

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum



ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

www.hertslaf.org.uk

This is the seventh annual report of the Hertfordshire Local Access Forum and contains details of the work done and advice given for the period 2009-2010¹ and of plans for the future.

Introduction

2009/2010 has been as ever a busy year for Herts LAF. Members have attended conferences and workshops, walks and meetings locally and nationally. We have welcomed some new recruits and continue to look for more. As part of this process we have adopted a more formal approach to the knowledge and skills held by members, and I have been impressed by the wide range of interests represented.

Attendance at public meetings has continued to be good - though there is always room for improvement - with the continued use of The University of Hertfordshire as our regular venue.

The first field trip in 2010 covered the site of the proposed rail freight terminal near Park Street

with LAF members seeing for themselves the area affected and considering the likely impact of major road and access changes. Officers were questioned about the input to the consultation by HCC and the district council.

During the summer - for our second field trip - we made a visit to a farm where we discussed with the landowner the growing urban population nearby and the need to accommodate members of the public with dogs, bikes, horses, etc. alongside the need to farm land efficiently and productively.

We are looking forward to another busy year for members as Herts LAF continues to be represented locally, regionally and nationally, for example with the development of Coastal Access as a major issue on the agenda among other projects.

One matter of concern is how current financial constraints will impact on access - and during the next twelve months - Herts LAF will be paying attention to the progress of existing plans and to funding options for any new proposals.

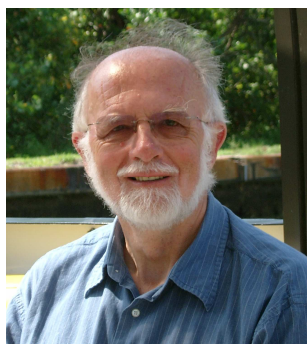
Liddy Lawrence, Chair

¹ This report fulfils the requirements of the "Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2007" and guidance set out in "Guidance on Local Access Forums" from DEFRA dated February 2007

Who are the Members of the Forum?



Liddy Lawrence (Chair)	Needs of elderly and minority groups, walking and cycling
Roger Thomas (Vice Chair)	Estate management
Diana Collingridge	Estate management
Tony Ferrari	Cycling and Motorised users
Cllr Rosemary Gilligan	District Councillor, representing the Herts LGA
Debbie Hougie	Countryside recreation education, walking
Norman Jones	Walkers, non car owners and public transport
Lynn Myland	Land owner, horse-rider
Cllr Bill Storey	County Councillor, Chilterns AONB
Robert Bolt	Transport, walker, PC experience, U3A
Tim Regan	Tree warden and ex-tree surgeon, walker, cyclist & public transport user



Robert Bolt



Tim Regan

Herts LAF new members of the Forum

There are currently vacancies for representatives in the following fields: land managers, horse-riders and disabled access needs. The forum is running a recruitment campaign and is hoping it will attract interest to recruit new members (for more information on how to apply, please log-on to: <http://www.hertslaf.org.uk/news.htm>).

What has the Local Access Forum been doing?



The Forum has been consulted and considered advising on the following topics during the year:

Project/Subject	Status
<i>Gating Orders – new HCC Policy</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Heartwood Forest, Sandridge</i>	<i>Ongoing - since Summer 2008</i>
<i>Local Transport Plan, including Rights of Way Improvement Plan review.</i>	<i>Ongoing - Public consultation due September to December 2010</i>
<i>Chiltern Cycleway</i>	<i>Launched</i>
<i>Planning s106 PRow for the Oaklands Development</i>	<i>On-hold</i>
<i>Commons: Fencing & Grazing</i>	<i>Ongoing - Consultation yet to come</i>
<i>Coastal Access, Consultation</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Strategic Rail Freight Terminal</i>	<i>Appeal decision awaited</i>

LAF Sub-Committees



Members of the LAF have divided into smaller sub-committees to be able to carry on projects. Currently these are the sub committees and their projects:

Safer Road Crossings:	Norman Jones, Debbie Hougie, Lynn Myland
School Award Competition:	Debbie Hougie, Diana Collingridge, Roger Thomas
Safer Routes to School:	Debbie Hougie, Diana Collingridge
LAF Website:	Norman Jones, Lynn Myland
Conference 2010:	Norman Jones, Liddy Lawrence, Debbie Hougie

Meetings and Attendance



Four Public Meetings took place:

- **15th Sept 2009** - Room B154, UH, College Lane, Hatfield
- **3rd Dec 2009** - Room B154, UH, College Lane, Hatfield
- **23rd February 2010** - Room B154, UH, College Lane, Hatfield
- **9th June 2010** - Room B154, UH, College Lane, Hatfield

Agendas were circulated to all county libraries and Parish Councils as well as to a frequently updated list of interested parties and added to the HertsLAF website. Press releases have been published in local papers with the help of the press office in County Hall. The number of members of the public attending is an average of 7 to 10 per meeting and communications from the public are growing, indicating an increasing interest and awareness. Forum members have been attending meetings or sending apologies when unable to attend. Richard Cuthbert (Head of Rights of Way) and Bob Fenton (Countryside Access Team leader) have been providing technical support to the LAF. One of them, or both, has been attending each meeting and work with the LAF to develop work programmes, events, etc.

A warm and well deserved thanks is due for all the speakers who have visited the LAF meetings throughout the year and enriched the members' knowledge on topical issues. Also our thanks go to the RoW officers for their constant and invaluable help and clarifications in case of questions from the LAF members.

Over the year there have also been two informal meetings attended by LAF members:

- **26th October 2009** – where members focused on working groups and plans for the conference in 2010;
- **12th April 2010** – where the members focused on the upcoming conference and themes for the public meetings in the next 12-18 months.

Training and Outside Events



Date	Event/Training	Attendee/s
July 09/Mar 2010	Conference for LAF Chairs in Ely	L Lawrence/R Thomas
2009/10	England Access Forum (EAF)	L Lawrence & D Hougie (temporarily)
March 2010	Chiltern AONB Access Conference	N Jones
March 2010	South East LAF Conference	N Jones
Winter 2010	Hertfordshire Rural Forum	N Jones
Winter 2010	Woodland Trust, Heartwood Forest (tree planting)	L Lawrence, L Myland
Feb 2010	East of England LAF Conference	LL, NJ, DC, DH, LM, RB
Jan 2010	Coastal Access, Consultation	L Lawrence
2009/10	Proposed Grazing on Common land in SW Herts	L Myland
2009/10	Herts Commons Study Group (bi-monthly)	L Myland
Nov 2009	BHS AGM	L Myland
Nov 2009	Green Infrastructure, Conference	N Jones, R Thomas
October 2009	Local Transport Plan Consultation event	L Lawrence
Summer 2009	Meeting with disabled user groups	N Jones
Summer 2009	East of England Plan 2031- scenarios for housing & economic growth, Hertfordshire	D Collingridge

LAF Events



Twice a year LAF members have field trips where they have the opportunity to survey areas of relevance to current issues.

Field Trips:

- **27th Jan 2010** – the winter field trip took LAF Members first to **Radlett** to view the proposed SRFI site, ahead of the decision due later this year. This area of land east of Park Street is the subject of a planning application to develop a Strategic Rail-Freight Interchange (road to rail and vice versa). There are only a limited number of such interchanges nationwide, hence its strategic nature. On the former wartime airfield, which is currently farmed, a new railway is planned to enter the site, interchange warehouses will be built covering the site in buildings up to 1km long and lorry movements will increase on the A414, A405 and access routes to the A1(M), M1 and M25. A mitigation package of extensive country parks, permissive path routes and a few changes to the definitive RoW network has been proposed by the developers.

Wall Hall was the second location visited by the Forum this winter. This former university site is owned by HCC and the farms around it are overseen by the Rural Estates team. As a result of the redevelopment of the buildings into private residences, s106 funding was secured to upgrade and improve the rights of way network on the site. A package of improvements including: upgrades to bridleways, creating routes along former missing links in the network and surfacing improvements are underway using that funding, with the cooperation of Hertsmere Borough Council's Greenways Officer, HCC's Rights of Way Service and the Rural Estates team.



LAF members overlooking the Radlett SRFI proposed site.

- **29th June 2010 – Cross Farm, Harpenden:** situated between Harpenden and Nomansland, Wheathampsted. We were welcomed by the farmer, Mr Will Dickinson and his son who took us around their farmland and pointed out the challenges they often face when fields have Rights of Way crossing them or in the vicinity. Also covered was a Bridleway dedication which has experienced long delays... the LAF took up the case and gave a helpful prod to all concerned parties.



Members of the LAF with farmer Mr Dickinson at Cross Farm, surveying fields and public rights of way, or not, as the case may be.

Cost of the Forum



The Forum is a voluntary body, with members giving up their time for free. Hertfordshire County Council - as Appointing Authority - also contributes officers' time and pays for any costs for administering the LAF using money allocated for the *'fulfilment of duties arising from the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000'*. In 2009/10 the costs of running the LAF came to: £9,880. The breakdown is as follows:

Reason	Costs (£)
<i>Meetings - venues, refreshments</i>	1,035
<i>Training</i>	361
<i>Transport</i>	279
<i>Advertising</i>	2,866
<i>Administration & others</i>	5,339

In addition, costs such as postage and some stationery have been absorbed by the RoW Service at HCC.

What's in store for the coming year?



2nd LAF Conference:

The second LAF conference was planned to focus on: Working with schools, Structures & Easy Access, Finding solutions to Rights of Way issues and Protecting and improving existing access. The event was planned for the 9th October 2010, at All Saints Pastoral Centre in London Colney and unfortunately had to be cancelled due to lack of bookings. The members are very disappointed and are planning to continue to pursue the subject areas via the Forum and sub-groups instead. The option of holding future conferences will be considered depending on funding and a more favourable financial climate.

Dates for next **Public Meetings**:

- *Monday 6th December 2010 (Speaker: Andy Webb, Ver Valley Society)*
- *Thursday 10th March 2011 (Speaker: Mark Weston, BHS)*
- *Wednesday 15th June 2011 (Subject: Coastal Access)*
- *Tuesday 20th September 2011 (Subject: Biodiversity)*

All meetings are held at the University of Hertfordshire (UH) Campus, College Lane, Hatfield. The venue, found with the help of one of the members, has proved a very good find and provides an accessible location and all facilities needed for the smooth running of the meetings, including in-house catering.

Informal meetings also take place in-between public meetings.

Plans for the future...



The Local Access Forum is keen to exert its influence on the emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) of the ten District and Borough Councils in Hertfordshire. A request for access - to be fully included in all relevant Local Development Documents (LDDs) within those frameworks - has been drafted and - once finalised and agreed - will be sent to the ten planning authorities.

The LAF will also be considering the implications of the potential replacement of the planning section 106 (s106) process (which provides financial contributions from developments) with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and advising the relevant bodies on the needs of/effects on access issues.

LAF Website & Twitter



The LAF dedicated website: www.hertslaf.org.uk continues to prove successful and/or source of information to all interested.

In May 2010, LAF went live on Twitter. The Twitter account name is: [@HertsLAF](https://twitter.com/HertsLAF) and at time of writing it has 12 followers. A 'How to open a Twitter account' guide is downloadable from the HertsLAF website and all are encouraged to 'follow' HertsLAF on Twitter (see HertsLAF web-pages for direct link).

If you cannot find what you are looking for, please contact the Local Access Forum via the link on the 'Contact Us' page on the website. Alternatively, if you wish to contact any of its members, and do not have access to the internet, please write to the address below:

LAF Secretary/Administrator: Ms Anna Mangini

Tel: 07778 241768

Email: administrator@hertslaf.org.uk

LAF website: www.hertslaf.org.uk

Twitter: [@HertsLAF](https://twitter.com/HertsLAF)

Alternatively you can write to:

Hertfordshire LAF Secretary, c/o Rights of Way Service, CHN103, Environment Department,
Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DN