



Hertfordshire Local Access Forum



74th Meeting Minutes 14th June 2022

(via Zoom)

Present

Liddy Lawrence, Chair (LL), Ian Gregory, Vice-Chair (IG), Chris Hall (CH), Debbie Hougie (DH); Brian Worrell (BW), Cllr Mark Mills-Bishop (MMB), Paul Christian (PC), Russell Huffer (RH); Cllr Chris Lloyd (CL), Robert Bolt (RB); Josh Redford (NFU) (JR), Laura Frey (LF);
- Richard Cuthbert, CRoW Service (RC).

Welcome

John Featherstone (BHS), Chris Beney, (OSS / BADFA), Dr Phil Wadey (BHS);

Apologies; Diana Collingridge (DC), Rosemary Gilligan (RG);

- Tony Bradford (TB) & Lee Tyson (LT) CRoW Service,
- David Keeley (StAAF).

Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy (SHS) - Following HCC's Climate Emergency Declaration in July 2019, HCC committed to develop a Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy that sets out initial policies and strategies needed to embed sustainability across all council operations and services and throughout the county. – **Julie Greaves, Head of Sustainability, Sustainable Growth Dept.**

See; [Sustainable Hertfordshire](#)

- Julie explained the international, national, and county level climate change issues, from flooding, to tree stress, to species extinction.
- Definition from Brundtland report being used for SHS – thinking beyond today in managing everything we do and assessing impacts.
- UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals being used – see slides.
- Action Plan and £12M HCC funding secured. Team grown to 11 staff.
- 9 Ambitions, 4 inward facing & 5 external; wide reaching, covering every HCC Dept.
- Energy / Air Quality / Pollinator and RoWIP plans all in-place.
- Focus on sustainable growth from the Leader & through all Teams.
- Active Travel & hedgerows policies (inc RoWIP), linking with biodiversity.
- Planning applications, local & neighbourhood plans being influenced.

Continued over...

Herts Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) in-place with LEP, UofH, and 11 Local Authorities as members.

County wide actions plans for water, biodiversity, transport and carbon; plus more (adaptation and behaviour change) to follow.

Information is key to overcome eco-anxieties to share understanding and spark change.

1.29M residents of Herts can all make a difference.

Questions:

- What about school travel issues? – Aware Herts not an ideal county for safe & sustainable school travel, but lots of initiatives in-place by the Safer & Active Travel Team, including ‘Bikeability’, anti-idling and walk/cycle to school weeks. Adults armed with info to go to hotspots and engage with those driving and idling there. Programme Manager appointed to deliver air quality agenda county wide. Investing in ‘Healthy Streets’ and won Defra funds to target air quality issues.
- Liaison with the farming community? – who are also doing a lot for ponds, hedgerows, nectar mix and poor land issues. – Yes, had NFU visit HCCSP; also delivering the ‘Queen’s Green Canopy’ on farms as well as HCC land. Liaison with CRoW Service to deliver the new Env. Land Management Scheme. Officers working on Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain and HCC’s Rural Estate involved.
- Affinity Water excellent work with farmers around water sensitive issues – Yes, critical friend for writing Water strategy, as well as other water cos.
- Local Authorities declaring climate emergency – used as ‘very special circumstance’ to allow solar farms on farmland – but local opposition not understanding climate issues – How do we explain / get messages across for links to planning system? – Agreed lack of understanding and lack of understanding for planners – Giving masterclasses to planners and attend Herts Planners’ Group to understand their issues – officers learning from each other. Also elected members with planning portfolios invited to sessions. Over 50% of Herts is Greenbelt but can have solar on it with biodiversity as well. Developer responsibility needed as part of information and awareness raising as well.
- 11 LAs consistency of language encouraged across Herts and dedicated Comms Officer out & about at events to spread awareness, e.g. with UofH, Herts & Essex Wildlife Trust, but Youth voice still missing so starting to engage with Youth organisations.
- Issues of minority groups in planning system losing out, e.g. equestrians – why don’t local plans address climate change? – 12 local plans, all at different stages, and ages, StAlbans very old, Wel-Hat still being prepared and others very new; but planning apps must be considered in accordance with those plans, no matter how out of date and the NPPF, which has been updated and now includes the sustainable development goals above. Both Hemel & Harlow Garden Communities developments are looking at things such as heat pumps and sustainable travel.

- Planners must comment in accordance with Policies or risk appeals, so where Local Plans are out of date new NPPF and climate emergencies declared in 8 out of 10 BC/DCs in Herts can be relied on instead.
- Building Regs are not helping as need updating, which is due in 2024.
- Online meetings (like HertsLAF) are more sustainable. Council meetings need to follow suit.
- Water concerns especially in Herts & SE England likely to be exacerbated by housing numbers in all districts. – There's an anomaly where building brings a duty to supply water. Planners will need to take advice and comments from water companies, as statutory consultees.

Access Land scheduled review, headed by Lord Agnew, recently shelved – **RC/LL**

- Change and uncertainty in farming and land management; [Farming is changing - Future Farming \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2023/05/24/farming-is-changing-future-farming/)
- Where is the money and where will see it, in reality, in Herts.?
- Active Travel funds have been received and projects are being delivered across Herts., inc Stevenage and Wel-Hat.

Countryside & Rights of Way Service (CRoWS) Updates

- **LT** – Access news & updates / capital projects update – Recruitment (send to DPH), KPIs.
- **RC** – DM&E news & updates 2026 cut-off update, KPI on target last quarter.
- Nick Turan / Rory McMullen developing Active Travel Strategy - Contacting cycle forums.
- PTRO Review – Project Plan to be created and shared.

Minutes & Matters Arising

- **Ridgeway Update (BW)** – Combined Delivery Group meeting & field trip to HS2 to see impacts on Rights of Way at Wendover, inc. steep slope on BR and limestone surfacing looking good, but cyclist doing 35 mph downhill with main road at foot of hill & what signs would be helpful for all users sharing route. SSSI next door, which HS2 should not affect. Links to station, cafes, pubs, and shops to sustain a sensible cycle strategy.
- Early May field trip postponed – to be rearranged for September.

Members Updates.

- **IG** – New cycle & community centre at Cottonmill, St Albans. BR18 Little Berkhamsted obstruction issue – Members updated with current stage of Modification Order going to PINS.
- **DPH** – Aldenham Reservoir path case, Inspector walking the path this week, then Decision Report awaited.
- UofH MSc Transport Planners talked about equestrians on cycle tracks and getting around.
- **LF** – looked at gates and stiles in Oxfordshire at the National Access Centre – recommended to group.

- **CH** – TRF objected to Therfield Orders to add UCRs to the Definitive Map.
- **CL** – Thanks to all as great to learn about all the issues. Thanks to Julian and other APO colleagues.
- **LL** – Cottonmill Level Crossing to have warning lights and bells. LL to send RC details.

Guests Questions;

- **CB** – thank you very interesting.
- **PW** – will LAF write to HCC to encourage not to cut RoW budgets at this time with all the good things we are delivering. Argue that tarmac benefits less users than adding routes to the map for all to use.
- 2026 cut-off abandoned and rest of Deregulation Act being pursued, including changing Directions to Determine old order applications to a Magistrates Court system.
- **JF** – Written to Mark Kemp, Director of E&T Dept on major development areas and road schemes (A602 Watton and Colney heath longabout) with improvements for cyclists but not for equestrians. **RC** to chase-up letter sent approx. a month ago and ask for response.
- **Colney longabout** includes a foot & cycle bridge and a light controlled crossing for foot & cycle, whereas equestrians have no controlled crossing and no promised road markings done yet, leading to the crossing not being used. Crossing further west desired as a better route for riders – **to be pursued**. Local Member involved and answers requested. **RC**

AOB.

See: <https://www.allourfootsteps.uk/blog-1/a-question-of-stile-part-one-stiles-as-heritage> blog and this project on the cultural heritage of the stile.

Dates of 2022 meetings:

- Weds 14th September
- Tues 6th December