

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Name of LAF: Hertfordshire

Name of LAF Chair: Liddy Lawrence

Name of LAF Secretary: Kavita Gooch

Number of LAF members: 14

1 - Involvement and Representation

What interests does your current membership cover?

Interests	Numbers	Interests	Numbers
Walking	4	Disability	1
Cycling	3	Biodiversity	6
Horse Riding	2	Families/Youths	2
Carriage	1	Public Transports & Users	2
M/C	1	Minorities	1
4x4	1	PC/DC Experience	3
Land/Farm Owner	4	U3A	1
Health/Social Care	1	Shooting	2

What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing?

None

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors:

We have found those volunteers representing disabilities are over subscribed with numerous requests to be reps on forums and therefore struggle to be able to give their time.

2 - Operation of LAF

What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective?

We use HCC's expenses forms and that keeps things efficient. New applications are vetted by HCC LAF liaison officer & the Chair, an informal interview undertaken and a decision made against set criteria, which keeps things straightforward.

How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team?

Through the recruitment process we actively seek those who can communicate, have the capacity to compromise and who listen. With a strong chair we keep debates in control. With the use of sub-groups we put smaller teams together who have a specific interest in certain areas of access.

In what ways do you reach consensus?

Consensus is not always reached but strong chairing of a debate can say where we have mixed opinions we agree to disagree. Otherwise through detailed presentations we draw-out the main issues and provide information and education on which members can rely.

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts?

Has not been a particular problem to date. Non-attendance at meetings is followed-up and disagreements are kept polite.

Give up to 3 examples of where you have encountered operational difficulties (e.g. lack of resources); explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate such issues:

- 1 - Errors in venue booking - resolved with direct contact to follow-up.
- 2 - Attendance at meetings - addressed through direct contact and more recruitment.
- 3 - Limited resources - carefully managed to achieve best value.

3 - Partnership and Progress

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not?

Yes, very good relations with Rights of Way Service, Countryside Management Service, Highways and senior local authority management.

Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not?

A little hit and miss, depending on the enthusiasm of individual contact officers in planning teams. They are frequently reminded of being section 94 bodies and asked / reminded to engage, where required.

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area?

Yes, as strategic advisory body on access matters we are well linked-in to the Rights of Way Service, Countryside Management Service, Highways and senior local authority management.

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your work programme (please provide supporting information)?

- It was a priority to maintain the good relationship with Hertfordshire County Council's RoW and its officers as well as the secretarial support and recruitment efforts.

The good relationship persists. A new secretary has been appointed and settled-in very well and LAF Member recruitment efforts have proved successful with the addition of a younger member bringing a different dimension to the Forum.

- Funding for secretarial support and associated costs.

This was committed by the local authority and the support for the LAF's work was very generous and helpful.

- To work with HCC RoW in implementing as many improvements as possible from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Support, including financial for the P4C project work was very generous and helpful and the route to be created addresses RoWIP desires.

Have you achieved something else?

P4C bid supported at Heartwood Forest, Sandridge - upgrade of a footpath to bridleway and creation of extra links to provide a safe off-road link between the village, the new forestry / open access area and the Nomansland Common.

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Main or notable achievements?

Lobbied Lafarge Tarmac to open up access to new country park at Panshanger, Hertford and first 3 mile route is now open.

We have engaged with the LNP (Local Nature Partnership) to ensure access issues are included on their agenda.

The local authority's 'Active Travel Strategy' consultation workshop was well attended by the LAF members, keeping the needs of non-motorised users firmly on the agenda.

Ramblers President, Kate Ashbrook, made a visit to Hertfordshire after the publication of their 'Councils of Concern' report and the LAF chair attended to paint a fuller picture of access work in Herts.

4 - Profile and Direction

Has anything changed over the last year?

Successful recruitment of 1 new member and a new secretary.

What changes / barriers can you see ahead?

Further funding reductions of the core Rights of Way budgets put more reliance on scarce s106 funding for access improvements and reduced numbers of officers means less support available to take projects forward.

What are your priorities for the year ahead (list up to 3)?

- 1 - Engage with the 10 LPAs on their emerging LDF core strategies.
- 2 - Engage with the LEP over economic growth opportunities and green infrastructure issues.
- 3 - Engage with the H&W Board to highlight the need for good countryside access to help deliver the core public health outcomes.

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities?

Planning awareness for LDFs and support in terms of getting s94 bodies to realise their responsibilities to take account of our advice and to respond to us.

5 - Section 94 Bodies

Give up to 3 examples of advice given by your LAF to section 94 bodies:

- 1 - Ellenbrook Fields, Hatfield - lobbied the LPA to deliver old s106 promises.
- 2 - Panshanger Country Park, Hertford - lobbied HCC and landowner to open-up promised access asap.
- 3 - Hunsdon Airfield, East Herts - advised HCC Rights of Way on desires for access under new ownership.

6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on? 0

How many cases have you responded to? 0

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases: n/a

7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year (please add numbers into the boxes below)?

Public meetings	4	Working groups	1
Training days	2	Definitive map modification orders	0
Highway orders	0	Green Infrastructure strategies	1
Gating orders	0	Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	1
Cycle projects	2	Disabled access	1
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders	0	Housing development schemes	1
Planning applications	4	PROW network and projects	4
ROWIP planning and objectives	4	Local development frameworks and planning strategies	6
Local Nature Partnerships	3	Recording of paths and promoting use	1
Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access	1	Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	0
Slipways and landing stages - public access to	0	Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	3
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council	1	Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	3
Shoreline management plans	0	Rail freight interchange strategic development	1
Network rail and rail crossing closures	0	Access and nature conservation	1
Horse routes and equestrian provision	1	Multi user routes	3

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

National Parks	0	Coastal access	1
Motorised vehicle access	3	Access to MOD land	0
New town & village green registration government consultation	1	Natural England consultations	2
Defra consultations	1	Commons grazing proposals	3
Highways Agency consultations	1	Department for Transport consultations	1
Other (please specify):			

8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority:

The LAF members are active and provide useful advice to the Rights of Way Service, Countryside Management Service, Highways and senior management. The balance of interests represented reminds us regularly not to make assumptions based on one party's view. The value that the forum brings includes keeping communication open.

9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:

2012-13 has been a time of challenge for the LAF forum, with many changes coming into force and financial restraints being introduced.

Communication among LAF members across the country and with Natural England has become easier, with NE making it's computer based system, known as 'Huddle', available to all LAF members, though it does require time and attention to manage.

The Eastern Region has once again been provided with a LAF coordinator who is working hard to keep the 10 LAFs informed and in communication about Natural England's developments, and in turn listening to our views and recommendations.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is in the process of reorganising its management of websites, which means that the HertsLAF website will be managed more efficiently and swiftly and we are hopeful that this will improve arrangements to make access information more readily available to the public.

We have had some success in recruitment and are delighted to have as a new member a student from the University of Hertfordshire and also to have retained our outgoing county councillor as an individual member, whilst welcoming our new and enthusiastic new county councillor.

The financial situation of local authorities remains of concern, with evidence of cuts in personnel and contracts becoming evident. HCC is clear about what needs to be done to balance its books and open to discussion with LAF and others such as the Ramblers and British Horse Society about priorities and making amendments where possible or appropriate.

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

LAF members have become engaged with the LNP and Health and Wellbeing Board, though it is still unclear as to how these bodies will work in practice in relation to LAF and access issues.

In 2013 I attended the National LAF Conference which was a successful event on many levels – it was heartening to hear of so much development and so many ideas being put into practice across the country and good to meet members of Natural England and exchange views on projects underway.

Once again it is thanks to HCC officers and LAF members that I can report on lively and interesting public meetings, informative and useful field trips, all well attended and with positive outcomes. LAF members are now becoming well established on several 'friends of' groups, on committees and on management boards of various organisations in Hertfordshire, with the aim of representing and promoting access. A notable achievement has been the award of P4C funding from NE for improved access around Heartwood Forest in Sandridge.

I remain impressed with the time and effort LAF members give to LAF matters and for the support given by HCC which enables us to continue with the work of the forum.

Liddy Lawrence

HertsLAF Chair
