



Hertfordshire Local Access Forum Final Minutes



The 23rd Local Access Forum Room C152, College Campus Lane, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, on 15th September 2009 (7.30pm - 09.50pm)

Members present	Liddy Lawrence - (Chair) Lynn Myland – LAF member Diana Collingridge – LAF member Norman Jones – LAF member Debbie Hougie – LAF member Roger Thomas – LAF member Tony Ferrari – LAF member
Officers:	Richard Cuthbert – Head of Rights of Way (RoW) Bob Fenton – Access Team Leader, HCC RoW Hilary Freeman & Simon Gaughan – from HCC RoW Anna Mangini – AMIVA (UK) Ltd – LAF Secretary
Public:	Attended by eight members of the public
Apologies:	Bill Storey, Rosemary Gilligan

2. Minutes & matters arising

- Minutes from last June's meeting were approved.
- LM mentioned that there is only 1 horse rep and asked about possibility of having an extra horse-rider to join the LAF.
- Recruitment update: advert went out in July on all county papers. Only two applications received, possibly a third on the pipeline. Interest from a couple of cyclists, who might be interested in joining. At the recent Disabled LTP Consultation Forum, NJ met a powered wheelchair user who might be interested in joining the Forum to represent disabled people.

3. Members updates

- LL reported on the Summer Field Trip to the Ayot Greenway and the survey of a bridge put in place by Sustrans. The bridge has since been opened to the public in August. At present on the line of the path, close to Wheathampstead, only one route is available to walkers, however another route for horseriders and cyclists is being worked on. DC has been approached by J Thornton from

HCC, RoW following the summer field trip and they have met and surveyed the area in question. DC came up with valuable suggestions which differ from the previous approach the RoW Service had taken and not been very successful with. It is felt this new view point and approach might be seen much more favourably by land-owners than the old one, and bring a faster and successful resolution for the development of this part of the Greenway. DC thought that this was a very challenging problem and the landowners were not necessarily being difficult. There needs to be a workable solution presented to them. R Cuthbert thanked DC for her input in the matter and in helping going forward.

- LL & RT attended the regional conference for Chairs that took place in Ely in July. Roger presented the presentation that B Fenton of RoW had prepared for them and it was very well received. So much so that LL has received 2-3 invitations from other LAF in the East Anglia region to present it to their members. LL underlined that is important to know what other groups do and are able to achieve. HertsLAF set the pace before the rest with their conference in 2007. LL is thinking of taking the presentation around in Herts to other organisations (i.e. NFU, Cyclists, etc.) to show the role of LAF. She suggested perhaps two presentations a quarter, and DH offered to be involved in taking it around.

LL/DH

At the July Chairs' conference it was noted that other groups have glossy leaflets to advertise their role in their county. It was suggested that perhaps HertsLAF should also think of producing one.

Action ?

- LL reported that NE has funds to promote walking from the health sector and also from Regional Awards.
- EAF: LL reported that LAF groups generally are willing to tell NE what they are doing and trying to achieve, rather than suggesting what they would like to see happening. The Chair for EAF, Duncan Graham, seems to be supportive of this more proactive role from the LAFs and taking forward the issues; NE seems more inclined to have a gentle approach. LM suggested how important it is to challenge NE. DH asked if there was a procedure/policy on the relationship between NE/LAF. LL said the last 21 months the two parties have been working together in order to arrive to a decision on how to move forward and work together in the future. Such decision will come next spring.
- LM asked for an update on the Grazing and Fencing of Commons. RC has contacted M Carter and A Hardstaff and got clarification that suggestions were being put forward. This was taking more an advisory role than of promoting. It is up to Commons' owner whether they are going to follow the suggestions. All seems to have gone fairly quiet. LM asked how does this fit with the statement from county council that in the next 10 yrs there will be grazing on commons? RC replied that if the Councils do not own the land they cannot enforce what was written, which was produced in order to persuade rather than impose. LM had received comments from members of public at Chorleywood where the 5 wks trial period was cut short by lack of grass and that are now in the process of being consulted. There is a lot of controversy as it seems the consultation paper is made up only of 1 question: "Do you want cows on the Common? Yes/No." Added to the fact that a lot of people living near the common have not received the paper. A member of the public commented that after the grazing, in July, the area had a great display of flowers. LM asked RC if it is possible to receive a progress report on all 4

RC/LM

commons, and RC suggested it might be a case of enquiring with the relevant landowners/CMS.

- DH has done some interim research on access with children and found the problem is not the children but the parents. She found it incredibly interesting discovering what the children thought.
- LM mentioned the email received from R Rees of CMS and the cattle issue (walkers and dog being harmed by cattle and bulls in the fields where paths are running). LL confirmed that the LAF can only advise and not produce a leaflet on the subject. So if the LAF is approached and asked to comment they would advise on the suitability of such literature and content. NJ also mentioned he had previously replied to the email and that the Ramblers support the practice of walking and have detailed guidance on their web site and have also produced advisory notices in conjunction with the NFU. DC agreed and also reminded us that there is a two step advice: keep your dog on the lead unless cattle go for it, in that case let it go.
- NJ attended a meeting on disabled user groups. He emphasised that the LAF was not just concerned with disabled access but general countryside access and consideration of routes for the disabled was part of the ROWIP. He mentioned how there seems to be a different perception from people on Access and disabled access. NJ mentioned a disable person had used the Ayot Greenway (possibly four years ago) and found some of the radar latch gates had rusted and were not working properly. The same person was interested in joining the LAF.
- DC went recently to the **East of England Plan >2031: Scenarios for housing and economic growth - Hertfordshire** public consultation event organised by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA; this will soon be subsumed into EEDA). The purpose of this event was to engage in a dialogue with the public about the future housing needs in the region and to provide an opportunity to explore the scenarios and how they will impact on the local area. There are four development scenarios outlined and the consultation ends on 24th November. The meeting was well represented by the Ramblers. The consultation highlighted that if houses are built in a way that does not take into account access, there are going to be great problems in the future. LAFs should be represented at these kind of meetings. RC to circulate link. RT reminded that LAF should be involved, together with RoW, in the consultation in the early stages. TF mentioned a leaflet he has recently received from a new school development in Stevenage where it mentioned the diversion of some public paths. BF confirmed there has been a consultation on suitable transport and safety to the school. It was agreed that RoW will inform LAF when they get consulted on other projects.
- RT mentioned the consultation from Lafarge for a site in Colney Street Lane (St Stephen FP53 & BR 5). RT and DH to go and survey.

RC

RoW

RT/DH

4. Other updates – Heartwood Project

Woodland Trust has applied to the Forestry Commission for the creation of Heartwood Forest, in Sandridge. Any comments about the application and the Environmental Statement must be sent by 17th September.

(Note: LM sent her comments to Heartwood Consultation by the deadline).

5. 4x4 user groups, issues and routes – Tony Ferrari, LAF member & Press & Communication Officer for the Green Lane Ass. (GLASS)

Tony gave us a very informative and interesting point of view on the use and misuse of Green Lanes.

Tony highlighted the confusing sets of signposting which proves often challenging for Green Lanes users. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is not a proper definition of Green Lanes (GL) in law and some of the descriptions go back to Roman times. The list of who uses the GL is long and varied, including both walkers and cyclists as well as motorcyclist, quad drivers and farmers with agricultural vehicles, including mobility scooters! In fact the importance of the GL is that less-able people can access the countryside by way of the GL. The use of GL is advocated for its tranquillity, for a slower pace of life, although we often do not associated them to these aspects as some groups (not connected with GLASS) are using GL in a disruptive and damaging way. GL disassociates itself from such groups and does its best to report them and prosecute them. The positive contribution of GLASS is proven by a series of associations and schemes that promote, as well as, keep GL open to all. GLASS is not just 4x4 and motorbikes it is ACCESS for all. At the end of the presentation LM suggested that it would be very useful for the LAF to get involved with GLASS.

6. Response to petition for Bridleway improvement – Lynn Myland

LM gave us some statistics on worth of horse industry in UK (£4bn) and how many riders there are presently in UK (4.3mil). Horse riders have access to less than 25% of the current network. RoW identifies needs for horse riders and carriage drivers.

In Hertfordshire we have been successful in securing LPT funding not only for horses. One of the core actions identified in the RoWIP was for more circular routes. Funding has been consistently growing over the last 3 years (started at £50k in 1st year to £390k this year).

Following on from the Governments response to the Public bridleways petition (already circulated) LM proceeded with a series of questions posed to both RC and LL.

1. Have HCC links with the Equestrian Access Forum p.1
2. Would HCC RoW carry out an audit to see if their RoWIP has address the government guidance to local authorities "to take specific consideration of horse riders needs in drafting their rights of way improvement plans and many authorities have done so"p.1
3. How successful have HCC been in gaining funding specifically for equestrian access as referred to in government response p.2 of petition
4. Reinstatement of severed crossings should be directed through LAFs to the Highways Agency p.2. Can our LAF do this? RC to circulate response.

RC

7. RoW – updates

- Hilary Freeman opened this part of the meeting with her report on the work down by **RoWIP** and the imminent improvements coming soon. In particular a path on the side of the A4147 providing a safe off-road route and a link in a circular walk. Further plans are for a longer cycling route including a path

adjacent to the A414 to the M1 interchange at Hemel Hempstead. These links will provide a good cycling route also great for horse riders. Unfortunately the local newspaper has negatively reported on the news by missing the improvement issue and only viewing it as a further disruption to the area. A member of the local Ramblers sent a response to the paper, to date the letter has not yet been published.

Another area that will benefit from the RoWIP work is in Ickleford where ca. 9 small roads/tracks are being linked together working in conjunction with the Heritage Foundation in Letchworth GC. A lot more is going on behind the scenes and will come to fruition in the near future. Hilary asked us to be a little bit more patient and good things will come ...

- Bob Fenton mentioned that the Freight Terminal is still a concern for the public. LAF cannot do much until firm proposals are in place. These are expected relatively soon. Questions were raised if LAF will be formally consulted and the answer was YES, and RoW will keep us informed of the where and when. LL suggested an Extraordinary meeting when a firm proposal is out.
- Symon Gaughan was next speaking of his involvement in **PTRO** (Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders). SG remarked that this subjects links quite well with TF presentation. Symon has been carrying out a review of all the PTRO in Hertfordshire over the last year. The purpose of this exercise was to check all the current PTROs are still correct in law and are enforceable. Some papers go back to the 1980s, and a thorough check needed to be done. In some cases there has been the need for public consultation. In future all PTROs will be reviewed every 10 years, so next is due in 2020. The review showed that 28 PTROs are still in place, and 13 were started but never finished (i.e. HCC doesn't have document sealed) and these will be looked at now and are in the pipeline to be implemented. The average cost for each implementation is ca. £5,000. In some cases the evidence put in when the case was first brought up, is still valid making the process easier.
Seasonal TROs will also be applied supporting for example GLASS' work. LAF should be consulted on the PTROs.
- Stakeholder working group on Public Rights of Way: They continue to meet and are reviewing how the process can be made more efficient for applications to be processed. There is no need for a whole scale legislation change but need for improvement and efficiency.

RoW/
BF

RoW/
SG

8. Any Other Business

New dates for the next 4 meetings were confirmed.

- Thursday 3rd December 2009
- Tuesday 23rd February 2010
- Wednesday 9th June 2010
- Wednesday 15th September 2010

The meeting closed at 21.50.