



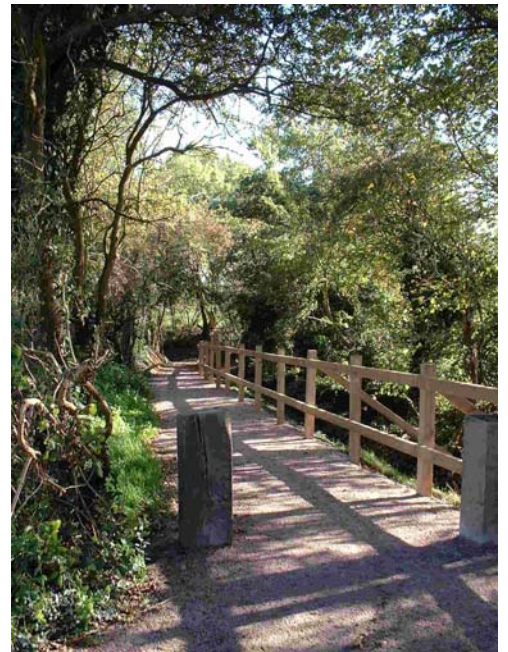
ANNUAL REPORT

2006 – 2007

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1. CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

In taking over the chairmanship of Essex Local Access Forum from Simon Gibson in November 2006 it was with some trepidation that I sought to continue the excellent work of the Forum. When both Simon Gibson and Simon Leatherdale stood down from the Forum, Essex LAF was denied the knowledgeable support of two landowner / access provider representatives, and whilst Richard Tattersall and Charles Gooch very efficiently carry out that function within Essex LAF, I do hope that we might soon be able to encourage membership from within those interests to ensure a good balance within the Forum.

The County Council has continued with development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the responses to the surveys have been well analyzed by the lead consultants and a report produced. The Draft Plan has been published and comments invited. Essex LAF will formulate our response during January 2008 so that it may be incorporated into the Final RoWIP, which is due to be published in the early spring.

2 of our members attended a training day entitled "Making the LAF more effective" and which they found most helpful and fully reported to the members at the next meeting.

4 members of the Forum attended a workshop in Ely which closely followed upon the issue of "New Guidance to LAFs" from Government, through DEFRA. Their report to the Forum was very positive and the new Guidance certainly promotes the role of Local Access Forums and has encouraged us to take a very much more proactive role, knowing that our advice and suggestions must be taken seriously by the Highway Authorities and Local Government Agencies.

The statutory duty of considering and responding to Government consultations has been satisfied in the form of "Rights to Apply for diversions", and also "Coastal Access" proposals put forward by Natural England. Essex LAF also considered and made suggestions concerning the access proposals for a second generation Stansted Airport.

During the year Essex LAF gave advice to the County Council as regards their PRow Technical Manual and they eventually adopted British Standard structures for stiles, gates, signage etc. Recommendations were also made concerning cross compliance, removal of illegal obstructions and enforcement of restoration of paths following ploughing. We shall monitor their progress on this.

The County Council underwent some significant changes to staffing levels during this year and whilst Essex LAF understand the underlying reasons, we have however sought assurances from the Council that they are still be able to fulfill their obligations and duties. The impact upon the LAF was the loss of Meryll Mackenzie, our secretary of some 3 years, and this caused us some inconvenience, much alleviated with the subsequent appointment of Jo Carrington, but short-lived when

she chose to take on a promotion to the Western Area Highway Office. Since that time, Paula Cheesman, who has been a great support to the LAF has fulfilled the secretarial role, albeit trying to avoid compromising her own duties with the Community Action Team. We are assured by Rosemary Welch, Network and Safety Manager, that we will soon have a suitable replacement. It is so very important to us to have good lines of communication.

Where one brings together a wide ranging group of volunteers, who between them have a wealth of experience and knowledge of access matters, directing and disseminating that skill requires a particularly efficient secretariat...

I hope you will have found this fourth Annual Report of the Essex Local Access Forum informative. It gives details of our activities and some of the issues we have tackled over the last twelve months, enables me to thank past and present members, as well as Essex County Council PROW Officers, for making the Essex LAF the success it is. All have given many hours and much effort over the last year working together for those who work in and visit the Essex countryside.

I am sure that the County Council will continue to makes good progress on the rights of way improvement plan. The next aim must be to oversee its implementation and to assist in the search for adequate funding. I am assured that the forum will benefit from an increased commitment from Essex County Council to support its work.

I would like to encourage anyone wanting to get involved in the LAF to look at our website (www.essexlaf.co.uk) where details of meeting times and membership opportunities can be found.

Mick Brash
LAF Chairman

February 2008

2. INTRODUCTION

The Local Access Forum for Essex was established by Essex County Council (the Appointing Authority) in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

As required by 'The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002' this is the fourth Annual Report of the Local Access Forum for Essex which I have pleasure in submitting to the County Council as the appointing authority.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The Local Access Forum for Essex covers the whole of Essex excluding the unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock.

Thurrock Unitary Authority has established a Local Access Forum.

Discussions about linking with Southend on Sea BC have taken place but no decision has been reached.

4. MEMBERSHIP


The Local Access Forum for Essex was started in August 2003 in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Membership during the fourth year has not changed. Chairmanship is with Mr Mick Brash and vice chair is Hazel Jarrold.

Forum members:

Alan Adcock
David Anderson
Kevin Ascott
Mick Brash
David Corke
Bob Drane
Jenny French
Charles Gooch
Lawrence Hammond
Hazel Jarrold
Norman Hunt
Tracy Mann
Susan Pattrick
Richard Tattersall
John Victory
Edward Woods

5. MEETINGS



Interested
in the
countryside?

Want to have **your say** on the future of public access across our county?

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING:
14th March 2006 2pm - 5pm
Central Baptist Church
Victoria Road South, Chelmsford CM1 1LN

or call
01245 437274

Public Rights of Way, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1QH

Agendas can be found on our website:
www.essexlaf.co.uk

The Forum met on 5 occasions during the year and venues were kept to Chelmsford as it was the central location for all members and for members of the public to attend.

Meetings usually last an average of 3 hours. All meetings were held on a Tuesday afternoon from 2 – 5pm.

At the May 2007 meeting Jacqueline Milward from the Legal Team gave a short presentation about the manner in which Essex County Council deals with the review of the Definitive Map.

In order to encourage networking between the members, meetings are followed by refreshments. This has helped gel the

members into an enthusiastic and cohesive group.

In accordance with the Guidance, to attract public participation, meetings, minutes and agendas are advertised on the website.

6. TOPICS DISCUSSED

- Rights Of Way Improvement Plan
- BVPI 178 Survey Results
- Youth Education Needs
- Local Authority PROW Technical Manual,
- Definitive Map Review
- Green Infrastructure Planning
- Stansted Airport G.2. Impact upon ROW
- Disabled Access
- Publicising and increasing the influence of Essex LAF.

7. BUDGET

In previous years the annual report has included the costs incurred during the Local Access Forum's annual period which ends in the month of November. This unfortunately overlaps the County Councils accounting period which ends March of each year. This has, in the past, resulted in considerable officer time being necessary to consolidate these figures.

It has therefore been decided that in the pursuit of efficiency it would be far better to express the annual costs of the Local Access Forum based upon the same accounting period as the County Council. Therefore the following figures relate to the period April 1st 2006 to March 31st 2007. Future financial reports will follow this theme.

Venue – hire and catering (5 meetings)	£1196.20
Site Meeting expenses	none
PAGE Media Group	£2914.00
Meeting Adverts for Year 4	£5206.00
Interview expenses	£57.71
members expenses	£308.30
TOTAL	£9682.21

8. THE FUTURE

Essex Laf are committed to supporting Essex County Council in the production of an effective Rights of Way Improvement Plan and will endeavour to assist in seeking out adequate funding to implement the proposals included within that Plan.

Essex LAF will encourage Essex County Council to at least maintain and if possible expand its budget for the maintenance and protection of the Public Right of Way network.

Essex LAF will seek out all opportunities for improvement of public access to land in Essex for the purpose of outdoor recreation and enjoyment and will use their influence to maximise such availability.