



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2013 AT 10.00 AM  
MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY**

### **AGENDA**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 March 2013, to be confirmed</b>	<b>1 - 6</b>
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<b>5 Rights of way group report</b> Mike Walker, Definitive Map Team; Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Advisor; and Joanne Taylor, Operations Team Leader	<b>7 - 14</b>
<b>6 LAF Members Report</b>	<b>15 - 50</b>
<b>7 Any Other Business</b>	
<b>8 Date of Next and Future Meetings</b> Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2013, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury	





# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 2013, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.40 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne and Mr J Coombe

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr J Clark, Ms J Taylor and Mr M Walker

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Mr P Harris, Mr H Hancock and Mr R Johnson

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Richard Pushman, Glyn Thomas, Neil Harris, Viv Lynch and Gavin Caspersz.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2012 TO BE CONFIRMED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2012 were confirmed subject to the following amendment:-

Page 5, Item 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, line 6 the word 'not' be added after Quainton are. So that the sentence now reads 'It was noted that because Waddesdon and Quainton are not within the AONB there would be more interest in that area'.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

David Briggs asked for an update on the Cycle project. Jon Clarke advised that an Officer, Sarah Randall had recently been appointed to the Cycle Towns Initiative and that the project was looking at 3 or 4 market towns and were likely to include Great Missenden, Chesham and Princes Risborough.

## **5. OUTER AYLESBURY RING**

Roy Johnson, Aylesbury Ramblers Association was welcomed to the meeting and gave a presentation on the Outer Aylesbury Ring (OAR).

Key points from the presentation are as follows:

- The OAR is an 85km/53 mile walking route
- The OAR is due to be launched on 18 May at Wendover Woods
- There are 23 circular walks
- Guides are available on the Aylesbury Ramblers website [www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk](http://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk)

Roy advised that the Ramblers Association wrote to Parish Councils asking them if they would like to receive copies of the guides. Parish Councils who responded to say they were happy to take delivery of the guides will receive them shortly.

Roy talked members through the OAR and how it evolved. He highlighted the following timeline:

- July 2011 – Idea conceived
- Oct 2011 – outline route
- Nov 2011 – Presentations to LAF & AGM
- Dec 2011 – Decision to progress
- March 2012 – Route and 23 circular walks published on ramblers association website
- April 2012 – Decision to progress & fundraising
- Oct 2012 – Way marking and materials ordered
- Dec 2012 – Route re-checking completed
- Feb 2013 – All walk guides completed
- March 2013 – Way marking completed and guides printed
- April 2013 – Pre launch publicity activity
- May 2013 – official launch in Wendover Woods on 18 May.

David Briggs asked if the route was all on the public rights of way. Roy said that the route is all on public open ways or areas open to the public.

Joanne Taylor congratulated Roy on his achievements with the route.

Paul Harris asked Roy whether there was access information regarding the route for people with disabilities on the website. Roy said unfortunately there wasn't and commented that some areas such as the Chilterns had a low number of stiles whereas other areas had a high number of stiles.

David Briggs enquired if the circular routes were waymaked and Roy advised that they weren't.

Roy was thanked for attending the meeting and providing an update and congratulated on his hard work in getting the route established.

## 6. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

Members had received the Rights of Way Group Report.

Jon Clark took Members through the Strategic Access Update.

The following updates were provided:

- The Strategic Access Officer comments on approx 250 planning applications a year
- The date in paragraph 54 should be November 2012 not July 2012

The Chairman commented that he was expecting to have a meeting with HS2, although he was not sure yet when this would be. Jon Clark said he would chase.

**Action: Jon Clark**

Joanne Taylor took Members through the Operations Update.

The following updates were provided:

- The path clearance scheme will need to be launched so that Parishes can fit in with the contractors or look for contractors to carry out the clearance.
- A notice will be included in the Parish newsletter shortly

John Coombe asked what was required to be an approved subcontractor. Joanne said that an approved contractor must comply with Health and Safety regulations and be a properly run business. She said that she thought it was unlikely a contractor for a Parish Councillor would be compliant with requirements.

John Elfes commented that he believed one of the biggest issues was likely to be insurance. Joanne said that briefing notes including a checklist would need to be sent to Parish Councils to ensure insurance was in place and risk assessments carried out.

Paul Harris enquired if this was to replace what the County Council did through the Ringway Jacobs contract. Joanne said she anticipated that take up would be low. She said that she anticipated that the County Council would still carry out clearance works this year but that as the scheme was publicised some Parishes may come forward. Joanne stressed that whilst Parish Councils could assist the County Council with the works, the County Council had a legal duty and this duty could not be devolved.

Paul Harris asked how long the £40k fund would be available for and whether Parish Councils had to match fund. Joanne said that the funds had been identified for 2 years, possibly 3. She said that the idea was to pump prime parishes.

John Elfes asked the officer whether the summary of works; Appendix 1 of the report included the work of Parish Councils. In response Joanne advised that the list did not currently identify the work carried out by Parish Councils but that it did include work

carried out by Volunteers.

Joanne advised that damage was done to Quanton Bridleway 36. Following enforcement, £30k of repairs was undertaken from the landowner/railway contractor. Joanne also advised that Buckland Bridleway 22A has been resurfaced. She said that diversion was considered but due to the number of trees needed to be removed resurfacing of the existing route was considered the best option.

Mike Walker then took Members through the Definitive Map Update. He advised that he had just attended the Rights of Way Committee and could provide some update to the report.

The following updates were provided:

- Points 1 and 2 of the report are being treated as the same public inquiry
- Points 3, 4 and 5 of the report are being put together for one inquiry
- The Council's decision regarding the application at Fawley Court was challenged. The claim was rejected by the County Council and was challenged in the High Court. The judgement is awaited.
- Point 16 of the report. The officer recommended that the application be rejected and this has been accepted by the Rights of Way Committee.

John Elfes asked what position the County Council would be taking regarding points 1-6 of the report. Mike said that the Council was not supporting the proposals.

Mike commented that the Village Green application in Iver related to the Pinewood Studios application. He also advised that the land which is part of the Village Green application in Great Missenden was owned by approx 100 people and commented that it would be an interesting inquiry.

Chris Hurworth enquired if there was legislation to prevent Village Green applications. Mike advised that there was legislation going through Parliament which will prevent Village Green applications being made as a means of delaying proposed development. When the legislation is in force a Village Green application can only be issued before a planning application has been submitted, it will not be possible to submit a Village Green application after a planning application has been submitted.

## **7. LAF MEMBERS REPORT**

Members had received the LAF Members' Report.

The Chairman advised that at the end of the meeting with HS2 the HS2 representative said that they would need to look through the proposals again with economies in mind. The representative said that they would not be looking to save money on the Rights of Way network but would be looking for economies elsewhere for example bearing in mind that if structures are higher then bridges would need to be longer.

The Chairman said that if any member attended a Community Forum to let Jon Clark know.

John Coombe said that he believed Natural England had recently released a statement on National Trails. Paul Harris commented that there was a paper which went to the non-executive board and that a public document would be issued in a few

days.

Jon Clark commented that the National LAF Conference was well attended with approx 80-90% of LAFs represented. He said it was a good conference with lots of interesting speakers.

#### **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman referred members to a letter in the agenda received from a member of the public. Members discussed the correspondence and the Forum agreed to support the proposal in principle but said that more information was required such as how long had the path been used for. The Chairman agreed to write to the landowner in the first instance.

**Action: John Elfes**

The Chairman said that social media was now being used a lot by various organisations and asked whether members felt it would benefit the Forum. In response it was suggested that this item be noted for the time being.

Members were informed that there was a meeting of the Oxfordshire LAF on 30 April, County Hall. Jon Clark said he would send an email to members to see if anyone would like to attend.

**Action: Jon Clark**

#### **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 July 2013, 10am. Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury

**Chairman**







**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

# Report

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## AGENDA ITEM 5

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013

**Title:** Rights of Way Team update

**Authors:** Mike Walker, Jonathan Clark, Joanne Taylor

**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDonald (01296 383603)

### A. DEFINITIVE MAP UPDATE (MIKE WALKER)

#### Resources Appraisal

Definitive Map investigations are statutory duties for the Council, funded through Place Service revenue budgets. Costs associated with Public Path Orders are, for the most part, recovered from applicants.

#### The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to appraise LAF Members of the outstanding Definitive Map caseload undertaken by the Definitive Map Team and provide an update for matters previously considered by the Rights of Way Committee.

#### DEFINITIVE MAP APPLICATIONS DETERMINED BY COMMITTEE / ORDERS MADE

1. **Great Missenden** – upgrading of Public Bridleways Nos. 52 and 55 (part) to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 14 July 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order has been made and advertised. Objections to the Order have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry is now fixed for 1st and 2nd October 2013.**
2. **Great Missenden/Wendover** – upgrading Public Bridleways No. 1 Great Missenden and Nos. 45 and 61 Wendover to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 14 July 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order has been made and advertised. Objections to the Order have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry is now fixed for 1st and 2nd October 2013.**
3. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway No. 24 (Featherbed Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by

the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made and advertised on 20 September 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry is now fixed for 6th – 8th August 2013.**

4. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway No. 25 (Kingstreet Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and we were directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made and advertised on 20 September 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry is now fixed for 6th – 8th August 2013.**
5. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway Nos. 29/42 (Mop End Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made on 21 June 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry is now fixed for 6th – 8th August 2013.**
6. **Stowe and Lillingstone Dayrell** – upgrading Public Bridleways No. 6 Stowe and Nos. 11 (part) and 12 Lillingstone Dayrell to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was partly rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order. An Order was made on 10 May 2011. Objections were received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry was held on 14 May 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be not confirmed.**
7. **High Wycombe** – claimed public footpath between Sheraton Drive and Windsor Drive. The Committee accepted the application on 10 November 2010. An Order was made on 25 October 2011. Objections were received and the matter has been referred to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry was held on 16 April 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be confirmed.**
8. **Taplow** – application to record the route from River Road to Amerden Lane as Public Bridleway. The application was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 7 December 2011. An Order was made on 18 June 2012. **Objections have been received and the matter is to be referred to the Secretary of State for determination, possibly by public inquiry.**
9. **Aston Clinton** - application to record the route from Weston Road to Public Footpath No. 28 as Public Footpath. The application was accepted by Committee at its meeting on 30th May 2012. An Order was made on 22nd October 2012 and one objection received. **The matter has been referred to the Secretary of State for determination, possibly by written representation procedure.**
10. **West Wycombe / Downley** – application to record Cookshall Lane as part Public Bridleway, part Restricted Byway. This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013, although public footpath rights were accepted. **A meeting was held with the landowner, Sir Edward Dashwood, with a view to completing the matter by Public Path Creation Agreement. This is now completed.**
11. **Lower Winchendon** – application to record the route from Public Footpath No 10b to Public Footpath No. 3, Cuddington as Public Footpath. This application was

accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013. **This decision is under threat of challenge by the landowner.**

12. **Wendover & Halton** – application to record the route from Public Footpath No. 24, Wendover to Public Footpath No. 13, Halton as Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21st January 2013 and has not been appealed. Completed.**
13. **High Wycombe** – application to record the route from Burnham Close to Whitelands Road, High Wycombe as Public Footpath. This application was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013. **An Order was made on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Objections have been received and it is likely the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State to determine, probably at public inquiry.**
14. **Princes Risborough** – application to record the route from Elm Road to Bell Street, Princes Risborough as Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21st January 2013 and has not been appealed. Completed.**
15. **Lane End – drafting error of Public Footpath No 25.** This matter was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013. **An Order was made on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and is through its objection period. A representation has been made which we are seeking to clarify so that the Order can be confirmed.**
16. **Beaconsfield** – application to record the route from Minerva Way to the junction with Public Footpath No. 15 and No. 16 as a Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its last meeting and has not been appealed. Completed.**

#### **Definitive Map Applications to be Investigated and Reported to the Committee**

17. **Westbury (Route 1)** – application to record the route from Footpath No 14, Westbury (at the Oxfordshire county boundary) to Public Footpath No 11, Westbury as Public Footpath. The route is 90% in Oxfordshire. Investigation not started. **Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us, pro-rata, to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. It is likely, therefore, that we would be looking to bring this claim – and the others in Westbury/Mixbury (Oxfordshire) – to a future meeting of the Committee.**
18. **Westbury (Route 2)** – application to record the route from Footpath No 14, Westbury (at the Oxfordshire county boundary) to the route referred to in (19) below as Public Footpath. This route is entirely in Oxfordshire. Investigation not started. **Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. It is likely, therefore, that we would be looking to bring this claim – and the others in Westbury/Mixbury (Oxfordshire) – to a future meeting of the Committee.**
19. **Westbury (Route 3)** – application to record the route from the junctions of Footpath No 303, Mixbury, Oxfordshire to Fulwell Road, Westbury as Public Footpath. Investigation not started. **Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us, pro-rata, to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. It is likely,**

therefore, that we would be looking to bring this claim – and the others in Westbury / Mixbury (Oxfordshire) – to a future meeting of the Committee.

20. **Iver** – application to record various routes across The Fields and The Clump, Iver as Public Footpaths. **Investigation not yet started.**
21. **Chepping Wycombe** – application to record the route from Elmshott Close to King's Wood as Public Footpath. **Investigation not started.**
22. **Bledlow** – application to record the route from Footpath No 49 to Bridleway No 55 as public footpath. **Investigation not started.**

#### **Public Path Orders**

23. **Aylesbury** – Application to divert Footpath No 7. **Some objection received to consultation but Head of Legal Services has been instructed to make an Order.**
24. **Bradenham** – Application to divert Footpath No 7. **Not started.**
25. **Coleshill** – Application to divert Footpath No 11(F) part. **Order made and no objection received. Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
26. **Gerrards Cross** – Application to temporarily divert Footpath No 11. **Order made and confirmed.**
27. **Hambleton** – Application to divert Footpath No 24 (part). **Order made and no objection received. Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
28. **High Wycombe** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 27. Wycombe District Council planning matter. **Order made and confirmed by WDC. Awaiting developer works.**
29. **Leckhampstead** – Application to divert Footpath No 34. **Order made and no objection received. Awaiting landowner works before confirming Order.**
30. **Marsworth** – Application to divert Footpath No 3. **Order made on behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council and no objections received. Awaiting landowner works and then Order will be confirmed.**
31. **Pitchcott** – Application to divert Footpath No 4 (part). Order made and objections received. **Referred to the Secretary of State for determination.**
32. **Quainton** – Application to divert Bridleway Nos 17 & 17a. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
33. **Quainton** – Application to divert Bridleway No 21. **Head of Legal Services instructed to make Order.**
34. **Quarrendon** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 2. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
35. **Steeple Claydon** – Application to divert Footpath No 6. **Not started.**
36. **Thornborough** – Proposal to divert Public Footpath No 9. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**

37. **Tingewick** – Application to divert Footpaths Nos 10, 11 and Bridleway No 13. Order made and objections received. **Referred to Secretary of State who confirmed the Order. Completed.**
38. **Westbury** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 14 (Special Schools). Order made. Objections received. **Committee to consider its position and is the subject of a separate report on today's agenda.**
39. **Winslow** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 5. **Order made and no objections received. Awaiting landowner works ahead of confirmation.**

#### **Public Path Creation Agreements**

40. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (BCC Land). **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**
41. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (ERC Land). **Awaiting go ahead from ERC to proceed.**
42. **Westcott** - Footpath Creation. **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**

#### **Village Green Applications**

43. **Gerrards Cross** – land at Lower Road. **A Public Inquiry was held 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and is the subject of a separate report on today's agenda.**
44. **Iver** – land at The Fields and The Clump. **The application is being investigated.**
45. **Great Missenden** – land at The Field, Bryants Bottom. **Application advertised and objections received. Likely to need public inquiry before referral to Committee.**
46. **Beaconsfield** – voluntary registration of the land at Hampden Hill. **Awaiting ownership confirmation from Town Council.**
47. **Penn** – land at Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green, Penn. **Waiting investigation.**
48. **High Wycombe** – land at Meadow Close, Wycombe Marsh. **Waiting investigation.**
49. **Wooburn** – land off Cherwell Road, Bourne End. **Waiting investigation.**

**For further information please contact: Mike Walker on 01296 382642**

#### **B. STRATEGIC ACCESS UPDATE (JONATHAN CLARK)**

50. A total of 40 planning applications have been commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer since the last meeting, distributed between authorities as follows: Wycombe 12; Aylesbury Vale, 19; South Bucks 1; Chiltern 3; and Bucks County Council 5.
51. The Strategic Access Officer has not had any further bilateral meetings with HS2 consultants, except the Wendover Access Forum on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Plans continue to indicate an attempt to accommodate most paths across the HS2 footprint by bridge, underpass or diverting under viaducts. Agreement was reached on nearly all

access crossings over the line and minutes of the Wendover meeting are being drawn up by HS2.

52. The Council has made its response to the Draft Environmental Statement. The overall access themes mentioned in the response included: the need for: 1. some extra attempt to take pedestrians off country roads onto 'footways' where paths are diverted along the nearest roads. 2. longer diversions, taking paths several fields away along more direct routes to crossing points rather than diverting paths that run parallel, and next to, the HS2 line; 3. maintaining a balance between access across the line and the impact that bridges might have on the landscape; 4. the need to deliver rights of way improvements, such as improving surfaces and upgrading footpaths to bridleways; 5. the need for more green bridges to combine pedestrian crossings with wildlife crossings; and 6. arguing the need for new structures to apply the principles and design of British Standard BS 5709: 2006, for gaps, gates and stiles.
53. The Strategic Access Advisor visited Calvert Green and Twyford Parish Councils to identify demand for pedestrian, cycling and horse riding access links. Calvert Parish were especially keen to progress a link between their village and the services in Steeple Claydon, and to connect with residents in Charndon. New non-vehicular links out from Twyford seemed less important to the Chairman of the Parish Council than other mitigation being proposed. The impact of HS2 and its Infrastructure Maintenance Depot on the area will be significant and there is a strong case to lobby for extra strategic links.
54. A meeting took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013 to discuss RoW crossing of the East West Rail corridor between Bletchley and Bicester, via Winslow. An update can be provided to the meeting, but the general themes from HS2 will apply.
55. There have been 10 new Donate-a-gate donors since March 2013, taking the total number of donors to 271.

### **C. RIGHTS OF WAY OPERATIONS UPDATE (JOANNE TAYLOR)**

56. The 'Summary of Works' is attached to this report in Appendix 1, outlining work carried out by the Rights of Way Operations Team between 1st April 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. A verbal update will be provided.

# Buckinghamshire County Council - Rights of Way

## Summary of Maintenance Carried Out Between 1/04/12 and 31/03/13

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	NORTH+SOUTH	
		April - March 12	April-Mar 13
Alignment	Path Off Line - resolved issue	28	18
Clearance	Clearance - carried out-jobs/km	508km	290k/517
Bridge	Installed or repaired	54	46
Finger/post	Installed or repaired	217	266
Fly Tipping	Fly Tipping - removed	21	12
Gate	Gate repaired or installed	161	108
Intimidation + animal	Intimidation - resolved	28	11
Intimidating sign	Misleading Sign - removed	6	2
Obstruction - resolved	Barbed wire	5	6
Obstruction - resolved	Barrier - Fencing, wall or other	137	87
Obstruction - resolved	Electric fence	24	10
Obstruction - removed	Fallen Tree	212	218
Obstruction - resolved	Ploughing and Cropping	124	58
Other	Delivery of materials	62	53
Other	Miscellaneous issues resolved	53	
Stile	Installed or repaired	240	151
Stile	Stile To Gap	26	16
Stile	Stile To KG	110	61
Stile	Stile To PG	60	63
Terrain	Path Erosion - resolved	9	8
Terrain	Bank Steps	22	13
Terrain	Path Surface problem resolved	98	52
Waymark Post	Installed/Repaired	195	165
Authorisation	New Structure HA80 sec 147	8	2
Consultations	All Planning Applications	225	
Volunteer Hours	The Chiltern Society	1800hrs	945 inter
Volunteer Hours	RA Only	1200hrs	
Improvements	To aid mobility access	303	248
5% Survey Results	Paths Rated easy to use	81%	80%
5% Survey Results	Structures rated easy to use	96%	97%
5% Survey Results	Routes with Roadside Signs	99%	95%
Number on Database	No. of Job Sheets issued	1792	1631
Number on Database	Av. time to complete a site inst	65 days	38 days
Number on Database	No. of issues os 31/03/12	799	
Number on Database	No. of Issues os 31/03/13		1150







## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013

**Title:** LAF Members' Report

**Author:** Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access

**Contact Officer:** Katy Macdonald (01296 383604)

### HS2

- 1 The Buckinghamshire LAF working group met HS2 and their consultants at an access forum on the Draft Environmental Statement. Attending were John Elfes (Ramblers), David Briggs (CLA & NFU), Gavin Caspersz (Disabled Ramblers), Viv Lynch (British Horse Society) and John Coombe (Chiltern Society). The meeting discussed a number of issues following the publication of the Draft Environmental Statement and gave an opportunity for LAF members to provide additional advice and lobby for access improvements at a number of locations along the line. Issues were discussed and conclusions reached on the best course of action along the line between the Colne Valley and Brackley. Additional representatives attended from the Ramblers, Chiltern Society and Chilterns Conservation Board attended.
- 2 Alan Lambourne will be attending the Waddesden HS2 Community Forum display on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013.
- 3 The Hybrid Bill process will follow in the autumn of 2013.

### Conferences

- 4 David Briggs attended the South East LAF Conference on 21st May 2013 in London. The keynote speaker was Sarah Slade, National Access Advisor for the CLA, addressing the main themes from '*The Right Way Forward: The CLA's common Sense approach to accessing the countryside 2012*'. Other topics covered engagement with Local Nature Partnerships; the MOD's recreation & access strategy; promotion of cycling in the Chiltern's market towns, cycling provision in the New Forest and South Downs National Parks; and the development of Smartphone 'Apps' technology and mobile websites for countryside sites.

### Turville Open Access

- 5 The Open Spaces Society has asked if one new kissing gate can be installed to aid walkers on open access land above Turville village. John Elfes wrote to the

Wormsley Estate and received a reply on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Following this exchange of correspondence, the Estate have agreed to a new kissing gate on the open access land through the donate-a-gate scheme and this will be installed w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013.

### **Outer Aylesbury Ring Promoted route**

- 6 The Aylesbury & District Ramblers launched their new 53 mile long distance path walk at Wendover Woods on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013. There are 14 additional circular walk guides available from their website: [www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk](http://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk)

### **Disabled Ramblers**

- 7 Gavin Caspersz is now the Regional Representative for the National Disabled Ramblers, with a role to promote the Chilterns. A recent survey of access from Coombe Hill open access land to Wendover was undertaken on a scooter.

### **Natural England correspondence**

- 8 Natural England wrote on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013 to all English LAFs (Appendix 1). In summary, the letter announces a new key contact for LAFs, Kevin Haugh, and the continued support for Jonathan Clark in the role of the South East LAF Regional Coordinator, at least for this financial year. In addition, a new quarterly newsletter was published on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (Appendix 2), which will provide opportunities to share good practice between LAFs, and advertise news/support from Natural England and Defra.
- 9 A new Annual Report form for LAFs, to summarise their activities and achievements, was published by Natural England and a copy is enclosed in Appendix 3. This needs to be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. Please also see attached letter from Martin Shaw and a copy of the National LAF Annual Report, submitted to Defra, in Appendix 4 & 5.
- 10 A 'Plan of Engagement between Natural England, Defra and Local Access Forums' was issued by Natural England on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013 and is enclosed in Appendix 6.

### **Dog Control Order**

- 11 The Local Access Forum is a statutory consultee under the Dog Control Orders (Procedures) Regulations 2006, Section 3 (1) (c) (ii). Burnham Beeches are considering such an Order and will consult the Local Access Forum in due course.

### **National Trails**

- 12 It has been outlined that National Trails will continue to be managed locally, but within a national framework of guidance and support provided through Natural England. Central government will be responsible for setting standards and investing in trail maintenance, while new 'Trail Partnerships' will take collective responsibility for local delivery. The Ridgeway and Thames Path Management Group is therefore set to broaden its membership with a new Development Officer appointed to set up the Trails Partnership. Natural England say they hope to build on existing funding through partnerships. The Chilterns Conservation Board and Cotwold Conservation Board now sit on the Management Group. See Appendix 7.

## **Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013**

- 13 The Growth and Infrastructure Bill received Royal Assent on 25th April 2013 and the Bill is now law. The Act includes changes to: 1) the registration process for Town or Village Greens, for example applications cannot be made if planning permission has already been granted on the land, if the land is designated for development in Local Plans or draft Local Plans; 2) how rights of way are dealt with in planning permission, for example, it will allow diversion applications to be made before planning permission is granted, putting them at the forefront of the planning process; 3) Highways Act 1980 s31(6) deposits – the Act will allow statutory declarations to also include protection against applications for Town or Village Greens and the renewal period will be extended from 10 to 20 years. An administration charge may also be made by the Local Authority for deposits. It is expected that this will be popular with landowners.

## **County Council Elections**

- 14 These took place on took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013. The Conservatives retain overall control with 36 seats, UKIP 6, the Liberal Democrats 5, Labour 1 and Independents 1. Martin Tett remains Leader. It is hoped a county councillor will shortly be chosen to sit on the Local Access Forum by the Deputy Leader, Michael Appleyard. Additional membership from a Buckinghamshire District Council will also be sought.
- 15 Responsibility for rights of way is split across two cabinet areas. Lesley Clarke OBE is Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste & Procurement, covering Rights of Way Definitive Map (and Strategic Access); while Janet Blake is Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, covering the Rights of Way Operations Team.

## **Rights of Way Teams**

- 16 There have been some changes in staff which are summarised on the Area Team Map enclosed in Appendix 8.

## **LAF dates for 2013**

- 17 The next meeting is due to take place on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013.



29/04/2013



Natural England  
1st Floor, Temple Quay  
House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6EB

T 0300 060 1505

Dear Local Access Forum Secretary

### **Natural England and Local Access Forums**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April this year your LAF local contact is Kevin Haugh.

Your local contact will be in touch with you, and all the LAFs in their patch, between April and June this year to discuss and agree how Natural England will be able to support your LAF for the rest of this year. This will most likely involve a more targeted approach and there will be opportunities for you to discuss how Natural England can work with you and help you to achieve your priorities this year, resource permitting.

We are also currently in the process of contracting LAF Regional Coordinators to help support your work as we recognised their importance to you in your feedback to us.

Within the next two months you will receive the first edition of a quarterly newsletter which will provide opportunities to share good practice between LAFs, information from Natural England and Defra, and will include more details about relevant Natural England contacts along with some details of how we would like to work with and support LAFs over the course of this year.

Natural England remains fully committed to supporting LAFs and looks forward to working with you again in the coming year.

Yours

Rob Leek  
National LAF Lead Adviser





# LAF NEWS

Issue 1: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013

## Welcome

(by Wendy Thompson, Natural England Principal Adviser for Access and Engagement)

Welcome to the first issue of this newsletter dedicated to keeping LAF members across England up to date about national issues and local good practice. The team at Natural England want this newsletter to be full of information that will help you to advise on public access wherever you are and whatever your views. Your stories are essential to making this happen and I look forward to hearing more from you to add to future editions.

Meanwhile in this edition we report back from the LAF national conference which was on the theme of sharing good practice and update you on how you can continue to share information on Huddle about what works well - and what doesn't. We also bring news of a new tool to help you to bring together facts and figures about the people who visit the natural environment in your area. Stories in this edition from LAFs include Durham's success in the dedication of access and Shropshire's approach to working with communities to create applications to the Paths for Communities grant scheme. We also feature some of the hot debates on Huddle as well as some tips on using Huddle. Remember anyone who has a computer can join Huddle and can contribute to the discussion forums and share information with other LAF members.

Natural England is keen to continue to support LAFs and we remain focused on helping to share ideas, suggestions and good practice along with attendance at meetings where we can add value. To provide clarity about our role we have produced the attached Engagement Plan which restates the roles and relationships of Defra, Natural England, the LAFs and their appointing authorities. We hope you find this useful.

We have limited statutory roles in relation to LAFs but one of these is to collate your annual reports. This year, for the first time, and in response to your feedback, we have created a national annual report with highlights from the 80 annual reports received. This has been presented to Defra is available for all LAFs on Huddle and via the LAF Chairs. This, along with the newsletter, will help to raise the profile of LAFs and the good work that you are achieving.

Please do respond to this newsletter with stories to share and with suggestions for how we can make this an effective way to keep you informed.

### In this issue:

- [LAF Conference](#)
- [MENE](#)
- [Durham dedication](#)
- [Working with Paths for Communities](#)
- [South East Conference](#)
- [LAF survey](#)
- [Huddle Highlights](#)
- [Huddle Tips](#)



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## National Conference Report 2013

The theme of the conference was 'Sharing good practice and Sharing solutions'. The event took place in Sheffield at the end of February and was well attended by 99 members from 72 LAFs, which represented 88% of LAFs from across the country. The event was funded by Natural England but very much led by the LAFs and chaired independently by Steve Scoffin, who had recently stood down as Vice Chair of County Durham LAF. The majority of workshops and talks were led by LAF members and supported by Regional Coordinators and Natural England staff. Many thanks to the LAF members who ran the workshops, to the Regional Coordinators for helping to put the event together, to the speakers from Natural England and Defra, and to Steve for keeping everyone in order and on time.

### Follow up from the Event:

The wealth of information generated from the conference - including a record of the workshops - can be found on the Huddle workspace and the [Natural England website](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7685821) and should help to feed continuing discussions. The workshop themes included: benefits to health; working with the planning system; dealing with funding cuts; green infrastructure and open access. We are trialling the use of Huddle Whiteboards to encourage the sharing of good practice in these and other specific themes. Feedback from delegates was largely positive and all of the following points have been noted for future events.

- Strong LAF involvement in designing the event was highly valued. The networking opportunities were particularly welcomed by delegates; although, as several said, there is never enough time!
- It was felt that some of the logistics, such as catering, could have been more streamlined, more space was needed for the workshops, and bigger name badges would have been helpful.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7685821>

Contact [Rob Leek](#) with

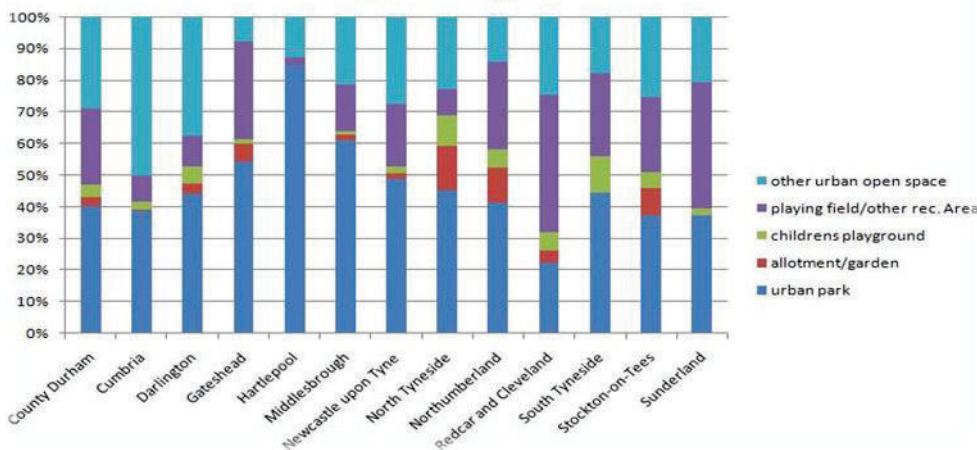


## Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

Those who attended the LAF conference were given a fascinating insight into MENE and for those who missed it, Stephen Herbert's presentation can be found on Huddle under conference feedback. Lots of LAFs have expressed an interest in making more use of MENE data in their work, and the good news is: plans are well in hand to make this easier.

An example of the data MENE can produce

**The types of place that best describe where you spent your time during this visit**



Natural England is developing an online tool which will allow LAFs to produce a list of results from MENE, along with maps of where visits are against demographic variables such as age, gender, socio-economic status etc. In addition it may be possible to provide a brief overview of the headline findings on environmental engagement within a LAF, complete with tables, charts, maps and text. The tool will be free to use and will be updated annually. When launched later this year it will include the four year's data collected to date. Watch this space for further update

## Durham Dedication

(by Jim Milner, Lead Advisor, Natural England, Access Local Delivery Team)

Following a request from the County Durham Local Access Forum (LAF), Durham County Council agreed to dedicate two pieces of land as open access.

Cllr Neil Foster, said: "We're delighted to dedicate this land as open access so that residents have the freedom to enjoy more of the beautiful scenery that County Durham provides. I look forward to the council and the Local Access Forum continuing to work together for the benefit of the people of County Durham."

Geoff Hughes, Chair of the County Durham Local Access Forum, said: "The County Durham Local Access Forum welcomes the decision of the county council to dedicate two areas of land, one here at Waldrige Fell and the other at South Moor, for open access. Both areas adjoin land that already has open access and this decision will ensure that residents and visitors to County Durham alike will be able to enjoy both these areas for the foreseeable future.

"The LAF has been asking the council to take this action and we are pleased that

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# LAF NEWS

they have now seen the benefits that will accrue. We hope that other landowners will now follow the lead of the council and dedicate suitable land for open access, and that the council themselves will regard this as only a start. Already Natural England have a programme of dedicating their nature reserves. We would be pleased to discuss the benefits of dedication with other landowners.”



## Working with Paths for Communities

(By Jim Stabler, Access Development Officer for Shropshire County Council)

Shropshire has found that LAF involvement in Paths for Communities (P4C) schemes has been essential from the outset. Potential projects were put forward at LAF meetings and one of the members of the LAF was nominated as a champion for the scheme. The person nominated was one with a particular interest in the project or detailed experience in the area of access concerned. The nominated champion explored the potential project in more detail and gave a presentation at the next LAF meeting. If the LAF liked the project and considered it feasible then it was endorsed for development.

The champion then became involved in the writing of the bid application and provided regular updates on progress at subsequent LAF meetings. This procedure ensured every project was given the full support of the LAF from inception to completion.

## South East Conference

(by Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Advisor, Buckinghamshire County Council)

Seven speakers and fifty delegates attended the South East Regional LAF conference on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013 in London. Sarah Slade, from the CLA, outlined from their paper: *'The Right Way Forward: The CLA's common Sense approach to accessing the countryside 2012'*. An excellent keynote speaker, Sarah was invited to try and redress the balance towards more speakers representing the farming and landowning community and reflected a concern that local access issues were being discussed without their input.

Richard Brooks from the MOD, outlined the varied and often unique access issues encountered on some of the vast expanses of MOD land - including visitors that carry away rather dangerous souvenirs from their visits! Andrew Kerry-Bedell, from 'Mobi-Scan', then described a range of technologies available, using on-site QR codes,

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# LAF NEWS

that can help to improve access information.

The afternoon was taken up with two advocates of cycling access. Bob Damper, a LAF member from the South Downs National Park, outlined the stark difference between the level of cycling access enjoyed in the South Downs National Park and opposition, by some groups, to the development of cycling access in the New Forest. Sara Randle of the CTC, spoke about plans to encourage greater access to market towns and stations in the Chilterns. This included Berkhamstead, hence attendance from Herts LAF, Eastern Region. Sara's enthusiasm was infectious; although, horse riders reminded delegates of the need for cyclists to be aware of the sensitivity and skittishness of horses. A plea was made for a speaker from the horse riding community at next years conference.

Kevin Haugh, Natural England, emphasised Natural England's remit to protect the natural environment. He went on to speak about changes to delivery within access and engagement and how Natural England, Defra, Local Authorities and LAFs need to understand each other's roles. Finally, Adam Wallace – also from Natural England - outlined progress on the formation of Local Nature Partnerships and spoke of the importance of LAF involvement.

It is hoped LAF members and Officers had an enjoyable day.

## LAF Survey

In March 2013 Natural England surveyed LAF Chairs and Secretaries to obtain an insight into how effective we have been in supporting LAFs work. We received a fantastic response with seventy eight questionnaires completed. The results are summarised in the attached report, which can also be found on Huddle. The information it contains will help us to prioritise our support for LAFs in 2013.

## Huddle Highlights

Of the wide ranging discussions on Huddle the one that has caught our eye this month is the slide show from Dave Allen of Worcester LAF. The presentation strongly backs the principle of least restrictive option and has some very good and practical examples of access infrastructure. Natural England would not support everything in the presentation and in particular the recommendation that some bridleways are closed for part of the year in poor weather - a suggestion that respondents to the discussion on Huddle have also challenged very robustly.

The presentation demonstrates the value of LAFs gathering and sharing good practice and we are using some of the slides to brief staff in Natural England that work on land management schemes (Higher Level Stewardship etc) about what to look out for in good access infrastructure. If you are a member you can find the discussion thread on Huddle [here](#) and join the debate.

## Huddle Tips

**(by Rob Leek, Lead Advisor, Natural England, Access and Rights of Way Delivery)**

For those not familiar with it, the LAF Huddle Workspace is an online internet resource for LAF members which includes a discussion forum, bulletin boards (whiteboards), calendar and document library. Here are some tips to try and help you get more out of it:

- **Email notifications** – when alerting other Huddle members to new content, try to only notify those relevant (e.g. members from a particular region). To unsubscribe from an email alert, reply to one of the Huddle notification emails,

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# LAF NEWS

delete the 'subject' line and put UNSUBSCRIBE instead before you send.

- **Discussions** – when posting please be succinct, stay 'on subject' and try to keep posts short and easy to follow.
- **Links** – when posting information to Huddle you can include hyperlinks to other relevant areas of the workspace (discussions, documents, whiteboards). Right-click on the file/whiteboard/discussion you would like to link to and select 'copy shortcut' or 'copy link location'. Then right-click paste this into your text.
- **Easy Access** – you can access the Huddle from any internet enabled computer – just type *defra.huddle.net* in the web browser's address field and hit 'return'. There's also free, easy to use Huddle apps available for many smartphones and also the iPad.
- **Search** – the search facility in Huddle (click 'Search' at the top of the screen) is quick and easy to use and searches all the content in all areas of the workspace apart from the 'People' section.
- **Guidance** – in the 'Guidance/FAQs' folder in the 'Files' section there are numerous guides to help with using Huddle including 2 (soon to be updated) introductory videos. Huddle's own 'Help' section (available by clicking 'Help' at the top of the screen) is also very comprehensive.
- **Join in** - if any LAF member would like to join Huddle, please contact Regional Coordinator or [Rob Leek](#) , who will arrange access.

Contact [Rob Leek](#) with suggestions ideas or feedback.



**Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013**

Name of LAF:

Name of LAF Chair:

Name of LAF Secretary:

Number of LAF members:

**1 - Involvement and Representation**

What interests does your current membership cover?

What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing?

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors:

**2 - Operation of LAF**

What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective?

How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team?

In what ways do you reach consensus?

How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts?

Give up to 3 examples of where you have encountered operational difficulties (e.g. lack of resources); explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate such issues:

1 -

2 -

3 -

**3 - Partnership and Progress**

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not?

Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not?

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area?

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your work programme (please provide supporting information)?

Have you achieved something else?

Main or notable achievements?

**4 - Profile and Direction**

Has anything changed over the last year?

What changes / barriers can you see ahead?

What are your priorities for the year ahead (list up to 3)?

1 -

## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

2 -

3 -

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities?

### 5 - Section 94 Bodies

Give up to 3 examples of advice given by your LAF to section 94 bodies:

1 -

2 -

3 -

### 6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on?

How many cases have you responded to?

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases:

### 7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year (please add numbers into the boxes below)?

Public meetings		Working groups	
Training days		Definitive map modification orders	
Highway orders		Green Infrastructure strategies	
Gating orders		Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	
Cycle projects		Disabled access	
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders		Housing development schemes	
Planning applications		PROW network and projects	
ROWIP planning and objectives		Local development frameworks and planning strategies	
Local Nature Partnerships		Recording of paths and promoting use	

## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access		Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	
Slipways and landing stages - public access to		Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council		Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	
Shoreline management plans		Rail freight interchange strategic development	
Network rail and rail crossing closures		Access and nature conservation	
Horse routes and equestrian provision		Multi user routes	
National Parks		Coastal access	
Motorised vehicle access		Access to MOD land	
New town & village green registration government consultation		Natural England consultations	
Defra consultations		Commons grazing proposals	
Highways Agency consultations		Department for Transport consultations	
Other (please specify):			

**8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority:**

**9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:**





Dear LAF Secretary or Chair

We are pleased to announce that the National LAF Annual Report 2011/2012 has now been sent to Defra. Many thanks to all who contributed to this process.

The 2011/2012 report contains a fascinating snapshot into the work of the LAFs, and we look forward to Defra's response. I hope that the current report will encourage more LAFs to provide feedback on the work you are involved in and the issues you are facing so that the 2012/2013 Annual Report can be even more informative.

The annual report template (Review Form) for 2012/13 has been sent to LAF Secretaries via the Regional Coordinators and Natural England looks forward to receiving all of the 2012/13 Annual Reports by the end of September 2013 though would welcome submissions before this date if they're ready.

Martin Shaw



## National LAF Annual Report - April 2011 to March 2012

### Foreword by Natural England

This is Natural England's annual report to Defra on the work that Local Access Forums achieved during the year ending 31 March 2012. We have collated together a selection of notable achievements from the individual annual reports, as well as some of the issues raised. Together they provide an interesting overview of the range of work that LAFs are involved with as well as some challenges they face. This report will be passed to the Minister so that he is aware of the good work LAFs are doing.

LAFs provide a local level body of expertise on matters relating to public access and outdoor recreation. They are a great example of localism in action. By bringing together volunteers from a range of backgrounds and interests, the LAFs demonstrate relevance to local decisions relating to a range of social, economic and environmental issues. The work of LAFs to encourage improvement to greenspace, other open access and connecting routes is important in helping to enable a healthier population, contributes to quality of life, creates opportunities for children to learn more about the natural world around them and contributes to local economic growth by attracting visitors to explore the landscapes, wildlife and heritage in an area. The best and most sustainable achievements involve working in partnership across sectors and in the coming year we look to LAFs to develop relationships with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards. There are many examples where this is beginning to happen and where the respective groups are finding common purpose.

There is certainly a wealth of expertise within LAFs to share with other bodies but also plenty to share with other LAFs. The conference at the end of February 2013 facilitated the exchange of knowledge and we, in Natural England, want to build on that momentum to support LAFs to continue to share good practice whether through contributions to a newsletter, by adding material to a new section on Huddle or through circulating ideas at the LAF Regional Chair meetings.

I look forward to hearing more about the good work in the year ahead.



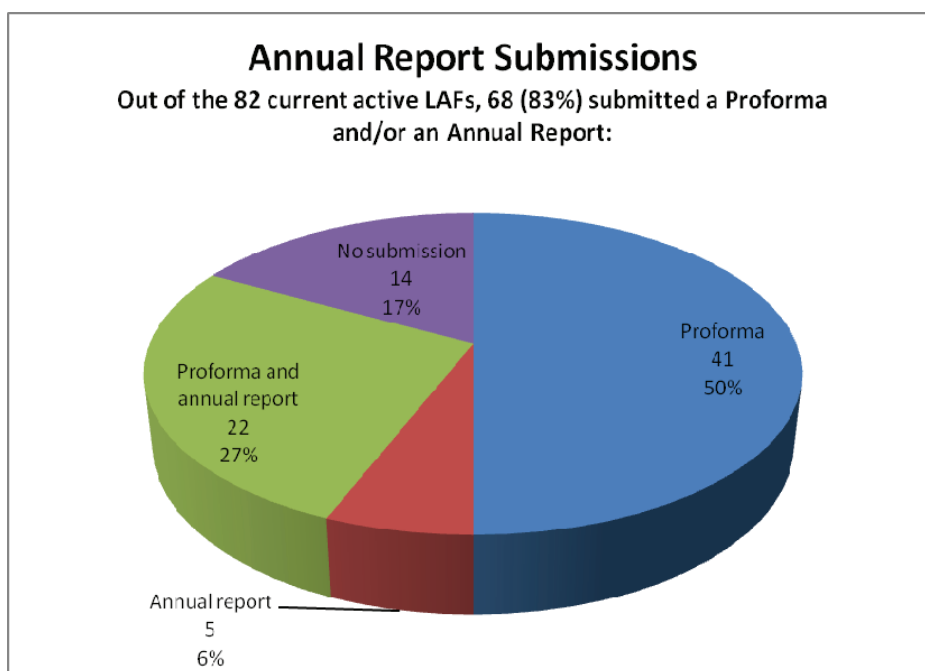
Liz Newton  
Natural England Director, Access and Engagement

## 1. Introduction

Natural England has responsibilities set out in the CROW Act (section 19 of the 2007 regulations) to receive annual reports from all LAFs. This report summarises all of the LAF annual reports received covering the period April 2011 to March 2012. The report provides statistics on LAFs and the activities they have undertaken, highlights some of the achievements reported, identifies issues and makes recommendations on improvements that could be made.

A revised reporting period was introduced to allow LAFs time to compile their annual reports. The reporting year end is 31<sup>st</sup> March with the submission deadline of 31 October. The LAF Regional Coordinators produced summary reports for their region which have been used to inform this report. <sup>1</sup>

The LAFs were asked to submit an annual report to Natural England ideally using a proforma provided. The final submission results are as follows:



## 2. Examples and details of some individual LAF achievements

LAFs have engaged in and influenced a wide range of consultation processes which are summarised in section 3.

A detailed selection of LAF good practice that has helped to achieve access benefits for local communities is set out below:

**Cumbria LAF** - Worked closely with partners from Natural England to make sure the Coastal Access Path worked well. They reported that a positive model for working

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<sup>1</sup> Reports from Regional Coordinators have been placed on Huddle

together had been developed which will make developing further stages of the coast path much easier.

**Lancashire LAF** - Work started on the Pennine Bridleway before the LAF existed but in recent years the LAF had been actively involved in its creation and development. The LAF reported that the experience of involvement with stage 1 allowed them to be more proactive on alignment of stage 2 of the National Trail.

**Rotherham LAF** - The rights of way team allocated £20,000 of the annual budget to the Local Access Forum to spend on countryside access improvements including: installing/fixing kissing gates, waymarkers, fingerposts, vegetation clearance and resurfacing.

**Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire LAFs** have been significant consultees with regard to the HS2 railway. Through meeting representatives from HS2, the LAFs have secured assurances of a better deal for access and rights of way along the line. Mark Bailey, Deputy Head of Environment for HS2 and his Team said he had been very impressed by the engagement, feedback, local knowledge and debate from Warwickshire Local Access Forum in respect of managing access and rights of way issues in the run up to HS2's Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Cambridgeshire LAF** - LAF members worked with the Wildlife Trust to assess disabled access to the Greater Fen Project, to highlight any access risks and develop a plan for future improvements, including improvements to the building and the removal of gradients too steep for wheelchair access.

**Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF)** - In 2010 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) £46,600 for the Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage (PATHH) project. The New Forest National Park Authority provided an additional £5,000. A Project Officer was employed to take the project forward, overseen by a Steering Committee led by HCAF members. The project was completed by the end of 2012, and succeeded in gathering research by over 100 volunteers for routes with strong historical evidence, but which also meet a modern need, as identified in the Countryside Access Plans. The project delivered workshops in 13 schools (29 classes, 820 children), an exhibition at 24 venues, and over 17 talks to interest groups.

HCAF has continued to monitor the Hampshire Countryside Access Plan (CAP) delivery and members are present on each of the CAP working groups. Working group progress reports were received at a number of HCAF meetings, and the Forum provided advice on best practice for the running of the groups. The HCAF has also contributed to project work, led by the Area Countryside Access Managers. This included a workshop to develop key messages to feature on a leaflet to promote the responsible use of byways. This is part of an initiative with the Community Safety Team.

**Swindon Countryside Access Forum (SCAF)** – The SCAF has worked on developing a local statistical evidence base, using data largely derived from MENE analysis. This concept has been modelled on the Wiltshire 'Joint Strategic

Assessment' initiative which aims to produce "a single version of the truth" upon which policy decisions can be made. The SCAF consider that for its advice to be influential it must adhere to the same quantitative rigour that the local authority adopts towards its other decision making processes. Initial analysis has focused on benchmarking Public Health Outcomes Framework indicator 1.16 and the level of people walking generally throughout Wiltshire and Swindon. The aim of this first study is to provide evidence to support the transfer of funding from the Health budget to pay for infrastructure improvements in the rights of way network, particularly targeted in areas of highest health inequality.

**JLAF (Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and South Glos)** – JLAF has worked with local authorities on the Outdoors West programme, to develop and publish a website at [www.OutdoorsWest.org.uk](http://www.OutdoorsWest.org.uk) as a first stop for information on the outdoors in the area. This is designed to be an attractive approachable website with mapping and information that people want, with the main aim to increase use of public rights of way. The website also holds background information and advice on public rights of way, access to mapping of furniture (stiles, gates, signs) on routes, and a system to allow online reporting of problems on the path network.

A JLAF working group has advised on the website content and approach, particularly helping to compile a routes database which has involved surveying routes, writing directions and plotting maps. This section of the website is still under construction, but will be a valuable database of attractive, reliable routes for people to explore the area. Other organisations such as the Cotswold AONB, National Trust, Health Walks and Museums are also involved in providing routes for the website.

The JLAF has extended the Cotswolds AONB Voluntary Warden service across the whole of the JLAF area. With start-up funding from Natural England, volunteer teams have been established to carry out on-site tasks such as vegetation clearance, kissing gate installation, as well as step and surface repair and installation.

### 3. Common consultations and activities that LAFs have been involved with over the year

Local Consultations	National Consultations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highway Orders</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategies</li> <li>• Planning applications</li> <li>• Gating orders</li> <li>• Local Transport Plans and traffic management schemes</li> <li>• PROW network and projects</li> <li>• Forestry Panel, the proposed boundary review of the Yorkshire Dales NP and the Lake District NP</li> <li>• Definitive map modification orders</li> <li>• ROWIP planning and objectives</li> <li>• Connect 2 and other cycle projects</li> <li>• Disabled access</li> <li>• Core Strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Coastal Access Trail - involved in the development of the (NW)</li> <li>• National Park Partnership Plans</li> <li>• National Planning Policy Framework consultation</li> <li>• Public Forest Estate consultations</li> <li>• Independent Panel on Forestry</li> <li>• Commons grazing proposals</li> <li>• The Natural Choice – The Natural Environment White Paper</li> <li>• Ministerial letter to Local Access Forums – responses</li> <li>• Defra's key discussion document 'An Invitation to Shape the Nature of</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog exclusion, dogs on leads, dog fouling orders</li> <li>• Housing development schemes</li> <li>• Local Nature Partnerships</li> <li>• Recording of paths and promoting use</li> <li>• Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding</li> <li>• Local development frameworks and planning strategies</li> <li>• Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access</li> <li>• Multi-use design criteria (Devon CAF)</li> <li>• Improvement of access through the PIGS scheme (Parish Improvement Grant Scheme)</li> <li>• Slipways and landing stages - public access to</li> <li>• Higher access rights to publicly owned land and the disposal and development of land owned by the Council.</li> <li>• Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes</li> <li>• Olympic mountain biking venue at Hadleigh - ELAF responded to Essex County Council's consultation</li> <li>• Shoreline Management Plans - ELAF to Environment Agency's - Essex and Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan</li> <li>• Rail Freight Interchange Strategic development</li> <li>• Network Rail and Rail Crossing Closures</li> <li>• Access and nature conservation</li> <li>• The definitive map and dedication of Land and Routes.</li> <li>• Horse routes and equestrian provision</li> <li>• Multi user routes - Balancing provision for</li> <li>• National Parks – Peak LAF have strong presence in all Park matters</li> <li>• Coastal Access / South West Coast Path</li> <li>• Access activities: walking, horse riding, cycling, running, paragliding, climbing, fishing; outdoor pursuits; conservation activities; wildlife watching; farming and land management, motorised vehicular access; Community transport; activities for guides and scouts; rural small</li> </ul>	<p>England'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Conversation public consultation about savings needed as a result of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review</li> </ul>
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<p>business; coastal access; urban access; access for all and more</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motorised vehicle access</li> <li>• Access to MOD Land</li> <li>• New Town &amp; Village Green Registration government consultation</li> <li>• Moving Inland Waterways into a Charity in England and Wales' by Defra</li> <li>• National Planning Policy Framework - Advice to Government on the draft</li> <li>• Simplifying Traffic Orders consultations - Comments to the Government</li> <li>• Highways Agency consultations</li> <li>• Revisions to the Countryside Code</li> </ul>	
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## 4. National Achievements

### 4.1 Huddle: internet based network to share information

To help enable LAFs countrywide to work together and share good practice, **and to facilitate communication with Natural England and Defra**, a LAF workspace was set up on the Defra Huddle website. This was trialled with the eight LAF Regional Coordinators, then rolled out gradually to LAF members. Initially this was to one 'Huddle Champion' per LAF which was expanded to three per LAF by March 2012.

- Number of LAFs represented on Huddle by March 2012 = **63 (76%)**
- Number of LAF members on Huddle by March 2012 = **121**

### 4.2 LAF conferences

In 2011/12, two national conferences were organised by Natural England in Newcastle and Bristol with speakers from Defra/Natural England, workshops and a video address from Richard Benyon to the LAFs. LAF representation was:

- Total LAFs represented = **73 (89%)**
- Total LAF member attendees = **79**

### 4.3 LAF annual work programmes

LAFs are encouraged to prepare annual work programmes and most reported that they were successful in meeting the objectives they had set themselves although in some instances work did not progress as swiftly as initially desired. A list of the typical work areas covered by most LAFs can be found in Annex 1. These mostly involved providing advice on:

- national consultations such as the National Planning Policy Framework or the Independent Panel on Forestry; or
- local consultations such as planning applications, RoWIPs or highway orders;
- Access restriction cases from Natural England.



## 5. Issues Identified by LAFs

It is important to remember that whilst LAFs are advisory bodies established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, they are run by volunteers. The current economic climate affects both the LAFs and the public sector that supports and works with them resulting in some frustrations and concerns. The proforma provided to LAFs for their annual reporting included sections for LAFs to list some of the issues they faced over the year along with their suggestions and ideas that could possibly help with some of these in the future.

Issues Raised by LAFs	NE/ Defra Response
Local authority funding cuts and restructuring have resulted in reduced staff time to support LAFs in holding regular meetings and in officers being less familiar with LAFs and the role they need to play.	Publication of 'Engagement Plan' that sets out respective roles and responsibilities
Pressure on budgets to improve and maintain access.	Promote 'good practice' sharing via Huddle and Newsletter. Continue to promote P4C via LAF networks as possible source of funding.
Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act lists the bodies that must have regard to relevant advice provided by a LAF. However there is a lack of awareness about this obligation amongst some of the bodies listed.	NE will circulate new newsletter to S94 bodies and remind them of the need to consult with LAFs.
General lack of awareness of LAFs and their activity at local and national levels.	NE will produce and circulate the Annual Report and a quarterly Newsletter.  NE to set up 'good practice' sites on huddle across a range of issues.
Frustration in consulting on matters within the defined statutory time period and coinciding with LAF meetings.	LAFs to share good practice (are there lessons to be learned from other voluntary groups?). Consider other ways to communicate between meetings.
The highway authority backlog of Legal Event Orders is frustrating for LAFs who provide advice and then often see no progress for some time.	The package of recommendations of the Stakeholder Working Group will streamline the process and allow the definitive map cut off date to be commenced. Local communities should hold local authorities to account for their spending decisions and priorities.
Many Forums struggle to engage with certain sections of society, in particular young people and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. A couple of forums also mention inability to attract candidates from disabled user groups and/or individuals. One LAF is struggling with representation from land management / farmers and one would like to see some local business interest too.	LAFs to share good practice on engaging with communities and encouraging new volunteers to join the forum.

Issues Raised by LAFs	NE/ Defra Response
Lack of time to look at Huddle for complex consultations	Share Good practice such as requesting the LAF Secretary summarise issues on Huddle at meetings.
For those LAFs with wide geographical areas, the distances involved in travelling to meetings can be a barrier for members attending meetings, especially in the winter months when the weather can be inclement.  Meetings too can be lengthy with too many Agenda items.	Chairs and secretaries to note the need to seek ways of making it easier for members to attend meetings (rotating location perhaps) and to ensure agendas are managed effectively.  Local authorities to consider training and development where required.
LAFs would value some training on MENE and on the use of ecosystems services valuations.	Natural England conference presentation on Huddle and NE web site. RCs are encouraged to lead on helping LAFs with specific enquiries. NE is developing a toolkit to help individuals to use MENE which RCs will be briefed on.
Request for briefing from Defra on the implications of the "localism" agenda for LAFs.	The Localism Act was introduced in November 2011 and devolved more decision making powers to individuals, communities and councils. LAFs are an example of localism in action.
Continued support for national training and specifically on equal access to the countryside and dedicated work under the new Equality Act.	Natural England is currently surveying LAF Chairs and Secretaries for their views on LAF's national training needs and will consider how these can be met through a combination of briefings, guidance, bespoke training and events. Local authorities are required to provide reasonable training for LAF members.
LAFs need more regular communication from Natural England both through feedback from this annual reporting process, in replying to correspondence and through feedback from LAF consultations.	Natural England is producing an annual report to Defra/Minister and will circulate this to all LAF members via the Chairs and Secretaries. Natural England provides a summary of the results of all consultations on its web site and will ensure LAFs are aware of this. Natural England has a Customer Service Standard to acknowledge all correspondence within 10 working days and to provide a full response within an appropriate time scale.
Concern re the impact of changes to HLS and those with agreed permissive routes on sites.	Natural England will brief LAFs on changes to agri-environment funding that impact on public access to the natural environment.
Open Access Restrictions – changes in staff structures at Natural England meant that a local person was no longer able to go along to meetings to explain issues. Natural England is now offering teleconferencing as well as information by email, however joining in is not considered easy by LAF members as they are not confident with the technology or familiar with the process for the meetings.	Natural England staff that deal with open access restrictions cover large areas of the country. It will continue to be necessary to provide information by teleconference or email. Teleconference would be to a LAF meeting and the Secretary will be encouraged to make this facility available.

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## Plan of Engagement between Natural England, Defra and the Local Access Forums

### 1. Purpose

1.1 This plan summarises the role of Local Access Forums (LAFs) and clarifies the relationship between the LAFs, Natural England and Defra. It is designed to be a dynamic document that informs and guides all three parties to direct and focus effort, and has been produced in part, as a result of feedback received from the LAFs at the 2013 conference and in general discussions. It will be kept under regular review and revised as necessary.

1.2 In parallel Natural England will produce a LAF Annual Report to Defra which will highlight achievements and current issues.

### 2. Introduction

2.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are advisory bodies established under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. LAFs are established by local highway authorities and National Park Authorities (termed the Appointing Authorities in the legislation) and their main function is to provide independent advice to the Government and to section 94 bodies<sup>1</sup> on the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and on other matters prescribed.

2.2 'Guidance on Local Access Forums in England' was issued by the Secretary of State in 2007. It remains an essential reference guide which details respective roles and responsibilities and can be found on the LAF section of the Natural England Website and on Huddle<sup>2</sup>.

2.3 Whilst LAFs have clear statutory duties, they can add value to their local access agenda by going beyond their statutory brief and embracing a wider role.

2.4 There are currently 83 active LAFs in England and they are made up of voluntary members appointed by the Appointing Authority. The Appointing Authority provides secretariat support for the meetings as well as expenses for the LAF members.

2.5 The importance of LAFs was recognised in the Natural Environment White Paper, June 2011, particularly in para 4.33 which recognised that *'Clear, well maintained paths and bridleways are important to give people access to the natural environment and can be enjoyed by cyclists, walkers and horse riders. There is considerable scope to improve and extend this network for example through LAFs and Rights of Way Improvement Plans.'*

<sup>1</sup> The Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, Section 94(4) specifies that it is the function of a local access forum, as respects to the area for which it is established, to advise the appointing authority; the local highway authority; other bodies exercising functions under CROW Act Part 1 (Natural England, Forestry Commission and English Heritage) and such other bodies as may be prescribed. These other bodies are set out in the LAF Regulations 2007, paragraph 21, and include: any conservation board established by the Secretary of State, any parish or town council in the area covered by the LAF, and Sport England.

<sup>2</sup> Huddle is the Defra social network which has a section dedicated to Local Access Forums.

### **3. The LAF role**

3.1 The primary purpose of LAFs is to provide advice to a range of organisations specified in the CROW Act, 2000 and in supplementary regulations and guidance. Specifically to:

‘advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed (Secretary of State, Guidance on LAFs, 2007, para 3.1.1).’

The LAFs set their own priorities depending on local issues and what is of interest to the group members, as well as providing a local input to consultations and draft policy documents.

Matters of interest are likely to include:

- the management of access land;
- the condition of PROW and work to record PROW;
- improvements to the network of routes and open spaces in an area including PROW and access land;
- provision of greenspace (including woodland and coast);
- relationship with other sectors with an interest in providing opportunities to enjoy open air recreation including health, sport tourism, land management and biodiversity;
- how local authorities prioritise their spend on access and recreation;

3.2 Each forum meets at least twice per year, but generally more often. Members of the public are entitled to attend meetings and may be permitted to contribute to discussion.

3.3 Members serve in a personal capacity to represent interests rather than particular organisations.

### **4. Role of the Appointing Authority**

4.1 Appointing authorities have a duty to support their forum and contribute to its effectiveness, by:

- setting the Terms of Appointment for forum members;
- appointing suitable forum members and notifying them of their Terms of Appointment;
- providing a secretary to administer the forum;
- publicising the forum agenda, minutes and papers for public inspection;

- publishing the forum's annual report (and if necessary assisting with writing), and sending a copy to Natural England;
- assisting LAFs with producing their Annual Report Proforma (see below), and adding comments where required;
- meeting the forum's reasonable running costs and reasonable training needs;
- providing suitable venues and refreshments for forum meetings;
- maintaining a good working relationship with the forum, and assisting the forum in developing its forward work programme, promotional material and events, etc;
- helping the forum to develop criteria for measuring effectiveness; and
- reimbursing members' expenses in respect of travel and subsistence costs, and any expenses for the care of children or dependants (and notifying the forum members of the rules for claiming expenses).

4.2 As a section 94(4) body, an appointing authority should also:

- have regard to relevant advice from the LAF;
- consult the LAF at an early stage on relevant (not just statutory) matters;
- provide information, reports, background papers, speakers etc;
- give timely feedback on advice received from the LAF;
- raise awareness of the LAF amongst officers and members throughout the authority.

4.3 The appointing authority must ensure the LAF is made up from a range of different people from the local community representing landowners / managers, access users (such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and other interests (such as health and conservation. Members are appointed to provide **independent, constructive, relevant, inclusive, incisive** and **informed** advice which takes account of a broad range and balance of local interests about access issues and priorities affecting the local area or which influence national policy.

## 5. Defra role

5.1 Defra is the Government department with responsibility for policy on access and recreation in England, including access to open country under the CROW Act and management of public rights of way. Defra is also responsible for policy on local access forums.

5.2 Defra's core purpose is to improve the current and future quality of life. It brings together the interests of farmers and the countryside; the environment and the rural economy; the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. This is achieved by integrating environmental, social and economic objectives - putting

sustainable development into practice every day, and by championing sustainable development as the way forward for Government.

5.3 Defra will work with ministers and departments to promote LAFs and their work. It will work with Natural England to report annually to ministers, based on the information gathered from the LAF annual reports. It will also provide Natural England with the direction for LAFs from Ministerial interests.

5.4 Defra is responsible for the creation of regulations and guidance to support the CROW Act. It keeps this under review and updates it as necessary.

5.5 Defra is keen to support the success of LAFs and will assist with the development and delivery of training when possible.

## **6. Natural England role**

6.1 Natural England is the Government's advisor for the natural environment in England. Its job is to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations. Its work is a significant component in the delivery of the Government's aspirations for improving the natural environment in England as described in the Natural Environment White Paper of 2011, and is the lead body for the Government's Biodiversity 2020 programme.

Natural England is charged with conserving the natural environment as a resource for people to enjoy, understand and study. We are also responsible for promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open air recreation.

Natural England's access and engagement work includes supporting the maintenance and promotion of 13 National Trails and managing 143 National Nature Reserves (NNRs), delivering coastal access, regulating open access and working in partnership with others to deliver and promote responsible public access and engagement.

6.2 Natural England's statutory role in respect to LAFs is limited and covers:

- receiving copies of all local access forum annual reports; and
- being notified of changes made to forum arrangements and changes in the Secretary.

6.3 In addition, as a section 94 body (see paragraph 2.1) Natural England welcomes advice from the LAFs on:

- the operation of open access restrictions, management and mapping;
- the condition of National Trails;
- access to the coast;
- the implementation of HLS/conservation management on access land;
- the effects of HLS/conservation management on rights of way;

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- facilities and services for visitors at National Nature Reserves;
- opportunities afforded to LAFs through engagement with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); and
- other matters relating to the provision of access and opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural environment.

6.4 In addition to its statutory function, Natural England provides support to LAFs by championing their role at national and local levels and by facilitating the exchange of good practice. To do this, where resources allow, Natural England will:

- maintain an online LAF workspace (e.g. Huddle) which enables LAF members, NE and Defra to communicate and work together nationally;
- produce an annual national LAF report for Defra;
- facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice gathered from meetings, annual reporting, meetings and events. To support this, in 2013/14 Natural England will issue a quarterly newsletter and will create a themed good practice section on Huddle;
- facilitate the provision of external Regional Coordinators who support LAFs by providing advice, training and facilitation as well as encouraging the production of annual reports and organising regional LAF meetings and conferences;
- hold a regular LAF Chairs conference;
- provide focussed input to LAF meetings (through an agreed targeted plan of engagement), particularly regional groupings, seeking to attend where it can make a difference;
- maintain a LAF section on its website which includes information and up to date contact links to all LAFs;
- manage communication between LAFs, Defra and Natural England (and other national bodies) via meetings, email, Huddle (in effect providing a conduit between local LAF interests and Defra / Ministerial interests).

Martin Shaw, Natural England, May 2013





28<sup>th</sup> March 2013



Dear Colleague,

Natural England  
Hercules House  
Hercules Road  
London SE17DU

### **Publication of National Trails Review Outcomes**

Over the last two years Natural England has been working closely with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to review the funding and management arrangements for National Trails. We are immensely grateful to all who have contributed so generously to the Review.

The Review has now been completed and 'the new deal' was endorsed by our Non-Executive Board on 6 March 2013.

We have today published a report of the responses to the formal consultation that we carried out last summer, as well as the recommendations made by two independent stakeholder groups on standards and funding.

We have also published a summary of the revised arrangements that explains how National Trails will be delivered in the future and gives details about our continuing role supporting the Trails at both national and local levels.

To find out more information about the findings of the review you can visit our website at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/nationaltrails/review2012.aspx>

In the coming months we will be working closely with our local partners to support their transition to the new arrangements.

If you have any further questions about the review please contact [Susan.Kasprowicz@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Susan.Kasprowicz@naturalengland.org.uk) or your local Natural England Partnership Manager.

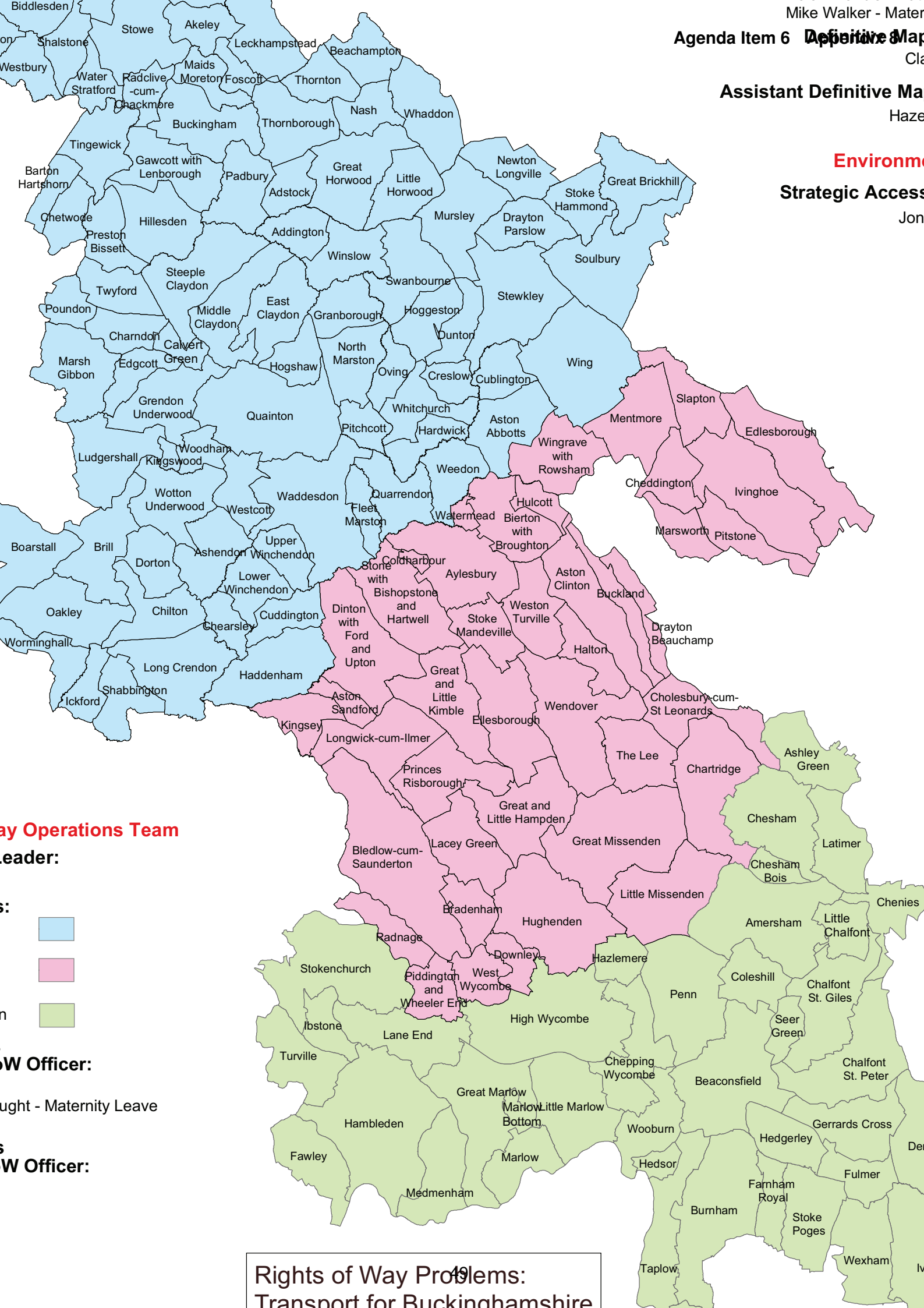
Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Newton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Liz Newton, Director of Access and Engagement





**Day Operations Team**

**Leader:**

**S:**



**W Officer:**

**ught - Maternity Leave**

**W Officer:**

