

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report Proforma

* Reporting year	April 2011 – March 2012
* Name of LAF	HertsLAF
* Name of LAF secretary	Anna Mangini

Review of Current reporting year

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your Annual Report or LAF work programme? Please provide supporting information.

- Advising HCC to prioritise a delayed bridleway dedication on HCC land, which gave the impetus needed to conclude the legal paperwork and open the route, providing important links to an open access land area;
- Woodland Trust's new Heartwood Forest - HertsLAF comments taken up by Access Officer to gain bridleway routes across the site. Regular meetings now being held of all interested local parties;
- Negotiations for the dedication of BR missing link to provide safe off-road access to the Heartwood Forest with local land owner;
- ROWIP working group assessment and rewriting of the local area implementation plan for St Albans District – all done by volunteers including LAF member/s;
- Ellenbrook Country Park development - HertsLAF chasing undelivered access improvements with landowners and planners;
- Panshanger – HertsLAF campaigning for quicker delivery of promised access;
- Commons fencing & grazing – ongoing heated debate on issues of access and fencing proposal by a Parish Council;
- Ongoing input to the development of LDFs by 10 District Councils. LAF comments sent to those consultations received.

*** How many Open Access Restriction cases have you been informed about/involved with?**

None

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

HertsLAF have a very good relationship with the Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Service and the officers there who provide technical advice at and between meetings, as well as overseeing the secretariat and recruitment issues. HertsLAF advice has made an obvious difference to the following cases:

- Strategic Rail Freight Interchange development - HertsLAF objections to planning proposal and comments on access mitigation integrated with local authority objections. SoS' decision still awaited;
- Alban Way management plan review - HertsLAF comments on providing for horse access taken up by HCC officers in their response to district council management plan review. District Council decision still awaited;
- HertsLAF have engaged with the emerging county's LNP to ensure access issues are included with wildlife topics.

Give up to three examples where you have encountered difficulties; explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate this issue:

- Difficulties in gaining access to original signed document agreements for s106 and planning conditions in respect of Ellenbrook Fields and Panshanger country parks to check and demand implementation of promised access. Public bodies are reminded of their s94 duty and FoI Act can be used where necessary;
- Difficulties in gaining all-party consensus among the LAF members on certain controversial issues. Members compromise where possible and the Chair takes forward the majority's view;
- Recruitment difficulties – see below.

Do you have any issues with recruitment of members from particular interest groups? Does this hinder your work in any way?

- There are currently vacancies for representatives in the following fields: land managers, horse-riders and disabled access needs. The forum is continuously open to new recruitment and follows up any leads to attract new members;
- Members wrote to a selection of local possible contacts for a representative to fill the vacancies of Land Owners/Land Managers;
- The importance of keeping a website presence up to date was shown when the most recent new member (a cyclist) was recruited after becoming aware of the LAF from the web-pages.

Comments from appointing authority

The Rights of Way Service has a good relationship with the members of the LAF and work closely with the secretary. HertsLAF advice has helped to make an obvious difference to the following cases:

- Alban Way management plan review - HertsLAF comments on providing for horse access taken up by HCC officers in the response to the district council management plan review;
- HertsLAF comments on commons grazing proposals led Rights of Way officers to query fencing permissions and local councils to review their approach;
- First-hand farming knowledge from LAF members has helped develop our understanding of what farmers will and won't be interested in for access improvement proposals;
- The range of user group desires represented has helped to keep very good lines of communication open between officers and those groups.

Forward Look

What are your priorities for next year (list up to 3)

- It is 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;
- Funding for secretarial support and associated costs is committed, however funding for project work and sub groups is now going to be far more difficult to find and will need and have to be high priority to be successful. The use of s106 funding will need to be maximised;
- To work with HCC RoW in implementing as many improvements as possible from the "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" - especially routes meeting the LAF and council's priorities and providing 'best value', particularly routes for all non-motorised, vulnerable road users, especially via the P4C grant funding and safe routes to school.

*What support/training will you need to be able to deliver these priorities?

- Understanding and better awareness by LAF members of LNP and LEP in order to exert influence on LNP and LEP locally to deliver access opportunities;
- Understanding and better awareness by LAF members of the new CIL regime and how it will relate to s106 funding from developments.

Do you perceive any barriers to delivering your priorities?

- Priority to maintain contact with the HCC RoW for ongoing technical support despite less resources and workforce available;
- To maintain pressure on the county council about their priorities, by pointing out that the RoW network is sustainable, helps to cut down on CO2, traffic, etc., and provides a natural way to help the environment.
- RoWIP funding issues - due to 25% budget cuts leaving just s106/CIL and the P4C grant funding to deliver network improvements.

Any other comments