



## Hertfordshire Local Access Forum



### 68<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes

January 2021

(Zoom)

**LAF Members:** Liddy Lawrence (Chair) **LL**, Diana Collingridge **DC**, Russell Huffer **RH**, Brian Worrell **BW**, Debbie Pearlman-Hougie **DPH**, Paul Christian **PC**, Bianca Badham **BB**, Rosalind David **RD**, Gary O’Leary **GL**, Ian Gregory **IG**, Chris Hall **CH**, Cllr Mark Mills-Bishop **MMB**, Rosemary Gillingham **RG**, Dianna Collingridge **DC**

**Guests:** John Featherstone **JF** BHS, Cllr Ben Crystal **BC**.

**Apologies:** Cllr Chris Lloyd **CL**

**HCC Officers:** Tony Bradford **TB** & Richard Cuthbert **RC**

#### 1. CROW Service Update – RC & TB

- Funding confirmed for next year; Revenue funding situation remains the same.
- Officer support while all working at home/ from home, going well.
- Internal arrangements between Richard’s team and Lee’s team means there is good liaison between both teams in terms of new Enforcement Officer’s time and resources.
- Two staff members however on maternity leave which are overlapping.
- New Enforcement Officer – Steve Whiting has now filled this role. Has 20-30 years’ experience in the police force and therefore has very transferrable skills.
- Technical Officer has resigned (David Bambury). Worked mainly on GIS support, landowner deposits and temporary path closures. Jackie Turner newly recruited as replacement.
- Hertfordshire Health Walks programme completely suspended. Main users are at high risk, so not feasible to run whilst under current restrictions and will restart when allowed & is sensible.
- Access Project Officers largely continue the same. Lots of possibilities to work from home and sensibly distance on site visits by themselves. Managed to undertake most daily tasks within COVID19 restrictions.
- Land Management Team latest project is the Cole Green Way surfacing.
- Working on the new Active Travel Design guide (draft) - Encouraging 6m wide multi-user routes. LAF consultation shortly.
- Communities team largely in action on RoW tasks.
- Tree officer part-time with CROW and part with Sustainable Herts Team. Using his skills across the department.

- **TB** HCC Health walks suffering from constantly changing lockdown dates. Comfortable with risk assessment processes when we can restart. Assistant project officer addition to the team – both officers during first lockdown had been redeployed. One of the assistant officers will be redeployed in vaccine management.
- Definitive Map Orders. Back to position before previous lockdown. Orders not on public display where they should be. Public scrutiny therefore not effective. Difficulties figuring out how to get information on public display. Possible to put notices in shop windows/advertisement in local newspapers?
- **RG** – Put notices on planning portals? **RC** Good idea, different across all the districts in county, but worth looking into.
- **DPH** – Covered by COVID19 Emerging Legislation? **RC** No, not covered. No specific legislation has been addressed by gov. for our area.
- **GL** – technical requirement ‘available for public inspection’. **RC** Carrying a risk if we press-on, there could be a challenge to HCC handling of orders. Risk of public raising a technical challenge.

- **COVID19**
- **TB** Management issues given this is ‘a marathon not a sprint’. Learning to ensure robust and shared protocols undertaken, especially around land management, RoW & Green Space management. Everybody engaged throughout who is working on this, work can therefore re-start as soon as restrictions allow. Will be well-planned and reactive, safe for staff, volunteers and members of public. Lots of changing guidelines and legislation being released, officers all up-to-date. Flexible staff when balancing tasks.
- **RC** Risk Assessments need adjusting for any LAF field trip. Prep completed so organisation of trip can be speedy once allowed.
- **LL** – PTRO review update? **RC** site visits undertaken. Write-ups giving picture of current issues, which will form basis for first stage informal public consultation. 30 summaries to be produced. Expecting lots of responses representing both main arguments. Second stage will be formal statutory consultation. Timeline 6 months+ (minimum). **LL** – Is there a role for LAF? **RC** – Yes, part of informal & formal consultations. **CH** - What is LAF involvement? **RC** – LAF can make recommendations as a collective or individual responses, not compulsory.
- **MB** – backlog on DM? **RC** – 306 modification cases, and coming-in faster than processing is possible. New starters in DM Team working on this, with good knowledge of experienced DMOs for training. This County seeing lots of apps from activists researching UCRs (unclassified county roads), where there’s doubt about their legal status, protection and future. RoW professionals are expecting (not yet confirmed) that applications will be saved at 2026 cut-off.
- **BW** – priorities to speed up enforcement? **RC** – initial training over first weeks. Steve W being exposed to high priority case list. Priorities will be shared (**SW**).

## **2. Member Updates**

- **DPH** – Aldenham; Not much to report – reservoir not being able to be fully accessed. 1938 covenant, stating landowner cannot build or fence anything on the land. Therefore landowner provided access to the land & that is now extended till mid-February. Some Pins Inspectors have resigned / retired impacting on their backlog.
- **RC** – Symondshyde Great Wood - Bridleways not usable due to forestry extraction.

- **LL** - Walked A414 great new crossing at London Colney longabout. Straight across with traffic lights. Very happy and easy to use. Sets precedent. **TB** – Please put feedback on highways webpage for this crossing – CRoW engaged with the Highways team on these type of projects. Regular meetings with Highways and A414 project had direct involvement from CRoW Service.
- **CH** – Permit system proposed for byway, to prevent motorbike usage. State of byways poor. Foxes lane flooding again. Byways at Datchworth and Bennington, TRF – contacting government authorities as trail riding was an approved activity.
- **BW** – concerned about local cycling and walking infrastructure plans. LAF involvement? Oxfordshire and Bucks example – cycling plans using restricted byways and bridleways expected to be tarmaced over. Inside town is justified. Taking over particular ROW in other less urban areas not acceptable, and needs to be prevented – are similar plans being developed in Herts? is HertsLAF is on highways consultees list? **RC** to check this. **TB** – working on similar plan in Stevenage – county council website has a good search feature to find out more on Growth and Transport Plans - search the website to find consultation documents. Principally a transport planning function. **IG** – Highways meeting tomorrow. County council has prepared plans for Tring and Berkhamsted, North Herts, 3R, StAlbans, & Watford; all got LCWIPs in progress. **LL** – how does consultation contact come through to LAF? **RC** – will come through LAF email address managed by **RC**.
- **BW** – the Old Bourne. Heritage lottery fund to surface the bridleway along the it, would have improved horse riding. HCC rejected support therefore grant funding lost? **TB** – to clarify, who had suggested this grant aid was successfully acquired? Work was very early stages with British Horse Society (BHS). No application to heritage fund has been made is TB's understanding. This will be addressed via email (**TB**).
- **IG** – emerging guidance for non-motorised routes. Active travel road closures in city centre of StAlbans – small gaps make it impossible for certain transport modes to get through. Prohibiting motor vehicles must sit alongside promoting other transport modes, including cycling. **RC** - RoW and Highways cases can progress more smoothly in other LA areas, however cases often held-up in Herts by stronger protests.
- **RD** - NFU put out polite notices on educating individuals on ever-widening footpaths due to boggy ground. Went for walk around the greenway in Letchworth. Has been flooded and still getting lots of use. Farmers are trying to help educate and **RD** happy to catch up with **RC** on these issues.
- **DPH** – reports in Wheathampstead area. Farmers putting electric fences up to narrow path / prevent widening. **RD** electric fencing allowed for livestock protection. Farmers facing footpath erosion/widening issues and asking users to wear appropriate footwear so they can stay on the path. All issues similar to this **RD** happy to be consulted. North country experiencing the same issues. Henry Holland-Hibbert to be invited talk to LAF about these pressures. All agreed that it would be good to hear from him.
- **DC** – people must adapt to weather. Use hardened pathways more appropriate in wet weather. Woodlands particularly vulnerable.
- **TB** Astonbury Wood. Different levels of engagement on different sites managed by Rural Estate (RE) property team. CRoW Management plan delivered first year through relationship with RE. Some land being offered for sale instead of being managed in-house. Petition on HCC website currently – over 650 signatures which will be put before Members. TB had been involved in previous round of delivering the plan.

Woodland was previously put up for sale and no sale was agreed however understood it would have gone back into community. Management plan was required. Land managed by RE team. Majority of work frontloaded at beginning of the plan. Unsure how the woodland has got to stage of being on sale again. Petition to stop this. **TB** trying to get better understanding of this issue. Very involved with RE team and the team happy with CRoW work in various other areas across Herts. **DC** – it has great recreational potential. **TB** – wants to continue to be involved in the management of the woodland, however does not have the power to control all decision making on this land as part of the wider HCC organisation.

#### Useful Links

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/dec/17/savour-the-squelch-and-stick-to-paths-to-protect-beauty-spots-walkers-urged>
- [Building Futures Conference & Awards 2021 \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/building-futures-conference-awards-2021)