

LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 10 APRIL 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

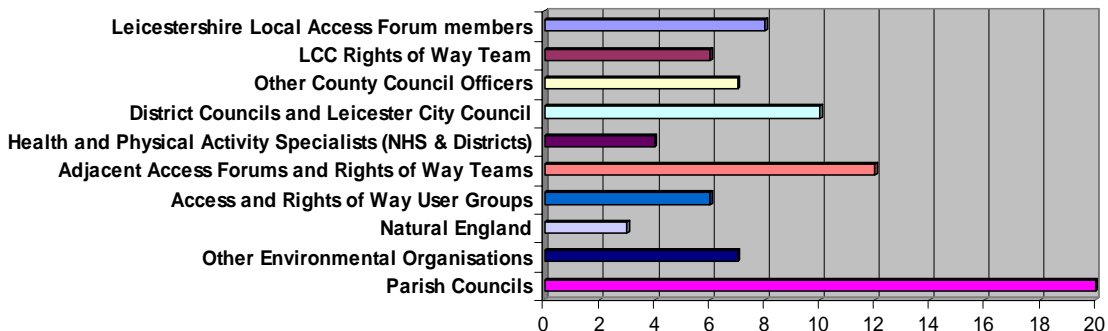
REVIEW OF THE SEMINAR – GREEN ROUTES FOR NEW URBAN GROWTH

Purpose of Report

1. To report to members about the ‘Green Routes for New Urban Growth’ seminar hosted by the Leicestershire Local Access Forum on Wednesday 26 March 2008.

Background

2. The aim of the event was to promote the Forum and to focus on how access and other ‘Green Infrastructure’ can encourage healthier lifestyles and sustainable communities. Presentations by four main speakers were each followed by an opportunity for questions.
3. The event itself included information about the Forum and a leaflet introducing the Forum was sent out with each of the invitations. Further copies were distributed on the day. One third of those who attended did not know about the Local Access Forum before the event. An aim had been to reach other agencies which the Forum is intended to advise and work with, including the strategic planning, policy and outdoor recreation teams within District Councils and Leicestershire County Council (LCC). District staff who attended, included five involved with planning as well as four people involved with countryside and recreation services and several Physical Activity Co-ordinators. The LCC Policy Team helped with publicising the event.
4. In total 95 people booked to attend the event, although 12 were unable to come on the day. Below is a chart showing the breakdown of those recorded as attending. Attached as appendix A is the complete delegate list.

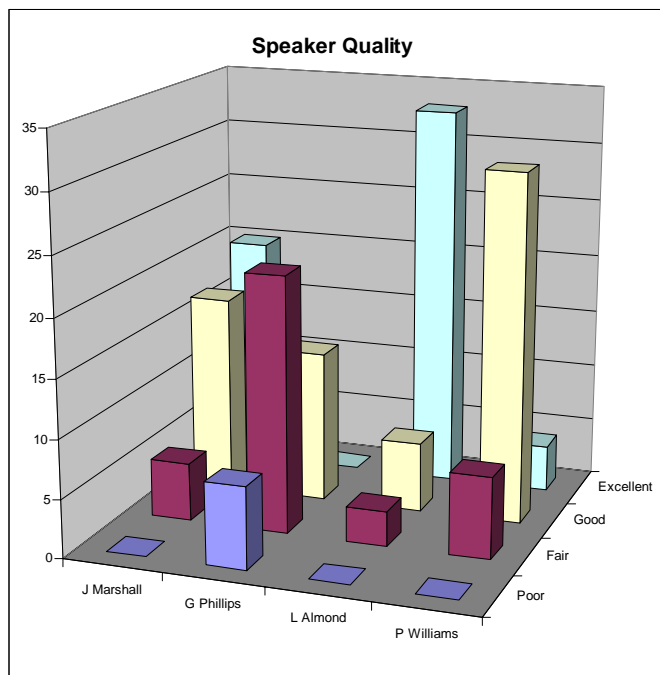


Summary of Feedback

5. People who attended mostly rated the speakers as good or excellent. Greg Phillips from River Nene Regional Park received lower ratings but was a last minute stand-in as the original speaker was unable to attend. The talk by Len Almond, Founding Director and Senior Advisor at the British Heart Foundation

National Centre for Physical Activity, was particularly well received. On the Feedback Forms 25% of respondents particularly valued this presentation several people commenting it was very motivational and interesting.

6. Mr Almond's talk contained an impressive range of data on health, the low levels of fitness in the population and the link between increased activity and health improvements highlighting that activity is more beneficial than weight loss alone. One respondent noted the talk *'showed how much work we have to do'*



and five similar comments were *'Pleased to learn there is so much going on to encourage activity'* and *'How well the groups are working together'*.

7. Recognising the limited time available, respondents wished there had been more coverage of *'Reasons why people are active in the countryside and how diversity of activity can be supported'* and upon *'Providing access for the physically disabled for whom access to the natural environment is very desirable but presently difficult'*. One person thoughtfully asked *'How will the good ideas and commitment of participants be channelled or focused into on-going co-operation between organisations? What can the LAF do to keep this going?'* Clearly there is a case for considering this further.

Conclusions

8. The event succeeded in bringing together a large number of people from a diverse range of organisations. It provided an opportunity to publicise the Forum but also to highlight the reasons for promoting Rights of Way, Open Access Land and Country Parks and the benefits of exercise as well as the need to create Green Infrastructure.
9. Outcomes leading to improved physical and mental health dominated proceedings as did effective partnership arrangements including the Local Area Agreement. The need for joined-up access networks and for joined-up partnership working between all the interested parties, involving statutory agencies, the private sector and environmental and user groups was a common theme highlighted by the Chair in his closing remarks.

Appendices

Appendix A – Delegate List

Officer to Contact

Edwin McWilliam, Policy Officer (ROW)

Tel: 0116 305 7086

Email: emcwilliam@leics.gov.uk