

## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2013 to March 2014

Name of LAF: Hertfordshire

Name of LAF Chair: Liddy Lawrence

Name of LAF Secretary: Kavita Gooch

Number of LAF members: 15

Number of LAF vacancies: 1

### 1 - Involvement and Representation

What interests does your current membership cover?

Interests	Numbers	Interests	Numbers
Walking	6	Disability	2
Cycling	4	Biodiversity	6
Horse Riding	3	Families/Youth	2
Carriage	1	Public Transport & 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?

Formal representation for the 10 District & Borough Councils in Herts.

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors: Representation from District / Borough Councils.

### 2 - Operation of LAF

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

Herts CC's expenses form is used, which keeps things efficient. New applications are vetted by HCC Officer & LAF Chair, an informal interview undertaken and a decision made against set criteria, which keeps recruitment consistent & efficient.

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

Through the recruitment process we actively seek those who listen, can communicate, have the capacity to compromise and who 'wear more than one hat' i.e. have more than one area of interest / experience to bring to the HertsLAF. 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.

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### 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 issues worked through. Differences of opinion are kept polite and, as above, where there are mixed opinions, LAF members can agree to disagree.

### 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 - Limited resources and sourcing free or cheap venues to book for meetings - resolved with direct contact to follow-up.
- 2 - Attendance at meetings - addressed through direct contact and more recruitment.
- 3 - Limited resources overall - carefully managed to achieve best value and helped by members awareness that any expenditure comes from the LA Rights of Way budget and therefore impacts on front-line maintenance budgets & resources for other duties.

## 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.

### Main or notable achievements?

- 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.

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 forest / open access area and the Nomansland Common.

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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, expanding the experience of the membership to cover disability issues via a partnership arrangement with HAD (Herts Action on Disability), where any of their members may attend and advise the LAF.

What changes / barriers can you see ahead?

Further funding reductions to the core Rights of Way budgets and reduced numbers of officers means less support available to the LAF and puts more reliance on scarce section 106 funding to achieve any access improvements or to take projects forward.

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

- 1 - Engage with the LNP over combined access & wildlife issues & opportunities and green infrastructure issues.
- 2 - Engage with the H&W Board to highlight the need for good countryside access to help deliver the core public health outcomes.
- 3 - Engage with the LEP over economic growth opportunities and green infrastructure issues.

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

Planning awareness for LDFs and support in terms of getting section 94 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 - Lobbied HertsCC to protect both the Access & RoW Service and the Countryside Management Service budgets, to continue to deliver duties and projects across the county.
- 2 - Lobbied St. Albans District Council to consider horse use of the Alban Way, disabled access users of Verulamium Park where FPs were upgraded to allow cycling and the Oaklands college development site to create a better joined-up network.
- 3 - Panshanger Country Park, Hertford - continued to lobby HCC and landowner to open-up promised access asap and upgrade FPs to BRs.

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### 6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on? 0

How many cases have you responded to? 0

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 and only count specific consultations once even if advice has been given on them a number of times. If a consultation covers more than one subject area, please count them separately as appropriate.**

Public meetings (e.g. LAF meetings)	4	Working groups	2
Training days	2	Definitive map modification orders	0
Highway orders	0	Green Infrastructure strategies	0
Gating orders	0	Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	0
Cycle projects	2	Disabled access	2
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders	0	Housing development schemes	1
Planning applications	3	PROW network and projects	2
ROWIP planning and objectives	1	Local development frameworks and planning strategies	2
Local Nature Partnerships	1	Recording of paths and promoting use	0
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	1
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council	1	Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	0

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Shoreline management plans	0	Rail freight interchange strategic development	1
Network rail and rail crossing closures	1	Access and nature conservation	1
Horse routes and equestrian provision	1	Multi user routes	1
National Parks	0	Coastal access	0
Motorised vehicle access	0	Access to MOD land	0
New town & village green registration government consultation	0	Natural England consultations	0
Defra consultations	1	Commons grazing proposals	1
Highways Agency consultations	0	Department for Transport consultations	1
<p><b>Other (please specify):</b> Chilterns AONB engagement. LAF Member representation on other local groups; e.g. St. Albans Access Forum / Woodland Trust's Heartwood Forest management group / Friends of Panshanger Country Park &amp; Aldenham Country Park.</p>			

### 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 also includes keeping communication open with the broad range of stakeholders represented.

**9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:** 2013-2014 has seen LAF Members active in many aspects of access in Hertfordshire, despite having a range of other commitments. LAF Members have attended public meetings, field trips and business meetings and continued to provide work for the HCC Rights of Way Service as a result of all the issues debated and cases seen. We remain concerned about the matter of the number of public in attendance at LAF meetings, though some subjects prove more popular than others. The challenges facing us are the budget cuts to the Rights of Way Service and the proposed outsourcing of the Countryside Management Service in Herts. We value the continuing role of the LAF Regional Coordinator and our links with other LAFs. I would like to thank once again the members of the HertsLAF for their continued time and dedication to the Forum and the officers of HCC for their ongoing support.

Liddy Lawrence  
Chair, HertsLAF