

## Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday 10 April 2008.

### Present:

### ACTION BY

Mr. R. J. Denney (In the Chair), Mr. P. Tame, Mr. B. Sutton, Mr. M. Parr, Mr. J. Hefford, Mr. J. Law, Mrs. H. Brown, Mr. H. Eppel, Mr. T. Kirby, Mrs. V. Allen and Mrs. L. Forman.

### In attendance:

Mr. Peter Williams, Mr. Edwin McWilliam and Mr. Sam Weston.

### 179. Introductions and Announcements

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular the following members of the public who were in attendance:

Ms. Joyce Noon, the Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Mr. Graham Stocks, the Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Ms. Susan Eppel, Kirby Muxloe Parish Council

### 180. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Mrs. L. A. S. Pendleton CC, Mrs. R. Camamile CC, Mr. S. Warren, Mr. P. Lancaster and Ms. A. Pyper.

### 181. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2008 were adopted as an accurate record.

### 182. Matters arising from the minutes

#### Minute 167(v): Country Parks

Mr. Williams reported that sites had now been identified for possible disposal. If sites were passed on to other bodies they would be managed on the basis of access being of the utmost importance.

#### Minute 171: Accessibility Forum

Mr. McWilliam reported that no formal minutes had been circulated from the last meeting of the Accessibility Forum, but that some new initiatives were proposed. Once these had been finalised the information would be passed to the LAF.

E.McW

#### Minute 178: Presentation by the River Access Group

Mr. McWilliam reported that Ms. Phipps had indicated that she was available to give her presentation to the next

meeting of Forum on 12 June.

**183. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

(Mr. P. Tame subsequently declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the matter discussed under Minute 191 below)

**184. Urgent items**

The Chairman asked members to raise any urgent items to be added to the agenda at his discretion. Members raised the following urgent items:

- Proposed Eco Town, Pennbury;
- Higher Level Stewardship.

**185. LAF Seminar – Feedback**

Mr. McWilliam reported on feedback on the LAF half-day Seminar, held on Wednesday 26 March 2008. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

Members of the Forum commented that the Seminar had been a success, praising in particular, the variety of speakers and level of attendance by parish council delegates.

It was hoped that, arising from the Seminar, there would be better communication between the LAF and districts/boroughs, parish councils and the County Council on ROW issues.

Mrs. Forman noted that copies of the LAF leaflet were available at County Hall on the day of the Seminar, but that none appeared to be available at her local library. Mr. McWilliam indicated that the copies of the leaflet had not yet been printed, but that this would be progressed soon and subsequently circulated to all County Council front-of-house services. The Chairman asked that, prior to printing the leaflets, Mr. McWilliam give due consideration to the suggestion of the Forum that a picture of an ethnic minority group be included so as to better reflect Leicestershire communities.

**E.McW/A.P.**

Mr. McWilliam reported that notes of the question and answer sessions arising from each presentation at the Seminar were now available on the LAF website at: [www.leics.gov.uk/laf](http://www.leics.gov.uk/laf). Copies of the presentations were also available.

Members felt that it would be beneficial for those who attended to have a copy of the Q&A notes. It was hoped that this would be an opportunity to stress to district/borough councils the role that the Forum must play in the planning consultation process.

AGREED:

That Mr. McWilliam circulate a copy of the notes from the Seminar to all of those who attended.

**E. McW**

**186. Correspondence**

The Access Management Grant Scheme

Mr. McWilliam reported that a reply had been received to the letter sent to Natural England regarding the future of the Access Management Grant Scheme. It concluded that there could be no assurances made about the future of the scheme due to Natural England's challenging budget for the next three years.

**187. Subgroups**

LTP Subgroup

The next LTP subgroup meeting would be for the Melton area.

Verges Subgroup

Documentation from Mr. Sheldrake was still awaited and it was hoped that this would be received shortly.

**188. Discovering Lost Ways**

Mr. McWilliam reported on the Discovering Lost Ways review that had elected not to pursue with the project. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

The following points were made arising from the discussion:

- Members felt that, following the decision not to pursue 'Lost Ways', more time should be spent by the County Council maintaining the existing network and hoped that this would be the case;
- Mr. McWilliam informed the Forum of the various types of lost way. It was felt that Leicestershire was in a better position than other authorities who were experiencing a large volume of claims for 'lost ways' to be recognised and recorded.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

**189. Urgent item – Higher Level Stewardship**

The Chairman reported on a seminar that he had attended regarding a scheme administered by Natural England to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority areas. Natural England was currently consulting on the Scheme and would be committing around £600 million over the next six years.

The Chairman asked whether members of the Forum had any particular suggestion for specific areas that would benefit from the Scheme. In response to this, the following points were raised:

- Near urban areas would provide greatest recreational benefit;
- It would only be worthwhile suggesting reasonably large land holdings;
- Charnwood Forest warranted increased access.

AGREED:

That a letter be sent on behalf of the Forum to Natural England suggesting that the following areas would benefit from the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme:

**E. McW/S.W.**

- (i) Bosworth Park;
- (ii) Charnwood Forest
- (iii) The National Forest
- (iv) Near urban areas.

**190. Funding initiatives update**

Mr. Williams reported on the following new funding opportunities for Green Infrastructure:

- £11 million had been made available by the Government over the next three years to improve Green Infrastructure. A new Green Infrastructure Officer would be appointed by the County Council around June 2008 in order to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for North East Leicestershire, Loughborough, West Leicestershire and Coalville;
- £200 million had been made available by the Lottery

for 'Changing Spaces' – an environmental programme focusing on community spaces, local community enterprise and access to the natural environment;

*(Further information available at:*

[http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_changing\\_spaces](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_changing_spaces))

- The Lottery's 'Community Spaces' scheme would provide funding opportunities for community groups across England and would be able to apply for four sizes of grant as follows:
  - (i) Small grants of between £10,000 - £25,000
  - (ii) Medium grants of between £25,001 - £49,999
  - (iii) Large grants of between £50,000 - £100,000
  - (iv) Flagship grants of between £100,001 - £450,000
  
- The Lottery's 'Access to Nature' scheme was a £25 million grant scheme to encourage people from all background to understand, access and enjoy the natural environment. The Scheme would focus on the following broad themes:
  - (i) Community awareness and active participation
  - (ii) Education, learning and volunteering
  - (iii) Welcoming, well-managing and wildlife-rich places

*(Further information available at:*

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/leisure/grants-funding/default.htm> )

- The Community Sustainable Energy Programme was an open grants programme run by the Building Research Establishment, an award partner of the Big Lottery Fund.

*(Further information available at:*

<http://www.communitysustainable.org.uk>)

- The 'People's Millions' scheme would provide grants of up to £50,000. Projects approved by the Scheme would have to cover one of the four following themes:
  - (i) Making the local environment cleaner, safer or greener
  - (ii) Improving the local natural environment
  - (iii) Improving the design, appearance or accessibility of local amenities

- (iv) Providing opportunities or facilities for enjoying the local environment or local amenities

(Further information available at:  
[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_peoples\\_millions.htm](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_peoples_millions.htm))

AGREED:

That the above funding initiatives be noted.

**191. Open Forum**

Eco-Town, Pennbury (Stoughton)

Mr. Williams informed the Forum about proposals for an Eco Town in Pennbury (Stoughton) arising from a bid to the Government by The Co-Operative Group.

The Forum was informed that the County Council's Cabinet had agreed to make budgetary provision for consultants to work with the Council. The Co-Operative Group's proposals would need careful consideration by County Council officers when known. This will divert resources away from other work.

A detailed report on the assessment of the Pennbury site was expected imminently.

At this point, Mr. Tame declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in the item as a member of the NFU, of which the Co-Operative Group was also a member.

Mr. G. Stocks (Campaign to Protect Rural England) attended the meeting and spoke on the item. He commented that, as no detail on the proposals had been issued by the Government, it was very difficult to make comments on them.

Mr. Williams added that a comment on the likely impact to ROW would need to be included in any formal response to the proposals.

AGREED:

That any further information that became available on the proposals be circulated prior to further discussion of the item at the next meeting.

**192. National Access Forum**

Mr. McWilliam reported that a meeting had taken place in January organised by Natural England, where it had been decided to establish a National Access Forum, to which two nominated LAF members from each region would be

appointed, though was presently unclear exactly how the appointments would be made.

For the East Midlands representatives, it had been suggested that of the two nominations, one would be a permanent member for continuity purposes, with the other member being rotated as appropriate.

AGREED:

That contact be made with Natural England to clarify the appointment process.

**E.McW**

**193. Planning Validation Checklist**

Mrs. Allen expressed her concern regarding the new planning application system and the level of importance placed on ROW.

Mr. McWilliam reported that the new planning application process included a section on ROW which had to be completed. Other forum members agreed that this was an improvement on the previous arrangement.

**194. Agenda items for the next meeting**

The following items were AGREED for discussion at the next meeting:

- Eco Town, Pennbury;
- Presentation by the River Access Group.

**S.W.**

**195. Dates of future meetings**

NOTED:

That the next full meeting of the Forum would take place at 6pm on Thursday 12 June 2008 at County Hall.

10.04.08  
6pm – 8.15pm

CHAIRMAN