lane development proposals, and therefore would not speak in relation to the item.

425. Change to the Order of Business

With the consent of the Forum, the Chairman agreed to vary the order of business from that set out in the agenda.

426. Urgent Item: Launch of Walking For Life

Mr Gordon reported that the Walking for Life project would be officially launching on 26 September. The launch would be marked by two thousand short walks, organised to take place around the UK. Forty of which would take place in Leicester and Leicestershire. On registering their planned walk, organisers had received information packs designed to provide them with support for their activities. The event would be widely covered by the media; including publicity on the ITV television channel.

More information could be found on the Walking for Life website, which could be accessed using the following link: www.walk4life.info.

427. Urgent Item: Hospital Lane Development, Blaby

Mr Whittemore informed the Forum that he had concerns regarding the future of an area of Blaby centred on the Long Walk, an area of woodland with a permissive path which linked Bouskell Park, Blaby, to a number of other local footpaths. Long Walk was part of a 57 acre site belonging to the County Council's Hall Farm Estate. The County Council had recently publicised outline plans to use Hall Farm for the building of up to 350 houses in an estate which would completely engulf the Long Walk. No date had been agreed for the submission of a planning application.

Mr Whittamore explained that Bouskell Park and the countryside to the East were well liked by local residents and visitors to the area. An extensive path infrastructure made the area popular with walkers, athletes, people with disabilities, cyclists, horse riders and families with children. Many local residents believed that this development would threaten the permissive path and the public rights of way surrounding the area, as well as having the effect of making the area far less attractive and effectively losing a valuable amenity. The area was very beautiful, and it would be a shame if it were to be overdeveloped.

Mr McWilliam reported that this was one of many sites being considered for potential development as part of the current Local Development Planning process. Any proposals that moved ahead would be subject to the appropriate processes and consideration by all parties. The Forum would be kept up to date with any relevant developments.

428. Leicestershire County Council – Local Transport Plan 3

Mr Sheard presented a report advising the Forum of progress on the development of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and the forthcoming consultation. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with

these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The Forum was advised that, having invested in a cycling infrastructure in the County, it was now the intention of the County Council to ensure that it was used effectively;
- Some members of the Forum were concerned that vehicle users may be given preference over people using rights of way, where rights of way were alongside carriageways in rural areas; through techniques such as road widening.
- Some members of the Forum suggested that, although rights of way and access issues were of importance, rural areas were also home to many businesses which required a transport infrastructure which allowed them to operate effectively.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

429. Membership Resignations, Renewal and Replacement

Mr Denney reported that Mr John Kitching had resigned as a member of the Forum. Mr Kitching felt that the Forum rarely discussed issues of vehicular access. Members expressed sadness at Mr Kitching's decision.

Mr McWilliam informed members that as a result of the requirement for the renewal and replacement of members serving on the Forum he had advised members, in writing, that unless he was informed otherwise, he would assume that all members were satisfied with continuing as a member, and would automatically renew the membership of all of those members serving on the Forum. He had since received no resignations, other than those sent through by Mr Kitching.

Advertisements for places on the Forum had been included in various publications including those linked with Voluntary Action Leicestershire and the BHS newsletter. Other than a representative for vehicular access, the Forum was currently meeting its criteria for member representatives. It would be useful to have members join the Forum who represented wide groups such as young people, members of ethnic minorities and people who had a disability, or specialists in various fields (medicine for example), but there was some difficulty in advertising to these groups.

AGREED:

- (a) That the update on membership arrangements be noted;

- (b) That the terms of reference for the Forum be circulated to members for their information.

PH/EM

430. LCC Reorganisation Update

Mr Vears updated the forum on structural changes, including the formation of the Travel Choice & Access team..

The County Council was looking into innovative ways of working in the light of current changes to funding. Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The Forum was advised that the Connect2 programme would be a significant part of the work carried out by the County Council on Networks. There were plans to include, in each village, signage which would indicate local walking routes for members of the public to use. Officers were currently researching what information should be included on such signs;
- The Forum was of the mind that the signage used in Leicestershire was of a high quality in comparison to many areas in the UK;
- A broader picture of where significant work was required could be built by looking at different services within the County and asking service users and members of staff how they travelled to those services. For example to hospitals or tourist attractions.

AGREED:

That the update be noted.

431. Orders Update

Mr McWilliam presented a report advising the Forum of the current position with regard to various Public Path and Modification Orders. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

432. Natural England Seminar – Planning System

Mr Denney reported that Natural England had hosted a workshop in July in order to give information to Local Access Forum members concerning planning systems. Unfortunately, no members of the Leicestershire Forum had been able to attend the workshop; as such there was no feedback to report.

433. Railway Crossings

A report advising the Forum of various current issues relating to public rights of way and railway crossings was presented. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

It was reported that, with regard to the road bridge at Elmesthorpe referred to in paragraph 4 of the report, the County Council had offered to advise Network Rail, however National Rail had not yet responded.

(a) That the report be noted;

(b) That Mr McWilliam provide the Forum with an update on the circumstances at Elmsthorpe at a future meeting.

EM

434. Workshop

Mr McWilliam reported that some members of the Forum had attended a workshop preceding the meeting in order to discuss these items. He explained that the workshop had focused on Lost Ways. The Forum members in attendance had agreed that the discussion should focus on reviews of the mapping system and prioritising those Lost Ways which were of most importance.

It was essential to prioritise some access issues over others due to the short period of time with which the County Council had to respond to the issue of Lost Ways. It had been the general consensus that Lost Ways which, if resolved, improved the path network, should be given priority; for example where a long path met a settlement but had not been completed to link with other rights of way.

Members of the Panel raised concerns regarding new developments which were built in obstruction of rights of way. Some members felt that the issue of rights of way should be brought to the attention of applicants to a greater extent at the beginning of the planning process. The Forum was advised that the Design Guide recently produced by the County Council would go some way to addressing this issue.

AGREED:

That the information and discussion points arising from the workshop be noted.

435. Updates: Correspondence, Castle Donington, Connect2, 6Cs Green Infrastructure, Walking Week

Annual Report – Mr Poole

Mr McWilliam reported that he had received a note from Mr Poole explaining that submissions for the Annual Report had not been forthcoming.

AGREED:

That those members who were able to contribute to the Annual Report forward their comments to Mr Poole as soon as possible.

ALL

Regional Meeting – Ms Herring

Mr McWilliam reported that he had received a letter from Claire Herring detailing arrangements for the Regional LAF meeting to be held at Saxon House, Derby.. Those members interested in attending were requested to contact Mr McWilliam as soon as possible.

AGREED:

That members wishing to attend the Regional LAF meeting should contact Mr McWilliam.

ALL

Castle Donington

A plan for a possible full time diversion was being pursued. All of the points which had been previously raised by the Forum had been addressed in correspondence with the applicant.

Connect2

The programme of works for 2011 had been established. The programme would be looking into how to utilise the infrastructure which had been previously been developed by the County Council.

With regard to Watermead, a new map had been installed in the park. The work on the lighting system was on hold whilst more information was collected about the habitats of bats living in the area, with the aim of creating a lighting system which aligned with those habits as far as possible.

Walking Week

The week had been successful so far. Approximately 116 people had attended the opening event held on Saturday 4 September. Once the week was finished information about the event would be collated for a debriefing in early November.

A leaflet describing the events organised for Walking Week was circulated at the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

6C's Green Infrastructure

Mr Gordon reported that the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Board had launched its strategy on 6 July 2010; to encourage local authorities to use the project as a tool for the launch of various schemes. In October the National Forest Cycle Centre had been established with the support of the 6Cs Green Infrastructure programme. One scheme was proposed

to contribute to local signing, including Connect2 routes.

436. Urgent item: Pigs at Beacon Hill

Mrs Allen had received complaints that some horses had become disturbed whilst using rights of way nearby the pigs that were located at Beacon Hill.

Mr McWilliam reported that he had contacted Country Parks, which was the organiser of the scheme, and had received a formal response explaining that the pigs were due to be removed from the area, as the scheme had been a pilot experiment only. In the future Country Parks was happy to investigate the issue further if any proposals arose concerning a return of pigs to the area.

437. Regional and National Access Forum Update

Mr Denney reported that he had formulated comments to the East Midlands Access Forum (EAF) in relation to views sought by the organisation with regard to future working arrangements between Natural England and the EAF. A copy of the comments formulated by Mr Denney marked 'E', and a copy of the minutes of the latest meeting of the East Midlands Local Access Forum Regional Chairs meeting marked 'F' are filed with these minutes.

AGREED:

That the Forum supports the comments made by Mr Denney and agrees to him forwarding them, via the regional coordinator, to the EAF.

RD

438. Partnership Working (Localisation and the Big Society)

Mr Denney reported that he had recently been interviewed by Consultants who were investigating different views on greater partnership working, with particular interest in the role and future of the Enable project. Claire Herring was also interested in seeking the Forum's views on this topic.

Mr Denney explained that he believed that LAFs were ideally placed to take advantage of greater partnership working, and the objectives of the 'Big Society', due to members being connected to many different organisations, for various reasons. There was an opportunity for members to help support and improve networks in order to identify new opportunities for joint working, particularly in collaboration with the voluntary sector. The aims of the 'Big Society' indicated that LAFs would be placed in a strong position in the future.

The Consultants had been interested in Mr Denney's report on proposals to disband the Enable group and replace it with a Strategic Environmental Partnership body to be functioning before the end of the current financial year. This body would benefit from better representation of relevant groups, and improved communications in

order to avoid duplication. Mr Denney was generally supportive of this proposal.

AGREED:

That the Forum note the information.

439. Shaping the Nature of England Consultation

Mr Denney reported that LAFs had recently been requested by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to express their views on the proposed Natural Environment White Paper; with the aim of encouraging debate about how best to protect and enhance the natural environment, and the services which were derived from it. Responding to the document was an opportunity for the Forum to help to ensure that the White Paper recognised the value and role of recreational access alongside other benefits delivered by a healthy natural environment.

The Forum broadly supported the aims of the White Paper, and indicated that it would wish to be included in any further discussions surrounding issues arising from its implementation.

It was reported that Natural England had already sent comments to Defra.

AGREED:

That the Forum wished to be updated and be included in any further discussions surrounding issues arising from its implementation. A comment was to be forwarded to Defra to ask why no mention is made of Access to the Countryside and the important role it plays.

EM

440. Date of Next Meeting & Schedule of Future Meetings

It was suggested that the Forum should use the following schedule of meetings for 2011:

Thursday 17 February 6pm
Wednesday 25 May 6pm
Thursday 22 September 6pm
Thursday 17 November 6pm

Some members of the Forum indicated that they believed four meetings were insufficient for the Forum to cover all the items which arose which were within their remit. It was also suggested that there was too long a gap between meetings in May and September.

It was reported that the County Council was seeking to make savings in order to continue to provide public services effectively. The County Council was therefore unable to provide support for any more than four full Forum meetings per year.

AGREED:

- (a) That the date of the next meeting, to be held on Tuesday 23 November, be note;
- (b) That officers would consider the issues raised, together with the suggestion of holding informal workshops before formal Forum meetings when appropriate, and would report back to the next meeting of the Forum to enable the dates of Forum meetings in 2011 to be determined.
- (c) That one of the four meetings be scheduled in August.

PH/EM

6.00pm – 8.35pm
8 September 2010

CHAIRMAN