

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum

ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005



www.hertsdirect.org/laf

This is the second annual report of the Hertfordshire Local Access Forum and contains details of the work undertaken and the advice given, in the period 2004-2005.¹

Introduction

We are now in our second year of advising and supporting Hertfordshire County Council and the Countryside Agency with aspects of public access and rights of way issues. The work of the forum has increased in the past year along with our membership.

We have had debates on a wide range of issues, some initiated by LAF members and others by members of the public. The outcomes have included a broadening of understanding, development of new areas of work for the forum and ongoing advice for the County Council.

I am pleased with the very positive relationship established between the LAF members and officers of the County Council, the regular contributions from other agencies and societies and from individual members of the public.

We continue to look for new members, particularly from groups as yet without representation on the forum. To assist with this we are changing the pattern of LAF meetings for the next 12 months, to include informal meetings in more varied locations.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is now at a critical stage and we hope to see some of the improvements being implemented. The LAF look forward to being able to advise on these improvements.

Liddy Lawrence, Chair.

¹ This report fulfils the requirements of the "Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2002" and guidance set out in a letter from DEFRA dated 26 July 2002

What's in store for the coming year?



The Local Access Forum will have a significant role to play in advising the County Council on its Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The next twelve months will also see the introduction of the new right of access to registered common land and open country, the re-designation of RUPPs and new regulations relating to the use of motorised vehicles off-road.

Who is on your Local Access Forum?



Cllr Rosemary Gilligan	District Councillor representing the Herts LGA
Cllr Bill Storey	County Councillor
Diana Collingridge	Estate management
Tony Ferrari	Cycling and Motorised users
Debbie Hougie	Countryside recreation education, walking
Liddy Lawrence	Needs of elderly and minority groups, walking and cycling
Lynn Myland	Land owner, horse-rider
Mike Render	Forestry, Chilterns AONB
Norman Jones	Walkers, non car owners and public transport.
Roger Thomas	Estate management
Anne Wilkinson	Horse riding

The Forum re elected Liddy Lawrence as Chairman and Roger Thomas as vice chairman in June 2005 for a further 12 months. The Forum is currently seeking three new members to replace recent departures. Representation is being sought from mountain bikers, equestrian users and those who can represent other minority groups.




Retired Members

Peter Ambrose	Mountain Biker, Walker and climber
Sue Barrett	Conservation, Horse riding
Cllr Mary Bayes	County Councillor, Chairman Herts Rural Forum
Rosemary Butler	Environmental management
Charmaine Smith	Landscape, horse riding




What has the Local Access Forum been doing?



The Forum has been consulted and considered advice on the following during its first year.

	Subject	Date
 The Countryside Agency	Research in to how better to support LAFs	March 2005
 Hertfordshire	Rights of Way Improvement Plan – preparing the action plan	21 Sep 2004
	Obstructions on rights of way	
	Maintaining the Definitive Map	6 Dec 2004
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan – roadshows and public consultation	23 Feb 2005
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan – research findings	
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan – update and next steps	25 May 2005
	Access to Water	25 May 2005
	Access to Woodland	25 May 2005
 Countryside Management Service	Healthy Walking in Herts	23 Feb 2005

A number of groups have been invited to attend and speak at forum meetings.

 The British Driving Society	 Local Access Forum	 BRITISH CANOE UNION
The needs of carriage drivers	Access to Woodland	Access to Water

Meetings and attendance

Four meetings convened during this period at a range of different venues.

- 21 Sept 2004 – County Hall, Hertford.
- 6 Dec 2004 – Hatfield Sports Village, University of Herts, Hatfield.
- 23 Feb 2005 – Red Cross Hall, Tring.
- 8 May 2005 – The Sun Hotel, Hitchin.

Agendas are circulated to a wide list of interested parties and posted on the HertsDirect website. Local press advertising is also carried out to encourage members of the public to attend. Unfortunately this has had limited success with public attendance ranging between 3 and 11. Attendance by the Forum members has been good with the substantial majority of members attending all four meetings.

In March 2005 the County Council recruited a part time administrator (Jasmine Smith) to assist with the running of the Forum. This enhanced capacity, using money allocated to the County Council for the administration of the Local Access Forum, now enables the County Council to better support the Forum in its work.

LAF Events



Winter Walkabout

The Forum held their first annual walkabout on Friday 10th December. This provided the opportunity for the Forum to meet socially and experience, as a group, the reality of countryside access. The Forum followed one of the Chilterns Country Walks that are widely available, starting in Lilley. The local Countryside Access Officer Tom Goldsmith accompanied them on the walk and was on hand to answer questions. Tom pointed out some of the improvements that he and his team have made recently, as well as describing proposals for future improvements. Members of the Forum commented that the day “provided a first-hand experience of the problems faced by officers trying to make the countryside more accessible to the public.”

Spring Gathering

The Forum met for an evening at the Waterend Barn in St. Albans to informally discuss the Forum. Members had the opportunity to air their views on how the Forum was meeting its requirements and how further improvements could be made. Members also provided positive feedback from their time on the Forum and what discoveries they had made by working together as a group.

Summer Field Trip

The Forum Summer Field Trip to Broxbourne woods led by Heidi Hutton, Projects Officer for CMS, proved a valuable insight into the improvements being made in the area. The Forum took a circular route from The Woodman public house which also included the newly constructed boardwalks nearing completion in Danesmead Nature Reserve, and sections of the roman road Ermine Street. A sculpture trail is planned for part of the wood and the tour provided a 'before picture' prior to the work beginning and the forum will have the opportunity to visit again in the autumn to see the finished result. The trip allowed the Forum to see and discuss several access points along the route.



Summer Field Trip at Broxbourne Woods

More events will be planned for the future enabling the Forum to get out and about in the countryside, to meet socially and give them and insight into countryside access as a group.

Cost of the Forum



Herts County Council, as Appointing Authority, pays the above-the-line costs for administering the LAF using money allocated for the fulfilment of duties arising from the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. LAF members however, give up their time voluntarily (i.e. for free) and therefore the Forum relies upon its members in a more profound way than it does on HCC.

Costs April 2004 to Mar 2005*	
Public meetings (venues, refreshments)	£973.50
Forum member (Travel expenses, conference fees)	£142.48
Total	£1115.50

*Figures in the table do not take into account the following costs: Officer time in establishing and administering the forum; postage costs or time costs associated with attendance of forum members and or speakers at meetings.

Forum website



The LAF has its own web pages on the County Council website, where up to date information about LAF meetings is stored:

www.hertsdirect.org/laf

If you would like further information on the Local Access Forum, or wish to contact any of it's members please see the contact information below.

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