

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2013 to March 2014

Name of LAF: Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum

Name of LAF Chair: John Elfes

Name of LAF Secretary: Jonathan Clark

Number of LAF members: 14

Number of LAF vacancies: 1

1 - Involvement and Representation

What interests does your current membership cover? Ramblers, British Horse Society, Trail Riders Fellowship, NFU, CLA, Parish Councils, Heritage, CTC, Sustrans, county council member, National Trust

What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing? More landowning and farming representation

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors: None

2 - Operation of LAF

What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications, monitoring of Huddle etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective? Expenses are re-imbursed by the county council; we have 4 members monitoring Huddle intermitently; and communication between meetings is through email. On larger consultations, such as HS2, sub-groups are formed to discuss issues between LAF meetings.

How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team? The chairman normally ensures a balanced debate and summaries the position of each party to ensure all opinions are represented.

In what ways do you reach consensus? Discussions and debates usually indicate the LAF's opinion on various matters. If it appears to be a split there is a vote through a show of hands.

How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts? Debates and meetings are tightly chaired and the membership are not inclined to conflict.

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 - Some meetings have had a low turnout and several members have missed more than 3 meetings in a row, which breaks the LAF attendance criteria. The secretary is to review membership during this financial year and replace members that show lack of commitment.

2 - Further difficulties in getting our advice given proper consideration by the county council - but see Chairman's comment below.

3 -

3 - Partnership and Progress

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not? The working relations with the secretary and LAF officer are good

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Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not? We don't have a system in place to respond to planning applications as there is not enough volunteer time or expertise.

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area? The profile of the LAF is relatively low in the county, but there are good relations in some quarters, such as the Chilterns AONB and with neighbouring LAFs. The awareness of the forum's consultative role within the county and district council is generally low.

Main or notable achievements?

Influencing the outcome of HS2's draft and final environmental statements and therefore helping to protect access along 63 rights of way crossings in Buckinghamshire.

Influencing the protection and enhancement of 34 at grade crossings through consultation with Network Rail through the East West Rail Project.

Developing and promoting a new new disabled access route.

Strong lobbying of the county council on rights of way budget cuts and TUPE transfer of staff to Ringway Jacobs

4 - Profile and Direction

Has anything changed over the last year? There has been a slight drop in attendance over the past year

What changes / barriers can you see ahead? Maintaining interest and enthusiasm from members when the council is cutting rights of way budgets so severely

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

- 1 - Establish a partnership project with the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead LAF
- 2 - Recruit new members, particularly from the farming community
- 3 - Try to ensure the maintenance of rights of way does not deteriorate too much following the budget cuts

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities? None

5 - Section 94 Bodies

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

- 1 - We wrote to the cabinet member for planning and transportation and met senior managers and councillors to express concern over the TUPE transfer of rights of way staff to Ringway Jacobs and the reduction in the rights of way maintenance budget.
- 2 - We responded to the draft Chilterns Conservation Board 5-year Management Plan document.
- 3 -

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6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on? 0

How many cases have you responded to? 0

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases: We lobbied the county council and Chiltern district council to take action over fencing and obstructions to pedestrian access on Pinner Green common land, near Chesham

We persuaded a landowner in Turville to grant permission to install a gate along new fencing to improve pedestrian links on open access land

7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year. Please add numbers into the boxes below and only count specific consultations once even if advice has been given on them a number of times. If a consultation covers more than one subject area, please count them separately as appropriate.

Public meetings (e.g. LAF meetings)	3	Working groups	1
Training days	1	Definitive map modification orders	0
Highway orders	0	Green Infrastructure strategies	0
Gating orders	0	Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	0
Cycle projects	1	Disabled access	1
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders	0	Housing development schemes	0
Planning applications	0	PROW network and projects	1
ROWIP planning and objectives	0	Local development frameworks and planning strategies	0
Local Nature Partnerships	0	Recording of paths and promoting use	0
Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access	0	Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	0

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Slipways and landing stages - public access to	0	Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	1
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council	0	Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	0
Shoreline management plans	0	Rail freight interchange strategic development	0
Network rail and rail crossing closures	12	Access and nature conservation	0
Horse routes and equestrian provision	0	Multi user routes	1
National Parks	0	Coastal access	0
Motorised vehicle access	0	Access to MOD land	0
New town & village green registration government consultation	0	Natural England consultations	0
Defra consultations	0	Commons grazing proposals	0
Highways Agency consultations	0	Department for Transport consultations	0
Other (please specify):			

8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority: A committed and enthusiastic core of members attend regularly, but attendance overall compared to 2012/13 is slightly down. This may well be partly related to poor moral from reductions in local authority rights of way funding and some lack of influence in challenging this course. Where the LAF have engaged with partners and consultees this has been positive, for example with HS2. We have recruited 2 new members to represent heritage and cycling respectively, and it is hoped to recruit someone from the farming community this year.

9 - Final comments from LAF Chair: I endorse the report. The difficulty in ensuring proper consideration of our advice by the county council may have been improved by a brief informal conversation I had with the leader of the council.