

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12



www.hertslaf.org.uk

This is the eighth annual report of the Hertfordshire Local Access Forum and contains details of the work and the advice given, in the period 2011-2012¹.

Chair's Introduction

The year 2011/2012 has seen a change in how the HertsLAF does its work and in the environment around us.

We have lost and gained members – we continue to recruit to HertsLAF using a 'skills grid' as reference for additions to the forum, which helps keep a broad representation and a wide base of knowledge amongst us. Communication with Natural England and other LAFs has changed with the introduction of 'Huddle' a computer based network, initially available only to a few and which can now be accessed by all LAF members – using it is a challenge to some of us.

Natural England itself continues to undergo change and further economies, but has recognised the need for a national face-to-face meeting for LAF members and there have been 2 very useful conferences attended by HertsLAF members this year, and one proposed for 2013. Regional LAFs are supported and brought together by a regional coordinator, and it is a great help for representatives to meet, exchange ideas and explore common problems. A new local nature partnership has been established for Herts and LAF is represented on this forum.

LAF members have continued to become more involved in projects and new development and, whilst each member has specific interests, are ably responding to the wide and diverse issues sent to the LAF for consultation, comment or participation.

We continue to enjoy an excellent working relationship with HCC's Rights of Way team which, whilst offering as much assistance as we ask for, is itself struggling to meet the demands of savings made in its service. This presents a dilemma for us in that, whilst we wish to see the highest standards of practice at all times, in reality this may not always be possible for financial and staffing reasons. However LAF is involved in assisting with decisions on establishing priorities and policy changes.

Members have plenty to choose from in their reading material in between the lively meetings with interesting speakers if they so choose, as well as getting involved in some events if they have the time.

For me there is always a feeling that more could be done if more time was available – and I need to remind myself that we are all volunteers at the LAF and members have enormous expertise and give their time generously, for which I am very grateful.

The coming year I am sure will present new challenges for Natural England, local communities and our councils, and HertsLAF will continue to support improving access to our green spaces and countryside.

Liddy Lawrence, Chair

¹ This report fulfils the requirements of the "Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2007" and guidance set out in "Guidance on Local Access Forums" from DEFRA dated February 2007

Who are the Members of the Forum?



Liddy Lawrence (Chair)	Needs of elderly and minority groups, walking and cycling
Roger Thomas (Vice Chair)	Estate management
Diana Collingridge	Estate management
Tony Ferrari	Cycling and Motorised users
Cllr Rosemary Gilligan	District Councillor, representing the Herts LGA
Debbie Hougie	Countryside recreation education, walking
Norman Jones	Walkers, non car owners and public transport.
Lynn Myland	Land owner, horse-rider
Cllr Bill Storey	County Councillor, Chilterns AONB
Robert Bolt	Transport, walker, PC experience, U3A.
Ian Gregory	Cycling.

There are some vacancies for representatives in the following fields: disabled access needs, land managers and horse riders. The forum is always happy to talk to anyone interested in joining the LAF. For more information on what being a member involves and how to apply, please log on to: <http://www.hertslaf.org.uk/news.htm>).

What has the Local Access Forum been doing?



The Forum has been consulted and considered advising on the following topics during the year:

Project/Subject	Status
<i>RoWIP</i>	Ongoing review of RoWIP areas & advising HCC on priority schemes
<i>Heartwood Forest, Sandridge</i>	Ongoing liaison on access issues with the Woodland Trust
<i>Local Transport Plan</i>	Ongoing contributions to consultations
<i>Bricketwood Common (fencing & grazing)</i>	Ongoing oversight of District Council fencing plans
<i>Chorleywood Common (fencing & grazing)</i>	Ongoing oversight of Parish Council fencing plans
<i>Alban Way</i>	Ongoing oversight of District Council management plan review – especially for improved access
<i>Coastal access plans</i>	Ongoing interest in this national issue
<i>Aldenham Country Park</i>	From early 2011, outsourcing management of park
<i>Access in developments</i>	Keeping informed of major planning applications, for s106 and CIL (e.g. New Barnfield incinerator proposals)
<i>St Albans Access Group</i>	Ongoing review of this RoWIP area, highlighting user priorities & advising HCC on schemes

Over the last 12-18 months LAF members have also helped push ahead the completion of a long standing project which involved the Dedication of a BR at a farm near Harpenden. This culminated with the official opening in May 2012 attended by many users.



Opening of Bridleway, 9th May 2012

LAF Sub-Committees



Members of the LAF have divided into smaller Sub-Committees to be able to carry on projects. Currently these are the Sub Committees and their projects:

Safer Road Crossings:	Norman Jones, Debbie Hougie, Lynn Myland
School Award Competition:	Debbie Hougie, Diana Collingridge, Roger Thomas
Safer Routes to School:	Debbie Hougie, Diana Collingridge
LAF Website:	Norman Jones, Lynn Myland

Members' Comments



Members were asked to comment – if they wanted – on their view of this year for the LAF.

Lynn Myland	<p><i>It has been another busy year. Highlights for me have been the momentum that the St Albans user group has achieved, it is tremendously rewarding for me as a LAF member to be working together with ALL of the local access groups, St Albans District Council and the HCC Rights of Way Officer. With an aim of improving access for all vulnerable road users.</i></p> <p><i>I am also gaining some knowledge on legislation used on Public Rights of Way and Open Spaces such as Law of Properties Act 1925, and The Trails Trust-Express Dedication Method (at Common Law).</i></p>
Rosemary Gilligan	<p><i>Group has been very busy and I think it looks an impressive work load</i></p>
Norman Jones	<p><i>Over the year the LAF has looked at the continuing development of Ellenbrook Fields and provided some advice over the site which is around 1 sq mile (c250 hectares) in size. The LAF has also been involved in the ongoing negotiations for the provision of some bridleways at the site, which is almost entirely accessible to walkers with defined permissive footpaths.</i></p>

Meetings and Attendance



Four Public Meetings took place at the University of Hertfordshire's College Lane campus, Hatfield.

- **20th Sept and 1st Dec 2011, 29th Feb and 14th June 2012.**

Agendas were circulated to all county libraries and Parish Councils as well as to the frequently updated list of interested parties, and added to the pages of the HertsLAF website. The number of members of the public attending is an average of 6-8 per meeting. Forum members have been attending meetings and last December the Forum welcomed Ian Gregory as its latest member to join. Richard Cuthbert (Team Leader Access and Rights of Way) and Bob Fenton (Countryside Access Team Leader) have been providing technical support to the LAF and Rosalinde Emrys-Roberts for any Definitive Map issues.

During the year there have also been two informal business meetings attended by LAF members:

- **25th October 2011** – where the members were updated on the LNP bid and the emerging Rural Transport Strategy;
- **2nd May 2012** –where the group discussed and gave updates on current topics which the members of the Forum have been involved with.

Informal business meetings take place in-between Public meetings to discuss and received updates on topical issues.

Training and Outside Events



Date	Event/Training	Attendee/s
March 2012	Chiltern AONB Access Conference	Norman Jones
Nov 2011	EoE LAF Chair meeting	R Thomas, L Lawrence
--	Countryside Recreation Network (CRN)	Debbie Hougie
Ongoing 2011-12	Friends of Aldenham Country Park (Big Society)	D Hougie
Jul. '11 + Mar.'12	Nomansland Common Inspection	Lynn Myland
Sept 2011	Health Benefits of Horse Riding launch	Lynn Myland
Oct. 2011	Bricket Wood Common Committee meeting	Lynn Myland
Oct. 2011	British Horse Society AGM	Lynn Myland
Nov. 2011	HCC Rural Transport Strategy Workshop	LM, NJ
Feb 2012	Huddle Training	LM, LL, NJ, RC
Various dates in 2011/12	Chorleywood Common Grazing Plan	Lynn Myland
Quarterly	Heartwood Forest Access Group meetings	Lynn Myland
Quarterly	Rights of Way Improvement Plan meetings - St Albans	Lynn Myland
Feb 2012	Local Nature partnership - formation meeting in Herts.	NJ + DH

Following the Huddle training 3 members now have access to Huddle and are using it to receive useful information or post HertsLAF issues to discuss nationally with other LAFs. Two more licences will soon be taken up by two other members.

LAF Events



Twice a year LAF members have Field Trips where they have the opportunity to survey areas of relevance to current issues.

Field Trips:

- **The Summer Field** trip that took place in September 2011 was at Ellenbrook Fields, the old British Aerospace area which for a long time has been earmarked for s106 money and has ongoing access issues to be resolved. The members were led around by the local Agent/grazier and shown how the site will develop over the months to come. Once again the 2012 Summer Field trip will take place in September and more detail will appear in next year's report.



LAF members testing a kissing gate for ease of use by less able users.

- **January 2012** – this year LAF Members visited Panshanger, a site which has been earmarked for restoration once the extraction activity ends. Lafarge – the site owners – representatives walked us around those paths which were already open and others soon to be opened explaining the plans for the site; the site also has an area of SSSI with a lake and several ancient oak trees. The Forum was also asked

to comments on the interpretation boards that will be placed at the site. Some of the new paths were due to be opened to the public this summer (2012).



LAF member near ancient Oak tree in Panshanger.

Cost of the Forum



The Forum is a voluntary body, with members giving up their time for free. Hertfordshire County Council, as Appointing Authority, contributes officers' time and pays for any costs for administering the LAF, using money allocated for the '*fulfillment of duties arising from the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000*'.

In 2011/12 the costs of running the LAF came to: £5,829.41, as follows:

Reason	Costs (£)
<i>Meetings - venues, refreshments</i>	£369.82
<i>Training, attending conferences, subscriptions, etc.</i>	£84.20
<i>Transport</i>	£176.85
<i>Administration & Various</i>	£5,086.50

In addition, costs such as postage and some stationery have been absorbed by the RoW Service at HCC.

What's in store for the coming year?



Dates for the next **Public Meetings**:

- *Wednesday 12th September 2012*
- *Tuesday 4th December 2012*
- *Wednesday 6th March 2013*
- *Wednesday 5th June 2013*

All meetings are still being held at the University of Hertfordshire's College Lane campus, Hatfield. This free venue provides an accessible location by car and public transport. Due to increasing costs for catering and cuts in budget, the members voted on an ad-hoc menu provided by local supermarkets and only order tea/coffee from the venue's catering department and savings are still being made.

LAF Website & Twitter



The LAF website: www.hertslaf.org.uk continues to be regularly updated and used as a source of information by members and the public alike.

@HertsLAF, under which the LAF broadcasts on Twitter is going strong. We are always looking for contributions of articles and references to create 140 character phrases for each working day of the month. Do you have any news, walks or anything to do with access to the countryside in Hertfordshire and its enjoyment, If so please send them to administrator@hertslaf.org.uk. Our followers have also increased and they now count to over 200.

A screenshot of the Twitter profile page for HertsLAF. The page shows the profile picture (the Local Access Forum logo), the name 'HertsLAF (HertsLAF)', and statistics: 218 Followers, 81 Following, 2,962 Updates, and 44 Klout. The bio reads: 'Passionate about access issues. It advise on strategy & planning. Works closely with local RoW. Meet quarterly @UH in Hatfield. Open to the public. Get in touch'. The website link is 'http://www.hertslaf.org.uk' and the join date is 'Mon May 17 11:13:42 +0000 2010'.

218	81	2,962	44
Followers	Following	Updates	Klout

Location Hertfordshire

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Twitter <http://twitter.com/HertsLAF>

Website <http://www.hertslaf.org.uk>

Joined Mon May 17 11:13:42 +0000 2010

@HertsLAF statistics

Our website and Twitter presence have helped to raise the HertsLAF profile and have produced interest from people that in time have applied and joined the Forum.

If you are still unsure of what Twitter is all about, feel free to contact the administrator or check <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter> . Should you want to open a Twitter account, go to our website (www.hertslaf.org.uk), click on the 'How to open a Twitter account' guide which is down-loadable and start tweeting.

Our contacts:

LAF Secretary/Administrator: Ms Anna Mangini

Tel: 07778 241768

Email: administrator@hertslaf.org.uk

LAF website: www.hertslaf.org.uk

Twitter: @HertsLAF

Alternatively you can write to:

Hertfordshire LAF Secretary, c/o Rights of Way Service, CHN103, Environment Department,
Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DN

If you cannot find what you are looking for, please contact the Local Access Forum via the above links or go to the '**Contact Us**' page on our website. Alternatively, if you wish to contact any of the members, but do not have access to the internet, please write to the address above: