

Inaugural Meeting of the
Northamptonshire Local Access Forum

Thursday 25th September 2014

Present:	Apologies:
David Farquhar (DF)	Paul Bush
Karen MacLeavy (KM)	Paul Parsons
Lisa Fell (LF)	Sandra James
Stuart Roberts (SR)	Cllr Clarke
John Shenfield (JS)	
Dave Knight (DK)	
Robert Martin (RM)	

- 1) DF** Introduction and background to group. Explained that the group now has 8 members which allows the group to function, however the members may want to consider how they can help to recruit further members. Explained that SR was previously Chair for the group and has offered to chair this meeting and the next one until an official Chair is elected by the members.

DF read the apologies including from Cllr Clarke who wanted to express to the group that he would have liked to attend however a prior commitment meant he was unable to do so on this occasion, he will however endeavour to attend the next meeting.

- 2) LF** asked if Natural England should have a representative on the group.
DF replied that this would be for the group to decide. There are no policies that state Natural England must have a representative and also nothing to say they cannot.
DF explained that the group has a good cross section of expertise, and if members feel that any particular group is not yet represented, members will need to actively seek that support.

- 3) Round table for members to introduce themselves to group:**

DF – Director Northamptonshire Highways for Northamptonshire County Council

KM – Interim NLAf secretary, Sustainable Travel Advisor for Northamptonshire Highways

LF – Walker, dog walker, horse rider, sympathy with farmers.

SR – Walking, bird watching

JS – Sywell Parish Councillor, British Horse Society representative for 20 years. Very interested in urban expansion in Moulton/Overstone, particularly in how can children cycle to Moulton.

DK – Motorised use in the countryside, disability access to the countryside

RM – Desborough town council, cycling, photographer, campaigner for R.O.W to be kept clear and open. Photographs and diarises everything he does.

4) SR explained the recent history of the NLAF and reason why he felt it came to a halt and wasn't working, leading to the need for it to start afresh. This was in the main due to an error whereby membership is limited to 3 years however all members at that point had been in the group for longer than that.

5) SR said that currently any communication from Natural England goes directly to him and the NLAF secretary, however this could be distributed to everybody should members want that. He said that it is important to ensure everybody has access to all of the information to keep interest in the group. SR also said that members need to take an active role and therefore if they have any agenda items, they should be submitted to the NLAF secretary along with any relevant background information no less than 3 days prior to the meeting to allow members to acquaint themselves with the issue before the meeting takes place

KM Action – send the most recent email from Mandy Sims (East Midlands LAF Regional Coordinator) to all members.

ALL Action – Send agenda items and background information to NLAF secretary

6) SR asked if it is possible to hold the meetings at John Dryden House (JDH) due to associated costs with hiring The Guildhall and parking constraints.

DF said that this should be something that could be arranged and KM will look into it, however it would be best to book the dates as far in advance as possible to increase likelihood of a room being available. If rooms are fully booked at JDH on the required dates then it would still be necessary to use The Guildhall.

KM Action – Contact JDH and establish availability. Also set up a 'Doodle' poll and send to members

All Action – provide meeting availability when requested

JS asked how the meeting dates would be advertised to the public.

DF replied that they would be advertised on the NCC website, but probably not advertised in the papers due to associated costs.

LF raised a concern that not everybody has access to the internet, could flyers be considered

DF said that there is a newsletter circulated to each Parish however the cost of sending a flyer to each household would be too great to be a feasible option. **DF** stated he believed networking will be key to increasing membership and raising public awareness of the group rather than traditional methods such as newspapers, he also suggested that as the group is newly established, maybe the focus should be around issues and concerns rather than generating public interest at this point.

SR said that NLAf need to inform other groups who may be interested in the issues raised

ALL Action - email **KM** with the name and ideally contact details of groups you would like to be kept informed and she will add them to the circulation list.

7) JS asked if the group would be able to have somebody from MGWSP explain the works programme

DF suggested this could potentially be done on a quarterly basis, whereby a programme of works is provided for the NLAf meetings.

KM Action – speak with the relevant team within Northamptonshire Highways with a view to establishing this information for the group.

8) DK asked if NCC still has a Rights of Way team.

DF explained the existing structure that NCC are working to with Northamptonshire Highways, and that yes, there is still a ROW team who are working to the County Council within this structure.

9) JS was concerned that when planning applications are submitted to NCC, employees are not going into enough detail to look at the issues thoroughly.

DF explained that the Development Control team report to him and they also now include expertise of ROW as well as liaising with specific members of the ROW team as appropriate.

10) JS raised concerns about the massive development expansions around Northampton. He is concerned that the developments are so big that ROW will be overlooked.

DF reassured **JS** that ROW are important and feedback is given to developers about this. **DF** stressed that NCC are only one consultee in the process and as such the Planning Committees can ignore the advice and requests given, however this doesn't tend to be the case.

11) JS asked what involvement NCC have in the Waterside development in Northampton

DF explained that the promoters are Northampton Borough Council. It is up to the public and NLAf to raise issues or concerns if they feel it is necessary.

12) LF said that the HS2 public ROW was advertised in the Daventry Express

SR said that the HS2 will cause disruption but ROW won't lose out in the long run.

KM said that Esme Herne from NCC has advised there will be a meeting in January for people to raise concerns. Esme will inform NLA of the meeting date nearer the time.

13) JS asked DF for information on the duelling of the A43

DF said that this will be submitted to planning in November and the plans will be drawn up by NCC. Barratts had previously submitted an outline plan as part of their proposed development. A detailed plan is currently being worked on. The determination for this will be in March ready to start work in May.

14) SR asked DF for information on the Flore bypass

DF said this will be submitted for full planning in November. There are 4 ROW that require diversion but are being considered as part of the scheme

15) RM asked why, when a road is straightened do NCC often sell little bits of the land so sections of ROW are left out

DF explained the history of highways and that NCC do not own most of the road network, but instead essentially act as a management company. In this situation, the land is usually being returned to the landowner. **DF** said that when land is returned to the owner ROW should remain protected, and that if the group had any examples where this had not been the case, then please inform **KM**

ALL Action – Inform **KM** of any examples relating to the above point

16) RM Said that when roads are built, the contractor are not always informed of where the ROW were. Better communication is needed.

DF explained that if a developer varies the S106 it is entirely up to the planning authority (ie Kettering, Corby etc) to decide if that is ok. NCC cannot make them change as NCC are only a consultee in the process the same as individuals, NLA etc.

17) LF raised a concern relating to the non-built environment and presented photographs of Jurassic Way to **DF**, asking how NCC communicates to landowners their responsibilities

DF answered that the majority of landowners know what is required and so the problem isn't necessarily one of awareness, but more one of compliance. **DF** requested that should the group have specific examples of areas of concern then they should forward them to NCC via Street Doctor. **DF** explained the financial and policy restraints the Council is working within and therefore people should be realistic with expectations but should report the issues all the same. **DF** added that if anybody had suggestions of how NCC could improve communication with landowners then they should let NCC know and they will do what they can.

LF also commented that it is recommended that farmers display a sign if they are using pesticides – **LF** questioned that due to how deadly they can be for animals, should this be compulsory rather than recommended.

DF said that this would be a decision for central government to make, however he was unsure that even if it became law that it would be enforceable. **DF** suggested that a

representative from the landowner/farmer groups could be asked to help the group by promoting the display of a sign as good practice.

18) DK asked if the previous restraints for using volunteers were still a problem, and believed these used to be linked to insurance concerns.

DF said that this is no longer an issue. NCC can help to facilitate ie provide PPE etc and will help wherever possible.

19) SR thanked the group for attended and confirmed that KM would contact members to establish another meeting which should be held soon, around November, to give those who could not attend this meeting the opportunity to participate at the earliest opportunity.