

**Notes from South East Local Access Forum  
London Conference held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012**

Alan Marlow, Hampshire LAF, chaired the Conference.

**1. New Forest access management - Nick Tucker.**

The New Forest has unrestricted access for walkers and horse riders, though not cyclists. However, there are some good cycle paths throughout the Forest. Nick explained how the Forest is managed and outlined the demands and conflicts in managing access. The land supports a way of life unchanged for centuries, such as verderer's grazing rights. Problems include fly tipping, BBQ fires, and pressure of visitor numbers. They work closely with user groups, Park volunteers and have their own Local Access Forum. They engage closely on education with different user groups, such as dog walkers, to promote good practice and behaviour.

**2. Engaging People with Woodlands - Paul Jarczewski.**

Paul is a Site Manager for the Woodland Trust who look after and promote small local areas of woodland for quiet informed recreation, education, health and well being. It's all free of charge to the public. They have 120 sites in South East England with 99% of the land open access. They work with local communities and schools with education programmes on nature. They have many volunteers that undertake practical vegetation management and guided walks. Most of their users are dog walkers, but they have to deal with problems such as vandalism, fly tipping, horse trespass, off-road vehicles, vandalism and dog waste. In Penn Wood, Bucks they are looking to graze the land but also provide disabled access.

**3. Working with new media - Anna Mangini, the Herts LAF Secretary.**

Anna outlined ways in which it is possible to attract members of the public to attend LAFs through Twitter. She has also publicised the LAF through the magazine Herts Life, through the County Council Press Office and local libraries.

**3. Local Access Forums & the role of Government - Ruth Sanders, DEFRA.** Ruth was unable to attend. However, this gave more time for the other speakers.

**4. Paths for Communities** - Kevin Haugh from Natural England (four other NE officers were in attendance).

This initiative is for local Communities working with landowners to apply. It will provide new PROW and new higher rights in rural areas. £2m funding is available for awards, from between £5k-£150k to be distributed over the next two years. Partnership working and LAF liaison is vital.

**5. Ramblers: National and Regional Access Campaigns** was presented by Anastasia French from Ramblers. She covered their 3 main campaigns:

a. 'Branching Out – walking in the woods'.

- b. 'Don't Loose your Way' - covering RoW work, local definitive map issues and diversion consultations.
- c. 'One Coast for All' aims to complete a route around England and the first 6 stretches which are underway.

#### **6. PATHH: Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage – Discovering Hampshire's Lost Way - Sue Coles, Hampshire LAF.**

Following the 'Discovering Lost Ways' project coming to an end, Hants started its own initiative through the LAF. This started with 50 volunteers looking at 30 Parish Tithe maps, Enclosure Awards, Finance Act maps and First Edition OS maps. The volunteers acquired additional skills and enjoyed the research work. Funding of £46,600 was obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund which stipulated the project must have an educational aspect, so they have been involved with local schools. Their work now involves all 274 Parish's in Hants with a Project Manager and 130 trained volunteers. The conference was very impressed with this initiative. Any claims must have a modern need; there is not to be blanket claims over Hants. They have 5 claims in at present with a further 50 in the pipeline.

#### **7. Open floor discussion and future of the SE LAF**

- It was noted that no land managers were present and the agenda did not include any item directly related to them.
- Everyone seemed to enjoy the day. The format, with good, informative presentations, rather than workshops, was thought the best for future conferences.
- The 'Huddle' website did not appear to be very popular with some members.
- Future NE funding for the SE LAF Co-ordinator is uncertain beyond April 2013.
- Alan Marlow will continue as Chair the South East LAF Group.