

The Lincolnshire Research Observatory Steering Group

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 15th January 2004

Present

Director of Public Health – East Lincs. PCT/Chair of Steering Group (MB)
Research Coordinator – Lincolnshire Development (AP)
Information and Liaison Officer – East Lincs. PCT (NC)
Pro Vice Chancellor (with responsibility for research) – University of Lincoln (MS)
Tourism Manager – West Lindsey District Council (WO)
Performance and Policy Officer – South Holland District Council (HB)
Research Officer – Children’s Links (SS)
Senior Planning Officer – Lincoln City Council (NB)
Director of the Community Operational Research Unit – University of Lincoln (RH)
Research Officer – North Kesteven District Council (EM)

1. Apologies

Data Manager – Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland (JT)
Knowledge Director – Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland (RT)
Public Health Specialist – Lincs. South West PCT (EM)
Research Officer – Learning and Skills Council (GR)

2. Minutes from meeting held on 19th January 2004

NC apologised for the following discrepancies in minutes from this meeting:

An error in the role of MS (University of Lincoln) as recorded under ‘Apologies’.
This has now been amended.

RH (University of Lincoln) was not included in the list of those present at this meeting.

Other items were accepted as a true and accurate record

3. Matters Arising

NC informed members that KM (Senior Development Assistant – Lincolnshire Development) had not yet received feedback following her presentation to the group on 19th January. She still invites members to feedback any comments regarding the potential use of data and outputs from the Skills Forecasting activity. For further information on this activity or to receive copies of the presentation please forward requests to LRO@Lincolnshire.gov.uk

NC informed members that since our last meeting a number of datasets have been added to the site by Lincolnshire Drugs Action and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and that Connexions Lines. And Rutland are currently in the process of organising the upload of a selection of data and material relating to destinations of school leavers in the County.

4. General Site Update

NC provided feedback on latest site statistics, site material and frequently accessed documents and data as at end February. This information is recorded monthly and can be accessed via the 'about the LRO' link on the website.

NC also highlighted that the growth in registered users has been encouraging over the last quarter, specifically following promotional and training events to a number of different organisations.

Activities and priorities since the last meeting and over the next 3-4 weeks will be in line with objectives laid out in the 2003-05 Business Plan (a copy of this is available on the website), including the preparation of a number of toolkits to support users of the site in gathering and analysing data (see item 7)

5. Site Development

AP outlined amendments to the proposed timescales for dissemination of results via an interactive front end from the Employer Survey and Skills Forecasting activities.

Skills Forecasting:

Consultants involved in carrying out this work are currently adding further information and tables to their data, which has caused a slight delay in the provision of outputs from this activity. It is expected that draft reports will be provided within the next few weeks and some key headline data will be taken from this and disseminated via the LRO website.

Employer Survey:

There is an ongoing delay with disseminating outputs from this activity due to the current site hosting company not responding in a professional manner to requests for the provision of information required to complete the final model. AP is continuing to challenge these delays and communication difficulties on behalf of the LRO. Members will be updated on this activity in due course.

2001 Census

The 'Census Atlas', which will map key census data down to output area level, is due to be published towards the end of April. A number of datasets from the Census will be published on the LRO within the next fortnight. These datasets have been selected from feedback provided by site users and partner organisations.

Research Calendar

AP outlined the key features of this research tool and presented screen shots of the draft layout, which will replace the current 'Research Notice board' available on the website. It was emphasised that this initial format is adaptable and will be put onto the site as a pilot from which we will utilise user feedback to update and develop it. Members will be notified when the calendar goes live and are encouraged to forward comments to LRO@Lincolnshire.gov.uk or to contact NC to provide feedback.

A number of comments were raised during the presentation:

HB voiced concerns about organisations not wanting to use the calendar to promote activities where results may highlight poor performance. In response, AP informed members that the calendar could be used to promote an activity itself and to share examples of good practice, without having to commit to publishing results and outcomes.

NB enquired as to whether the calendar could be used to promote activities and outputs that were restricted access (ie. incurred a fee). In response NC informed members that the site has the capacity to hold results from research activities in restricted access areas, and AP suggested that where restriction was related to a fee that some contribution could be made from this to the LRO to support it's continuation and development as a dissemination tool.

MS questioned the title 'Research Calendar' and suggested that this may not be the most appropriate name to reflect the features and use of this area. AP explained that this title is open to amendment and that suggestions for names for this area of the site are welcomed from members, again this can be done by contacting NC or forwarding suggestions to LRO@Lincolnshire.gov.uk

MB Questioned how the calendar could be used to promote activities that were currently being considered or proposed rather than just those that were actually taking place. NC explained that the calendar has the capacity to do this but that a few changes could potentially be made to incorporate a research type named 'Proposed Activities' or similar.

NB raised the issue of sharing information on possible problems with house-to-house research (eg. Notifying police, known addresses to avoid). It was felt that this issue should be considered and that the site could point users towards a contact for such information but was not suitable to hold such data itself due to sensitivity issues.

Action: NC to inform members once Research Calendar has gone live, if this happens prior to next SG meeting.

6. Quantifying the Value of the LRO – Update on Site User Survey

AP updated members on the reasons for this survey, which is primarily to build up a picture of who is using the LRO site, how they are using the material it provides and how they value it as a research tool. This information can be used to shape the direction of the site and any further developments that are prioritised in the future.

Copies of a draft survey were distributed amongst members and feedback on content, question structure and general format were requested prior to the next meeting. A final draft can then be prepared to circulate and finalise during this session.

Actions: Members to forward any comments or suggestions relating to the survey to LRO@Lincolnshire.gov.uk or directly to NC.

NB. Please contact NC to request a copy of this document.

7. The LRO Business Plan – Meeting our Objectives

A number of activities were discussed in relation to objectives outlined in the 2003-2005 Business Plan.

Toolkits

NC is currently preparing a number of toolkits to support site users in searching for, presenting and analysing data relating to specific areas. These toolkits have been prioritised by analysing comments from site users and the reasons they have recorded for their data searches.

In order to meet our objectives for the end of the financial year, these toolkits will initially incorporate text, document references and external links to guide users through a number of search processes although ultimately, we will look to have them working interactively and incorporating ‘data associations’ to allow users to be linked to specific material on the site that relates to their activity.

The toolkits created for the website will include:

- ***Demographics*** – Supporting users in building up a picture of the demographics of a given area
- ***2001 Census*** – Supporting users in gaining value from the 2001 Census and its outputs.
- ***Funding*** – Using the LRO site to support the preparation of funding bids
- ***Mapping and Presenting Data*** – supporting users in getting best results from the site mapping facility and understanding the benefits of presenting data in this way.

- ***Understanding Geographies*** – A guide to the geographical areas used on the LRO website and supporting users in understanding these and how they relate to data gathering and research.

Action: Members to forward any suggestions or comments relating to the preparation and content of these toolkits to NC or to LRO@Lincolnshire.gov.uk

Quality of Life Groups

MB updated members on the origin and objectives of this activity and outlined the work that has taken place in relation to the ‘Children and Young People’ group. There are a number of other activities taking place that could potentially be linked to this group and MB intends to get some further feedback on such activities before progressing further with the group itself.

Action: NC to circulate original documentation and ‘Terms of Reference’ relating to QoL groups in order to update new members on the background to this activity. (See **Appendix 1**)

Budgets and Key Activities

AP outlined the background and objectives of the European Social Fund (ESF) and presented a number of activities that he believes could be considered to put forward on behalf of the LRO for funding in the next bidding round. ESF funding is primarily concerned with the development and retention of skills and qualifications.

These activities would need to be undertaken by external agencies, as LCC is a co-financing organisation, therefore, Lincolnshire Development cannot carry out any of these activities in house.

Members highlighted a lack of ‘community’ based activities in the list and AP invited these and other comments to be fed back as soon as possible in order for the list to reflect the objectives and activities of all partners and a wider range of local organisations.

AP also asked for volunteers to be involved in a half day ‘evaluation/appraisal’ event (now confirmed to be taking place on 4th May 2004 from 1pm) during which activities such as those listed above would be considered and appraised against ESF objectives and feedback prepared for those that would not be selected for funding.

Actions:

- NC to circulate list of proposed activities to members (**See Appendix 2**)
- Members to contact NC/AP regarding any activities they would like to see added to this list or any areas they see further potential in developing by 02.04.04

- Members wishing to volunteer for the half-day evaluation event in May to inform NC ASAP.

AP Presented an example of an interactive tool for measuring the impact of housing developments on local services (re: section 106), specifically schools, which is a result of work being carried out on behalf of LCC education directorate.

Members discussed a number of wider potential uses for such a model and NB highlighted the potential for using this tool to support local planning activities and to act as a pilot for other Local Authority Districts.

MB informed AP of data currently available through Lincolnshire NHS Shared Services that may be of use in building up the database behind this model.

Action: AP to contact MB to discuss availability of GP data to support this activity.

8. 2004 Annual Conference

It was agreed that this years event should be a partnership approach following the success of last years and that any ideas regarding guest speakers, presentations, key activities etc. should be considered and discussed at the next meeting.

Action: NC to circulate possible dates for conference and members to feedback on any key dates to avoid.

9. Any Other Business

RH invited members to provide contact details for MBA and MSC students at University of Lincoln in relation to joining up with partner organisations in their research activities. It was emphasised that organisational involvement can range from a one off consultation to employing students in specific research activities and is flexible according to the organisation and their specific requirements and circumstances.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting was due to be held on Tuesday 27th April at 2pm, the Board Room, Oak House, Lincoln.

NB. This meeting has since been rescheduled to take place on Friday 30th April 2004 at 10am, The Board Room, Oak House, Lincoln

Further dates for future meetings will be agreed at this session.

Appendix 1.

The Lincolnshire Research Observatory Steering Group Quality of Life Sub-Groups (Children, Adults, and Older People)

Terms of Reference (DRAFT)

Objective/Overall Aim:

To produce an informative and analytical report describing the key issues affecting the Quality of Life in our County and the present situation in relation to these. This should provide a baseline, capable of being maintained and updated, to support a range of organisations in the planning and subsequent assessment of strategies/services aimed at enhancing the Quality of Life across Lincolnshire.

Timescale: For publication before end March 2004

Work Involved/Processes:

(To be undertaken within each age Sub-Group)

1. To consider and identify key indicators, reflecting a variety of socio-economic issues, which can be used to describe the quality of life within our County.
2. To determine the availability and/or limitations of the indicators identified in relation to the overall objective, and organise the gathering of data.
3. To investigate any relationships/correlation between indicators and consider their impact/weighting upon one and other and upon the quality of life as a whole.
4. To produce subsequent value added analysis to describe the current situation in Lincolnshire and highlight any potential areas of concern/development/strength.

Potential Future Activities

- The knowledge economy – workplace and resident based skills, commuting activities of skilled residents;
- Reality check and Interpretation of the findings of the skills forecasting model including consultation with business sectors and communities;
- Future update and incorporation of data into the skills forecasting model;
- The level and transferability of skills particularly in areas and sectors affected by rural decline;
- Available, required and transferable skills in the self employed;
- Provision of resources to the LRO to continue the work into widening partnership, available information, research work and dissemination;
- Added value association of data and information to make intelligence and expertise available to non-practitioners on the LRO website;
- Improved identification, analysis and dissemination of relevant information to users through further LRO web development (searching and mapping).