

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report Proforma

* Reporting year	2011
* Name of LAF	Shropshire
* Name of LAF secretary	Jim Stabler

Review of Current reporting year

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your Annual Report or LAF work programme? Please provide supporting information.

The LAF has had a successful year with 5 full meetings and a training day on the Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Project. There has also been an extraordinary meeting to discuss the LAF response to the consultation on the sale of the Forestry Commission land.

The LAF has also commented on various other consultations throughout the year.

*** How many Open Access Restriction cases have you been informed about/involved with?**

None

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

January. Stakeholder working Group on unrecorded ROWs. Shropshire Council Invitation to shape the nature of England. DEFRA

April. Rationalisation of Access laws. Review of statutory duties on local government.

July. Draft National Planning Policy Framework

Give up to three examples where you have encountered difficulties; explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate this issue:

Shortage of members of the LAF. Presently we are undertaking a campaign to recruit more members. Newspaper advertising has not been very successful most members are recruited by word of mouth with five being recruited this autumn.

Non attendance by elected Councillors who are relevant portfolio holders. This matter is being discussed further in Council at present.

Important issues with deadlines falling between meetings. This necessitates the use of e-mail or post to distribute documents and ask for individual comments. Only small % of members then has the time to comment.

Do you have any issues with recruitment of members from particular interest groups? Does this hinder your work in any way?

The recruiting of younger members of the public is particularly difficult and this separates the LAF from a wide group of users.

LAF meetings are held in daytime which restricts recruitment from some sections of the working population.

This has been a problem with cyclists in particular but a new cycling rep has been recruited and additionally a Council Tourism rep has been nominated. Some interest groups can dominate proceedings if not kept in check.

Comments from appointing authority

The LAF has had a successful year with an excellent chair who has controlled and focussed meetings well.
There have been problems with representation by elected Councillors which is being addressed at present.
Funding for Rights of Way improvements and maintenance will prove to be more difficult in coming years due to the cutbacks in Government funding.

Forward Look

What are your priorities for next year (list up to 3)

Continuing to give advice to the Council of rights of way matters and gating orders in particular.

Help with the update of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Continue to work on unrecorded Rights of Way

*What support/training will you need to be able to deliver these priorities?

Huddle access and training to enabling a better flow of information using Huddle and local resources/websites

Do you perceive any barriers to delivering your priorities?

Lack of council funding for rights of way and consequent reductions in manpower.

Natural England removing permissive access revenue payments. This was a retrograde step and will limit severely the development of new routes and trails. The LAF thought that access development was one of the primary tenets of Natural England!

Any other comments

The West Midlands Regional LAF chairs and secretaries meeting proved a great success and will be repeated on an annual basis with 6 monthly teleconferences even though Natural England is no longer working on a regional basis.