

# NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Annual Report 2008

## Chairman's Introduction

I am pleased to present the 2008 Annual Report for the Local Access Forum. I hope you will read the enclosed articles and some of you may be inspired to want to volunteer to join the Forum. Please contact the Secretary whose telephone number and email address are at the end of this report.

In my last report I encouraged readers to go and use the footpaths and bridleways in your own local area and then to explore the wider county. We, the public, are constantly being targeted by Central Government and local organisations to take more exercise to make the nation healthier, in particular, in preventing the increase in heart diseases and obesity. Natural England have been spearheading some of these schemes and I understand the potential savings to the NHS amount to many millions of pounds if we can reduce heart attacks etc. Sadly, I have seen little or no evidence of 'new' walkers on our footpaths and bridleways, or people just walking to the local shops.

The biggest problem now facing both national and local organisations is funding, which seems to dominate any initiatives or plans either for new access areas and footpaths or the improvement of existing ones.

As we will almost certainly see budgets squeezed it may now be time to concentrate on the maintenance of the existing network of paths which have suffered badly with the differing weather this past twelve months, rather than short fund schemes for new ones. This is one of the topics the LAF will be discussing in 2009.

I would like to thank the forum members who have left us in the past twelve months, but also those of my colleagues who attend the meetings regularly and support the Forum. I would further like to express all our thanks to our Secretary for her efficiency and putting this report together.

I wish all readers good health and good walking in the new year.

Edward Anderson  
Chairman



## What is the North Lincolnshire Local Access Forum?

The North Lincolnshire Local Access Forum was established by North Lincolnshire Council in response to sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and had its first meeting in December 2003. It works as an advisory body on the improvement of public access to land for open-air recreation and enjoyment, having regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area.

## Who is on the Local Access Forum?

The North Lincolnshire Local Access Forum consists of 14 members of the public plus three elected members (two members of the ruling Group and one member of the opposition Group). Members are appointed, following open advertising, and the representation is balanced between those who use the countryside for recreation and those whose main interest or experience is in land management or farming. Other interests are also represented such as conservation, tourism and regeneration. There are currently four vacancies on the Forum.

## Who are the Members?

Forum Members	Status	Expertise and Interests
Edward Anderson (Chairman)	Landowner's Consultant	Walking, landownership, conservation
Guy Hoey	Access User	Walking, estate management, disabled access rights
Andrew Towns	Farmer, Landowner	Farming, landownership, cycling, walking, conservation
Richard Alderson	Landowner's Consultant	Walking, landownership, farming, cycling, conservation
Hazel Armstrong	Access User	Green tourism, health, riding, cycling, walking
Steve Ball	Access User	Rambler's Association, walking, cycling
Frances Ross	General Interests	Walking, Rights of Way, member of the Lincolnshire Field Paths Association
Mary Jenkinson	Access User	Walking, motorised vehicular use, disabled access rights
Giles Dixon	Access User	Tourism, conservation, farming
Suki Jackson	Farmer, Landowner	Walking, dog-walking, landownership, farming
Cllr Bernard Regan	Councillor	Environmental issues
Cllr Alan Smith	Councillor	Environmental and access issues
Cllr David Wells	Councillor	Conservation and environmental issues, member of English Heritage

## Visit to Crowle Moors



On 7 May 2008 our LAF met at Crowle; this was to give the members the opportunity to visit Crowle Moor where work is under way to reclaim large areas that had been badly damaged over many years of extraction of peat for horticultural uses. Such reclamation has to be managed skilfully and imaginatively so that the moor can become a major asset, diverse in wildlife and attractive to the public. (If left to itself, regeneration evolves rapidly towards impenetrable tracts of birch scrubland.)

As Tim Allen (Environment Team Manager) explained, progress at Crowle Moor was at an early stage and the task quite daunting, there being some 3000 acres now under protection there. But as had been seen at nearby Hatfield Moor (nearer to Doncaster, on a similar visit in 2007) transformation can become an inspiration and the new lakes and scenery a real pleasure for public visitors. Such are the intentions for Crowle Moor, though the extent and time-scale have to be considerably larger. The work itself is financed by Natural England and the Council, but the LAF also plays a part by assisting where issues of access are concerned.

Such a site visit has added value for the Forum; it brings the members together quite informally, thus helping them to know one another and appreciate the various interests represented. For the officials and staff involved it is a special opportunity to show the progress and problems as they really are, on the ground. Thus there is no doubt that site visits are greatly valued by all parties concerned and our LAF hopes to make significant visits to other projects in its area in future.



## Regional Access Forum

Two members of our forum attended a Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Local Access Forum in October hosted at Wakefield Town Hall. There were over 40 attendees of which 2/3rds were volunteer members from local access forums in the region along with officers from public rights of way departments at the various local authorities.

A verbal report was presented by an attendee at a recent English Access Forum and it was agreed that this process was very useful to enable information to be distributed regionally. Similarly, items discussed at this forum could be taken back to the national body and members thought this was a useful opportunity to get ideas and comments pushed forward.

It was good to meet the regional Natural England officers, who are based in Wakefield, and hear from them the issues they have dealing with such a large region.

Unfortunately, every topic discussed seemed to end up focusing on funding, or the limitations this presented. Brief details of the regional budget were presented and it is clear that many initiatives will not be able to proceed at this time or in the near future. There are no funds directly available to local access forums other than a very small budget for training, neither are local authorities given any extra funds to carry out any new schemes or projects. Some forum members felt that continued lobbying may produce a rethink but others were more sceptical.

There was a lot of discussion of the demise of the Lost Ways project and major issues which are to resolve e.g. conflict of interests between users and landowners, especially changing permissive rights into full rights.

A useful day but clearly there is much to do as user groups and officers try to iron out the best way forward to create not only greater opportunities for access but equally to encourage the public to use them.

### Update on the Coastal Access provisions of the Draft Marine Bill

Following a resolution at an earlier LAF the Forum Chairman had a meeting with the MP for Brigg & Goole to express the wish that the provisions of the coastal access proposal be extended further along the Humber than the Humber Bridge (the first crossing point as outlined in the Draft Bill). The LAF hoped the crossing point might be changed to points further up both the rivers Trent and Ouse, particularly as these rivers are tidal well in land.

The MP did write on our behalf to the Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs and a letter was received in return which states the Minister will ensure Natural England representatives will take full account of all circumstances in each case before deciding on the appropriate access for an estuary.

It is not now expected the Draft Bill will go before Parliament until late next year. However it should be noted that in a recent survey by Natural England, support for the proposals to increase access to the coast was expressed by 50% of the respondents, with 23% not welcoming the proposals and the remainder not expressing either clear support or opposition. The LAF will continue to keep this item on its agenda.

LAF agendas, minutes and dates of future meetings can be viewed on:

[www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs/Transportandstreets/Publicrightsoway/LocalAccessForum](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs/Transportandstreets/Publicrightsoway/LocalAccessForum). If you require any information please contact the Secretary on (01724) 296235 or [dinah.lilley@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:dinah.lilley@northlincs.gov.uk).