

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report Proforma	
* Reporting year	2012
* Name of LAF	New Forest
* Name of LAF secretary	Sarah Manchester

<b>Review of Current reporting year</b> (The New Forest Access Forum reporting year runs as a calendar year from January 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup> )
<b>Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your Annual Report or LAF work programme? Please provide supporting information.</b>
<p>We succeeded in the creation of greater transparency in the management of the £16m Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for the New Forest. We engaged with the Board of Management and as a result they have now instituted an Annual Report public meeting.</p> <p>We have succeeded in re-establishing a close connection with the county CAP management programme and have a direct input into this.</p> <p>We are represented on the key decision making committees dedicated by the National Park Authority to promoting their Recreation Management Strategy. e.g. The Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group, The Cycle Working Group, and the Research sub-group. (See NPA web site for Minutes of the relevant committees)</p>
<b>* How many Open Access Restriction cases have you been informed about/involved with?</b>

None

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

- We were actively involved in the design of a programme for the visit to the New Forest of the Independent Panel on Forestry. We also took part in hosting the visit, and in particular were able to demonstrate the involvement of the community in the protection, conservation and enjoyment of the Forest.
- We joined with New Forest Access for All in making representations to New Milton Town Council on recommending improvements to access to a recreation ground, with particular emphasis on mobility scooter access.
- We took part in a site visit and inspection of planned site works relating to improvement and reinstatement of an original water course which affects a valley mire in the New Forest. The visit was hosted by the Forestry Commission, who are managing the work under the £16m Higher Level Stewardship award.

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

- The Forum have supported an initiative to re-examine the existing network of approved cycle routes within the New Forest, with the aim of creating improved connectivity. As part of this aim a proposal was made to the Verderers Court to trial two routes under close supervision and monitoring. This application was turned down by the Verderers. Due to the de facto powers of veto held by the Verderers little can be done to move forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century without a significantly more pro-active stance being taken by the Forestry Commission, which is sadly lacking.
- The Forum is frustrated by the limited amount of funding allocated to access issues in works being funded under the £16m Higher Level Stewardship 10 year grant. The Scheme is administered by a joint board of management consisting of the Chief Executive of the National Park Authority, the Deputy Surveyor for the Forestry Commission (South England) and the Official Verderer. Representations have been made to the Board to address this issue but so far to no avail.

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

No. We have maintained a buoyant membership drawn from a wide range of interests. Although we have lost valuable members in the past year we have been able to attract equally experienced and dedicated replacement members. We believe that the exemplary service provided by our support officer (provided by the National Park Authority) and her knowledge of the legal framework within which we work hugely facilitates informed and constructive debate within the Forum. This makes taking part a rewarding activity and one to be enjoyed.

**Comments from appointing authority**

**Forward Look**

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

- To take a close interest in and support for the implementation of the recently awarded £4m Local Sustainable Transport Fund.
- To continue to press for access benefits within the spend of the HLS Scheme referred to above
- To continue active involvement in the planning, monitoring and implementation of the Hampshire CAP

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

- We are consulting with our members at our March meeting on what training or support they may be looking for.

**Do you perceive any barriers to delivering your priorities?**

We enjoy excellent relations with Hampshire County Council, Forestry Commission and National Park Authority personnel, and with a number of local special interest groups. We believe the Access Forum is held in high regard by these bodies. Relationships with our local District Council, and some other local special interest groups are less strong and need to be strengthened . There are a number of well established local groups representing particular interests who are bitterly opposed to enhancement of recreation, particularly cycling on the Crown Lands. Sadly, compromise will not be countenancedt

**Any other comments**

We believe the design of this Annual Report pro-forma has some draw-backs. It creates restraints on what can be reported and recorded Whilst it may give you the narrow band of information you require to monitor the performance of LAF's it is a poor vehicle for displaying the wider range of activities and issues addressed by a LAF throughout the year