

Comments forwarded by the Chairman to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in response to its recently launched 'Barrier Busting' service; a review of statutory duties placed on local government aimed at making processes more efficient by overcoming overly bureaucratic procedures.

Consultation response from Leicestershire Local Access Forum

20 April 2011

We would like to comment on the consultation and in general terms would wish to say that Sections 129-147 of your spread sheet, referring to the Commons Act and Rights of Way (under the Highways Act) are essential to try and bring some clarity to an area still subject to much contention. Similarly Sections 148-150 refer to designated landscape legislation and all these regulations taken together help to provide clarity as to where the public can go and what they can do there and protects the footpath network and places of outstanding attraction thereby encouraging the population to get out in the fresh air taking exercise to the good of their general wellbeing and helping fight the obesity epidemic. This in turn cuts down the cost demand upon the NHS. Section 154 has similar implications re common land.

Sections 151 and 152 refers to Local Access Forums which are a classic example of localism and the involvement of the voluntary sector. At very little cost they bring together all sectors of the community and provide a level of expertise invaluable to the appointing authority. We would further suggest that the role of these bodies could be expanded to take some of the burden off the public purse. Amongst other possible functions they could provide a first tier tribunal or arbitration panel to look at disputes in respect of rights of way matters. Section 156 also refers to this matter; i.e. to statutory duties in public rights of way, the RoWIP and LAFs

Section 157 refers to coastal access - At very modest cost and over an extended period this will provide a facility to the public which amongst many benefits will encourage the taking of exercise and lead to a fitter and healthier population with resulting savings for the NHS purse. The rolling out of the coastal access programme can lean heavily on the local voluntary sector and their depth of knowledge and the burden on both the national and local authority purses is minimal for the benefits which will be achieved.

Section 297 - RoW dedication - Somebody has to 'referee' all such agreements or they are either worthless or will lead to expensive court cases

With these comments in mind we would not see any case for the removal of these obligations.

Roy J Denney
0116 233 8604
Chairman, Leicestershire Local Access Forum