



Hertfordshire Local Access Forum



Ellenbrook Fields

20th October 2001

Mr Daniel Pagella
Goodman
10 Old Burlington Street
London
W1S 3AG

Dear Mr Pagella,

I am writing on behalf of the Hertfordshire Local Access Forum (LAF). The HertsLAF is a strategic advisory body set-up by the County Council as a statutory requirement of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. Our role is to advise the County Council and other bodies on access issues.

Following our recent field-trip to Ellenbrook Fields on the 14th September, we note that Ellenbrook Fields is a fantastic open space and we would like to congratulate you on the conservation grazing that is in place. We do have some concerns though on the access element and would like to offer some suggestions.

1. The Ellenbrook Lane entrance, which forms the definitive bridleway entrance, has been blocked by numerous means - post and rails placed in the "horse holding" area; wire fence completely blocking the path across the entrance to the sports area; a metal gate further up the road is not "horse friendly" and - as it has a padlock on the lock - we are concerned that people would be dissuaded from entering for fear of being locked in. The LAF wishes this bridleway to be accessible from both ends. At the other end of the definitive bridleway, in Coopers Green Lane, the entrance has a kissing gate which will not allow horse riders or cyclists into Ellenbrook Fields. The surface should also be made good, as in patches it is very boggy and uneven. We understand that Hertfordshire County Council are working with you to ensure that the surfacing is improved and appropriate and that suitable gates or barriers can be installed to prevent motor cycles whilst enabling horse-riders and cyclists to use the entrance.
2. The public information boards inside Ellenbrook give good historical information and are very informative on conservation. However they are not easy to correlate with the paths on the ground and they do not refer to horse-riders at all. The signage on the whole site is in need of some clarity and a more welcoming approach. We would suggest a review of signage is appropriate. This should include signage at all 4 major entrances and clear maps for using the site. The LAF recommends that an additional panel could resolve this, at the same time

stating horse-riders are welcome and showing clear paths for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. We would also like to see signage on this additional panel identifying paths that are suitable for mobility scooters, wheelchair and pushchair users.

3. On our field-trip one of the members was a mobility scooter user. It was almost impossible for the scooter to enter the grazing paddock without the help of other people. The surface around the gate was so uneven and it needs an improved surface to enable people to enter/exit safely.
4. We note that ragwort control is already in progress. We recognise that this is not an easy site to clear and that it will take some years. We recommend that sufficient funds are given for the success of this ongoing work.
5. Just inside the access land entrance point at Beech Farm there is a 'prohibitive' sign stating: "*Strictly no access, this land is dangerous...*". This is not what we expected to find and it is very unwelcoming to all members of the public wanting to use this land. We also note there is a ditch near this point and this needs to be mown or kept visible for the public to see, for safety.
6. The permissive bridleway should be reinstated with safe access and egress to Hatfield Road. The LAF recommends a meeting with the British Horse Society for advice.
7. This site has enormous potential and the LAF recommends that the Rights of Way Service looks at ways of improving paths and safe links to the site for ALL users through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).
8. We also note that there is no parking provision for users of the site. We are aware of good bus links from the Hatfield Road, however we would recommend some provision, particularly for disabled people and people coming from further afield.

Finally we would all like to express our thanks to Tom Williams, of Maydencroft Rural, for taking us around the site, giving us a very interesting talk and answering all of our questions.

We are looking forward to hearing from you and are open and willing to further discussing ideas and proposals should you like to keep us directly in the loop. We meet regularly at the University of Hertfordshire, in Hatfield and would be very happy to meet you if you were to come along to a meeting in an informal way (no obligation to speak publicly!) or on another occasion.

Yours sincerely,



Liddy Lawrence
Chair, Local Access Forum