

Local Access Forum Annual Review Form

April 2014 to March 2015

Name of LAF	Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum
Name of LAF Chair	John Elfes
Name of LAF Secretary	Jonathan Clark

Total number of LAF members	13
Number of members representing users of public rights of way or access land	7
Number of members representing owners and occupiers of access land or land over which PROW subsist	3
Number of members representing other interests	3

1. LAF achievements? (Please give examples to illustrate how your LAF has improved public access to land for the purpose of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area)

The LAF were successful in lobbying the local district council to enforce the removal of fencing on open access land, achieving easier access to the land from all directions and ensuring better access to the local rights of way network. This has been ongoing for 2 years, but was achieved in this reporting period. Some useful publicity was also achieved through the Open Spaces Society.

The chairman attended and contributed in a workshop aimed at improving the future management and promotion of the Ridgeway National Trail. He identified possible joint working, shared knowledge and helped steer future policy.

The LAF provided important support to the county council and district council in their ambition to create a new bridleway along a disused railway line at Bourne End under section 26 Highways Act 1980.

The LAF provided advice on a Dog Control Order at Burnham Beeches NNR.

The disabled access member has been active in creating a new mobility scooter route between two rural villages; has tested and given advice on creating additional disabled access routes in the county; and has led a number of disabled rambles.

The LAF has joined a sub-regional LAF group including neighbours in Slough and RBWM seeking to improve access across authority boundaries.

The LAF were successful lobbying the county council highways department to install a pegasus crossing seeking safer access for vulnerable users between two communities in Aylesbury, when the council were otherwise considering returning the s106 money back to the developer.

The LAF contributed to a Network Rail consultation on the proposed closure and diversion of 16 crossings on the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury branch line and 26 crossings on the Bletchley to Biscester line in order to improve safety. The LAF response strengthened the case for securing more convenient crossings for the public across these lines.

The vice-chairman wrote to the county council to support a Local Highway Maintenance Challenge Fund Bid to the Department for Transport (ultimately unsuccessful) for better walking access on the highway network.

2. What are the main challenges affecting your LAF's ability to deliver improvements to public access in the coming year?

The main challenge might be time commitments working on projects outside the 3 meetings per year.

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3. What are your top three priorities for the year ahead?

Advice to Network Rail on their closure programme is likely to focus on more detailed solutions as part of the East West Rail closures and diversions programme.

The LAF are setting up a working group to start the process of making claims for new rights of way on the basis of historical evidence in the run-up to the closure of the definitive map in 2016

The LAF will continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities in the south of the county to improve access to the Jubilee River network near Maidenhead and access along the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal

The momentum of creating greater disabled access in the county likely to continue and grow through 2015/16 reporting period.

4. Is there any particular support or training that you need to deliver your priorities?

Greater knowledge of the achievements that can be made by the Local Access Forum would be helpful; and basic training would be useful for new members on the workings and structure of LAFs. IPROW have suggested training in 2016 and we will be interested in taking part.

LAF activity in 2014/15

Number of full LAF meetings held	3	Number of sub-group meetings held	0
Number of working groups led by others	0	Number of training days provided by the Appointing Authority	0.25

Partners the LAF worked with during 2014/15 (click on a box or type 'x')

Local Nature Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Enterprise Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and Wellbeing Boards	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEADER funding Local Action Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please add numbers to the following differentiating between formal consultations and general advice given by the LAF on particular subjects. If a consultation covered more than one subject area, please count separately.

	Consultations	Advice
Green Infrastructure strategies	0	0
Public Space Protection Orders (including gating orders)	0	0
Transport (LTP, traffic management, rail, DfT, Highways Agency)	0	2
Water / Coast (slipways, flood defence, EA, shoreline)	0	0
Public open space (protection orders, commons, village greens)	0	1
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders	0	1
Planning applications	0	0
Housing development schemes	0	0
Local development frameworks and planning strategies	0	0
PROW creation, diversion or closure - number of each	1	1
Right of Way Improvement Plan review	0	0
Route improvements (to PROW and other multi-user/cycling/horse-riding/walking routes)	1	2
Promotion of access, open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area	0	0

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Definitive map and recording PROW	0	0
Parish Council or other grant schemes	1	1
Disabled access / access for people with mobility issues?	0	4
Vehicular access and issues relating to motorised use of PROW	0	0
Nature conservation (including SSSIs)	0	0
Land use and planning matters (e.g. informal advice on land development)	0	0
Greenspace including Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves	0	0
Open Access land restrictions	0	0
Coastal Access/National Trails	0	1
NNR dedication	0	0
Agri-environment scheme issues (HLS and new Countryside Stewardship) e.g. expiring permissive access agreements, effects of land management options on public access etc.	0	0
Forestry and woodland	0	0

Any other LAF activity (please specify)

We provided advice to a landowner in Quanton to resolve a local issue between horse riders and a local shooting syndicate.

We provide ongoing advice to the ROW maintenance team, but particularly in this year we advised them on the targets for their 'Priority Matrix' when funding had been cut.

5. Summarise any feedback received from section 94(4) bodies¹

Chiltern district council wrote to confirm the removal of fencing on their land blocking access to a piece of common land in Latimer.

6. Please provide any comments from your Appointing Authority

¹ 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.

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The lobbying and advice from the LAF have been excellent and resulted almost invariably in successful outcomes. Issues do take time to resolve, which is the nature of rights of way problems. Advice to the county council teams working on rights of way has been useful and valued and the LAF continue to closely scrutinise the work of the ROW maintenance team. Further project work is limited by the amount of time members can commit to working outside the normal meeting schedule. Committing to lead on forming a voluntary group to record lost ways in the run up to the 2026 cut-off date will demand more time. We were disappointed not to secure membership from the local National Farmers' Union, but they did offer to provide advise as issues arise. On the other hand we have appointed three promising new members respectively representing equestrians, cyclists and Chiltern Society.

7. Comments from LAF Chair

I endorse the report and would like to record my appreciation of the support I have had from LAF members, and particularly from our hard working officer Jon Clark. Our ability to effect improvements to access to the countryside is now severely limited by budget cuts, which fallen very heavily on Rights of Way.

John Elfes, Chairman

8. Any important information to bring to the attention of Natural England

After many years service, John Elfes, the chairman since the LAF was formed, is due to stand down and elections will take place to replce him at the next meeting on 4th November 2016

9. Any other comments

None