

East Midlands Local Access Forums
Regional LAF Chairs Meeting
Tuesday 8th June 2010, Goscote Committee Room, County Hall
Leicestershire County Council,

Minutes

<p>Present Roy Denney, Leicestershire LAF Christopher Precey, Leicester City LAF Andrew Shirley, Derby and Derbyshire LAF John Boland, Nottingham City LAF Dennis Reeson, Nottinghamshire LAF Christopher Padley, Mid Lincolnshire LAF Brian Montgomery, South Lincolnshire & Rutland LAF Andrew McCloy, Peak District LAF David Parker, Natural England Claire Herring, EMLAF Regional Co-ordinator</p>	<p>Apologies David Johns, Northamptonshire LAF</p>	
<p>Welcome and Apologies Thanks to Roy Denney and the Leicestershire LAF for hosting the meeting. The meeting was pleased to welcome Christopher Precey representing Leicester City LAF for the first time and Dennis Reeson standing in for Peter Hiley at Nottinghamshire. Northamptonshire has a new LAF chair, David Johns, who was not available to attend on this occasion. Action: CH to contact David Johns and welcome him to the regional chairs group.</p>		CH
<p>Issues arising from the previous meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda Mid Lincs back of hedge path links: CP raised a concern that what a local authority may interpret as a cooperative and generous offer by a landowner to divert a route to a back of hedge linkage may be seen by the LAF as lacking in ambition. In CP's view local authorities are culturally averse to use their compulsory powers / creation orders and settle for DMMOs – and because authorities so rarely use creation orders then this becomes a self perpetuating situation.</p>		
<p>Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) CP's concerns stimulated a discussion as to most cost effective approach to network improvements – DMMO's or creation orders and whether Local Authority legal services departments are a gateway or barrier to progress. AS reported that DADLAF is trying to help with the prioritisation of DMMOs – there are currently 280 outstanding. Not everyone is in agreement that prioritisation is the most approach – there is also a view that DMMO's should be dealt with in date order. There was general agreement that a lack of an effective project management approach resulted in bottlenecks and duplication of effort and exacerbated the delays in the system. The meeting recommended that there should be a national dialogue on the most effective method of tackling of DMMOs. Action: CH to pose a question with other regional co-ordinators / IPROW discussion board in order to start a national debate. East Midlands to put this issue forward as an agenda item to the EAF. DP suggested that this was a discussion which could be usefully shared with the County</p>		CH

<p>Surveyors - as the people who can most influence systems approaches across the region. The meeting agreed that there could be some useful sharing of ideas and breaking down of barriers if the regional LAF chairs and the county surveyors meeting came together for all or part of a meeting later in the year.</p> <p>Action: DP to talk to Steve Jones re co-ordinating the timings of the next county surveyors and LAF chairs meetings.</p>	DP
<p>DADLAF Erewash Bridleway Strategy – the new link from Elvaston to Shipley Park is being held up by the Stanton Ironworks Planning Application. AS reported that LAF members were feeling frustrated with the slow progress. AS will be standing down as chair of DADLAF in September 2010.</p>	
<p>Regional round-up & queries</p>	
<p>There was no specific regional round up session. However as RD had not been able to attend the last 2 meetings he brought the meeting up to date on activities at Leicestershire LAF.</p> <p>There has been an internal reorganisation and responsibility for Rights of Ways has moved to the Highways and Transportation Department.</p> <p>Leicestershire LAF has looked at ¾ of county re maintenance issues and gaps in the network. The ROWIP has been effective in improving the condition of existing rights of way e.g. identifying and repairing broken bridges and stiles. However the LAF would also like the ROWIP to produce network improvements, but here it has reached a deadend. RD's comments led to a discussion on how ROWIP 2 could be more action focussed. (<i>See below</i>).</p> <p>A new long distance trail is proposed for the National Forest. CH will pass the contact details for the Staffordshire LAF onto RD.</p> <p>The LAF is involved in a major planning application at Bardon Hill Quarry. This is a huge project with numerous footpath diversions and interim diversions for the lifetime of the quarry, before restoration to a country park. This led to further discussion of the involvement of LAFs in planning applications. (<i>See below</i>).</p>	CH
<p>ROWIP 2 RD observed that as policies and aspirations are already established in ROWIP 1, that it should be possible for ROWIP 2 to be a more concise, action focussed, realistic document which succeeds in achieving network improvements as well as meeting maintenance obligations.</p> <p>DP offered to talk to Jane Yates who has the national focus on ROWIP2 / LTP3 at Natural England to establish what form guidance for ROWIP2 will be taking. He advised that local authorities should expect less support than was available for ROWIP 1, given the current financial climate.</p> <p>The meeting asked CH to put an agenda item forward to the England Access Forum on the same subject and to brief the next East Midlands representative on the forum accordingly.</p>	<p>DP</p> <p>CH</p>

<p>Consultation of LAFs over planning developments / Planning Aid Training</p> <p>CP felt strongly that LAFs have a key role to play in persuading Local Authorities to think about PROW when considering planning developments. District Councils are particularly poor in this regard. There is a tendency to view an electronic communication as consultation and this is inadequate.</p> <p>There is therefore a need to raise the profile of LAFs within planning departments in order for LAFs to fulfil their role as the champions of local access. However there is also a need to strike a balance between being consulted on everything and being missed out when a LAF's expertise could have had a positive influence.</p> <p>The meeting agreed that the role of LAFs is to influence policy and the way in which a local authority consults - not to be consulted on every proposal themselves.</p> <p>CH advised the meeting that Helen Metcalfe of Planning Aid has offered to deliver a training session on working with the planning system on July 20th. DP will check whether a room is available at the Natural England Nottingham offices at Chalfont Drive. CH will discuss a round table discussion format with Helen Metcalfe and invite LAF members to attend on a "first come first served basis".</p>	<p>All chairs</p> <p>DP</p> <p>CH</p>
<p>Update from Natural England</p>	
<p>DP provided an update, particularly addressing the meetings concerns about the impact of budget cuts.</p> <p>The People and Access section has had a 15% budget reduction, being termed as in year savings rather than cuts. It is likely that further cuts will be identified as a result of the autumn spending review. It is not a blanket budget reduction – some areas will be protected, whilst others will receive heavier cuts.</p> <p>The £7000 budget allocated for LAF support in the region is still available and DP emphasised Natural England's continuing commitment to Local Access Forums.</p> <p>However some other areas of work have had to be curtailed, including capital works on the southern end of the Pennine Bridleway and the Decadal Review of CROW mapping. Incentives for network improvements may be more limited. Ministers remain committed to the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, but there may be a different approach or timescales.</p> <p>There has been a complete freeze on recruitment and therefore the appointment of Jan Tilsey's replacement has not been able to go ahead.</p> <p>Programme Activity Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping greenspace provision – DP reported slow progress in getting data sets from local authorities. • A new publication "Nature Nearby" has been produced which sets out accessible natural greenspace standards. Nature Nearby can be downloaded from: http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/naturalenglandshop/product.aspx?ProductID=887a3e18-5296-4f1f-ae0c-15e02defb0e5 • Last year saw a large increase in the number of HLS approvals as older countryside stewardship schemes are gradually being transferred into HLS. A good example is Sutton Estate at Tealby, which has 7 miles of permissive routes. <p>"Stepping Forward": AS asked whether there is a government commitment to adopt the</p>	<p>DP</p>

<p>recommendations of the report of the Stakeholder Working Group on Unrecorded Public Rights of Way, which followed the cessation of the Lost Ways Project. DP agreed to follow this up with colleagues. The Stepping Forward report (NECR035) can be seen at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news/2010/250310.aspx</p> <p><i>Update: DP has enquired with colleagues regarding Stepping Forward and ROWIP2 guidelines. As yet there has been no firm commitment or advice from DEFRA in either regard.</i></p>	
<p>England Access Forum The England Access Forum met on 27th May in Cheltenham. CP attended on behalf of the East Midlands region. CP has produced a report of proceedings which is attached with these minutes.</p> <p>Concern was expressed by AS and CP and echoed by the meeting as a whole that it was not always clear whether delegates at the EAF meetings were mandated by their region or representing their personal views. CP had been particularly concerned by the series of email exchanges which had taken between EAF members between the agenda being distributed and the meeting date. The meeting agreed that this was inappropriate.</p> <p>Action: CH to forward the comments of the meeting to Duncan Graham.</p> <p>AMc stressed the importance of LAF's responding candidly to the EAF consultation which has been distributed by Andrew Mackintosh. The consultation closes at the end of September. Any LAF which needs another copy of the consultation questions can get one via Claire.</p>	<p>CH</p> <p>All chairs</p>
<p>Regional co-ordinators work programme The meeting discussed options for the regional co-ordinators work programme which is funded from the £7000 allocated to the region. The agreed programme is attached with these minutes.</p>	<p>CH / DP / AMc</p>
<p>Date of next meeting September 7th or 14th to be confirmed, venue Derby.</p>	<p>CH</p>