

Item 10 – Parish Conference

Summary

The Forum is invited to contribute ideas and views on a conference for Parish Councils to be held in June this year. Forum members are welcome to attend and/or contribute to the conference.

Background

In 2004 and 2008 HCC's Countryside Service ran conferences for Parish and Town Councils, with the support and assistance of the LAFs and Hampshire Association of Local Councils. 200 people attended the last event, representing half the Parishes in Hampshire – the Director of HALC remarked that this was the best attended PC event in the county and it was very well received. There was a surge in Small Grants Scheme applications following the event which promoted a greater understanding of issues among both officers and Councils and inspired some positive partnership working. Annual turnover of parish/town clerks runs at around 20%, and so it is now timely to hold a further event. As with previous events, we have sought and heeded advice from the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (Steven Lugg) in planning the conference.

Aim for the 2014 event:

To offer an interesting, informative countryside access event for the 260 Parishes in Hampshire, aiming to:

- Provide up-to-date information on policy, law and who to contact
- Give an opportunity to speak to officers about local issues on a one-to-one basis
- Provide advice and ideas to give confidence in improving paths and addressing local concerns
- Offer funding and assistance to encourage participation in the Small Grants Scheme, Waymarking scheme and Stiles to Gates programme
- (if you wish) Promote the Forum and its role

Format

The Conference will be held from 3pm-7pm on Thursday 5th June in the Chapel at Royal Victoria Country Park, which offers room for plenary and workshop sessions along with a 'marketplace' for stalls providing information on specific topics. The site provides free parking for attendees and is close to both the motorway network and Netley rail station. The workshops proved very popular in the feedback from the last event, and so these will again be offered, preceded by a plenary session. Again as last time, Parish Councils offering good practice will be invited to share their experiences and a variety of voluntary and public organisations will be invited to provide stalls. In addition, we are planning to offer pre-booked 15 minute 'surgery' sessions so that a Parish can speak to 'their' rights of way officer directly.

Your views

It is hoped that NFAF will join HCAF in endorsing the decision to hold the conference. Forum members' views and ideas are sought on the content and format of the event, and members' organisations may wish to become involved (e.g. running a stall or helping to run a workshop). HCAF suggested a one-off joint sub-group meet mid-March to discuss the event agenda and how/if the three LAFs in Hampshire should be involved.

The agenda, including workshop options, will be finalised before the end of March. Conference places will be allocated on a first-come basis, with parishes initially being offered two places each. Numbers at the venue are limited to around 200, so LAF members are encouraged to sign up early if they wish to attend.

For information, some quotes and the agenda from the last conference are provided in Annex 1 and 2.

Quotes from the last event

“Presentations – specific, informative; well-presented workshop – always interesting to hear from people in parishes of different sizes and needs”

Parish Council representative

“The Small Grants Scheme is VERY easy to use, as well as being flexible and well administered!”

Parish Council representative

“Workshops should be more a sharing of information and not mini lectures”

Parish Council representative

“You had the best attendance from PCs at any county-wide event since I joined the association”

Director of Hampshire Association of Local Councils

“My team met some of the Parish reps, many of whom showed their gratitude for his work...receiving these comments first hand can help to demonstrate the excellent work of our teams and make them feel valued”

HCC officer

“I hope to replace more stiles with kissing gates, improve rights of way and create new ones”

Parish Council representative

“A very positive event, with lots of interest from lots of people; there wasn't time to explore anything like all the issues and contacts that came up!”

Forum member

“Need to go on another one to attend the other workshops!”

Parish Council representative

“This has given me many ideas as far as the partnership you are encouraging between the county, Forums and HALC – you should congratulate the county... I hope we in W Sussex can follow this lead”

W Sussex Forum member

“I shall be writing a report for the village/parish news and making a full presentation to the PC at their next meeting “

Parish Council representative

“Pleased to help, a well organised and very professional event”

HCC officer

“I will be endeavouring to stimulate more activity with my PC, its volunteer groups and our landowners. As a small parish with a goodly mileage of rights of way, I am sure we should be making more use of the Small Grants Scheme!”

Parish Council representative

“We had a busy day, with people coming up to us even when we were setting up, and I met quite a few people from various PCs that I had spoken to on the phone, so it was great to put names to faces...we both felt that the conference was a tremendous success and the response from the delegates was very positive and enthusiastic...if you run another we'd be delighted to attend again”

Stallholder

Paths to Partnership (conference for Parish Councils)

Thursday 9th October, 1-5pm
Alton Maltings, Alton

12:15	Registration table open & tea/coffee/biscuits available	
1:00	Welcome <i>Christopher Langford (Chair, Hampshire Countryside Access Forum)</i> <i>Councillor Ray Ellis (Executive Member for Rural Policy, HCC)</i> <i>Ann Sevier (Chair, New Forest Access Forum)</i>	Auditorium
1:10	Setting the scene: <i>Andrew Smith (Assistant Head of the Countryside Service, HCC)</i> <i>Cath Hart and Justin Harvey (Access Development Officers, HCC)</i> Introducing the Countryside Access Reference Guide written specifically for Parishes, news regarding the Small Grants Scheme and volunteering, and recent developments in local and national policy.	Auditorium
1:40	CHOICE OF WORKSHOPS: (Refreshments in workshop rooms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding out what local people want Practical projects with volunteers, including replacing stiles with gates Off-road vehicles – rights, responsible use and what to do if conflict occurs Dogs – how best to manage for (and communicate with) dog walkers 	Workshop rms
2:20	BREAK: chance to look at stalls and talk to officers about specific issues	
3:00	CHOICE OF WORKSHOPS: (Refreshments in workshop rooms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding out what local people want Practical projects with volunteers, including path surfacing Promoting local access – producing leaflets & mapboards Working with groups who use the network (Walkers, Cyclists, Horse-riders) 	Workshop rms
3:40	BREAK	
4:00	Working together (discussion and Q & A) Brief presentations from two Parish Councils, as good practice examples, followed by open discussion on Parishes' potential role in resolving issues and improving paths. Also communication between HCC and Parishes.	Auditorium
4:50	Closing remarks (<i>Christopher Langford</i>)	
5:00	Close	



Hampshire
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