

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum

ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006



www.hertsdirect.org/laf

This is the third annual report of the Hertfordshire Local Access Forum and contains details of the work undertaken and the advice given, in the period 2005-2006.¹

Introduction

During this year the formal right of access to commons and open country in this part of the country was put in place. Although it did not result in the creation of significant new access in Hertfordshire it has raised both public expectation and the profile of access generally.

LAF meetings continue to have broad agendas, a good quality of debate and result in constructive advice being passed to the county council and other bodies. Recruitment of two new members this year means that forum membership is healthy – although there is still a wish to add to membership with representation from minority groups.

County Council officers and a range of other agencies have worked well with the forum with timely consultation and technical support to items of interest to the forum.

Over the year the Hertfordshire LAF had a significant role to play in advising the County Council on its Rights of Way Improvement Plan – it has been adopted and work has started on developing in the first of the pilot areas around Hertford and Ware. The LAF are looking forward to receiving feedback on the impact of the work and also having the opportunity to advise as the pilot work is rolled out across Hertfordshire.

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 two initial pieces of statutory work for the LAF – RoWIP and Access land may have been signed off but it's only the beginning of the access journey! Implementation of the RoWIP will be followed with interest – it is the practical issues and their solutions in the pilot areas that will shape future access projects in the county. Access for all groups and access to information will be two key pieces of work this coming year as well as ensuring that the LAF engages effectively with the new development plans (LDF's) that are being developed by the district and borough councils of Hertfordshire.

Who is on your Local Access Forum?






Cllr Rosemary Gilligan	District Councillor representing the Herts LGA
Cllr Bill Storey	County Councillor
Oliver Blowey*	Cycling
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
Marian Whittaker*	Horse riding
Anne Wilkinson	Horse riding

The Forum re-elected Liddy Lawrence as Chairman in September 2006 for a further 12 months. The Forum filled two of the three vacancies during the year is and currently seeking one new member to focus on minority groups. (New members marked with * above).

What has the Local Access Forum been doing?



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

	Subject	Date
 The Countryside Agency	National research into support for LAFs	13 th Sept 2005
 Hertfordshire	Access to Woodlands	13 th Sept 2005
	Managing Open Access	13 th Sept 2005
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan	17 th Jan 2006
	Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders	2 nd May 2006
	Open Access in Hertfordshire	2 nd May 2006
	Improving Access for the disabled	2 nd May 2006
 defra Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	Consultation on gating highways to reduce crime	13 th Sept 2005

A number of groups have been invited to participate in forum meetings.

 Lee Valley Park <i>Open spaces and sporting places</i>	 HERTFORDSHIRE - ACTION - ON DISABILITY	 UH
Access in the Lee Valley Regional Park	Access for people with disabilities	Views of young people

Meetings and attendance

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

- 13 Sept 2005 – High Leigh, Hoddesdon.
- 17 Jan 2006 – Campus West, Welwyn Garden City.
- 2 May 2006 – Aldenham Country Park.

Agendas are circulated to a wide list of interested parties and posted on the HertsDirect website. Local advertising is also carried out to encourage members of the public to attend. Unfortunately this has had limited success with public attendance ranging between 4 and 1. Attendance by the Forum members has been good with between 7 and 10 members at meetings and apologies from those not able to attend.

The departure of Trevor Mose to a new role within the Environment Department and Jasmine Smith's move to a new job meant the support Hertfordshire County Council provides to the LAF had to be reassessed. The aim was to ensure the same level of support was provided but within existing resources.

Andy Hardstaff, Countryside Management Service Area Manager for West & Southern Herts has taken on the role of LAF support and Secretary. Liz Heath, a Project Manager and Lisa Hill a Business Support Officer in the Environmental Management Group will also support the LAF as and when required.

The new arrangements that the County Council has put in place to are aimed at providing an enhanced and more integrated framework so the LAF can develop and move forward.

LAF Events



Youth Event

The Youth Event informal meeting on 1st November 2005 at the University of Hertfordshire took the form a workshop with students at the University and involved informal questioning to discover how often students visited the countryside and

explored the reasons behind those that didn't. A paper was made available to view on the LAF website. The event was felt to have been a success and it encouraged further exploration of other issues including disability and access which were the focus of the informal meeting in March 2006.

Meeting the needs of users

Annabelle Waterfield from Herts Action on Disability met with the LAF at an informal gathering in March 2006. The forum were impressed with the presentation and recommended that the County Council's Rights of Way unit arrange a similar session to help raise awareness amongst staff of some of the issues brought up during the session.

Summer Field Trip

The theme for the Forum's summer field trip was "access and management" – with the land owner / manager perspective. The area chosen was around Bricketwood Common and the Munden Estate. Forum members were able to look at a wide range of issues, public access on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, needing to take account of nature conservation issues and the challenge of wet conditions. On the Munden Estate there were examples of managing a "traditional" estate, farming, access to waterside, the challenge of the urban fringe, sorting out the historical legacy attached to rights of way and signing of access. Officers and local representatives were on hand to help with the background to issues.

A continuing series of events are 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



The Forum is a voluntary body, with the members giving up their time for free. Herts County Council, as Appointing Authority, also contributes officer time and pays for any 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'.

For 2005/2006 these costs have totalled £1,139.38, broken down as follows:

Stationery (production of posters) - £45

Public meetings (venues, refreshments) - £1,094.38

In addition there have been other (small) associated costs, such as postage and mileage expenses, however, these have been absorbed by the County Council.

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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