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LOCAL ACCESS FORUM FOR ESSEX

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Background

All Local Authorities and National Park Authorities are required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ('CRoW Act') to establish a Local Access Forum to provide strategic advice on 'the improvement of public access to and in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed'. The membership of this group must be balanced between different interests in the countryside so that it can provide well-argued, unbiased advice. The Act requires Councils and the Countryside to take the forum's advice into consideration with regard to such matters. The forum does not have decision making powers, nor is it a statutory body for consultations on matters such as diversions. The highway authority must consult the forum prior to making bylaws relating to access land, appointing wardens for access land, when developing the rights of way improvement plan.

Purpose of Forum

The aim of the Local Forum is:

Provide guidance and contribute towards improving opportunities to enjoy and the management of the Essex countryside.'

The remit of the Local Access Forum is to:

- Respond to the Draft and Provisional Maps of Open Access Land for Essex and to perform a statutory duty to advise on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, as described in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Contribute in an advisory capacity to the development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan(s) for Essex.
- Promote the appropriate use of opportunities to enjoy the countryside, and to foster better understanding of the varying needs of the different types of users.
- Advise upon the appropriate management and maintenance of access, balancing the provision of access against the needs of biodiversity, wildlife management and of land – owners and managers.
- Advise on developing additional opportunities for everyone to enjoy the rights of way and access network, in particular for those with disabilities.

Membership of Forum

It is likely that the forum will often be discussing contentious issues and that their advice will guide policies and actions of the County Council. Therefore, it is vital that the membership of the forum represents a wide range of interests and is balanced between the wish to increase access and the need to protect the landscape and its economic use. To ensure that this is achieved the County Councils as appointing body has agreed that the forum should include representation of the areas of interest listed below.

- Walking
- Walking/Dogs
- Cycling
- Other Sports (land, air and water)
- Equestrian (riding and driving)
- Motorised vehicle use
- Disabled access
- Ethnic minority groups
- Tourism
- Rural Business
- Conservation
- Land-owning/managing;
- Councillor; (to represent county, borough/district and parish councils)

An ability for each member to recognise the validity of the views of others and to seek consensus will be vital, as will independence from the views of any particular organisation.

In addition to members of the forum, observers may attend meetings and can comment but cannot vote; these will include officers from the authorities and the Countryside Agency, who are overseeing Local Access Forums across the country.

Recruitment Process

The following process has been approved by the appointing authority (the County Council) as appropriate:

- a. A small group of officers was convened. This group followed all relevant regulations and guidelines to agree selection criteria, the contents of an application form, text for advertisements and for letters to all known contacts who may be interested in applying. These were all approved by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation in consultation with other cabinet members of the County Council.
- b. Once the closing date for application has passed, officers will sift the applications and forward them to members for review. Recommendations will then be made to the cabinet member for Highways and Transportation for approval. The Authority is aiming to have a Forum of between 16 – 18 members.
- c. Once the decision has been made, all applicants will be informed whether they have been successfully appointed to the forum or not. Interviews may be held.

Commitment

The forum will meet at least three times a year, probably mid-week daytime/evening meetings but this is to be determined by the members themselves. The first meeting will take place in August/September 2003. Members will be expected to attend all meetings but must attend a minimum of two per year; membership should be for an initial period of one to three years, and may be renewed. Members will be expected to actively seek the views of the interest group (not just one organisation) they represent and to spread news of the work of the forum. Please see the sheet titled "Members' Role and Responsibilities" for further details. It is envisaged that the forum will participate in the Authorities Area Forums which would provide an important conduit of information between the Local Access Forum and Essex County Council and the people of Essex. It is expected that following the first year of the forum the performance of the forum will be appraised and any recommendations for change will be put to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Local Access Forum for Essex

AUTHORITIES' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Essex County Council will:

- Provide a venue (at varying locations around county) and refreshments for meetings of the Local Access Forum for Essex.
- Provide a secretariat and on-going support and advice to the forum as a whole and to individual forum members.
- Reimburse forum members for out-of-pocket expenses, limited to expenses incurred through travel and subsistence costs, if agreed in advance, and childcare.
- Relay the advice given by the forum to the relevant board and/or cabinet members of the authority at appropriate times.
- Promote the work of the forum through available means including press release and a web-site.

Local Access Forum to Essex

MEMBERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Applicants will be expected to undertake all the duties given below.

Members should:

- Be representative of access land, rights of way users, owners or occupiers of land, or other related interests especially relevant to Essex.
- Provide an independent view, rather than reflect the views of any particular organisations(s)
- Pursue opportunities to publicise the work of the forum and obtain feedback through newsletters or other means, within that member's own organisation(s) and also others with similar interests active within the area covered by the forum.
- Be expected to attend all meetings (3-4 meetings a year anticipated), but must attend a minimum of two meetings a year, deputies will be allowed at no more than one meeting a year with prior agreement from organising authority.
- Be willing to serve on the forum for an initial period of between one and three years (term may be extended if acceptable to the appointing authorities and the members concerned).
- Allow a picture, brief biography and e-mail address (member's choice of either their existing or a new e-mail account) to be available to members of the public and other interested parties on publicity, and to be placed on the Essex County Council web site.
- Regularly check that e-mail address and relevant comments on any web-site discussion board, if established in relation to the forum, reply to messages requiring a response (or raise these promptly with the appropriate County Council officer for response) and convey the broad content of e-mails to the forum when appropriate.
- Similarly, reply to written comments/enquiries (or raise these promptly with the appropriate County Council officer for response) and convey their broad content to the forum when appropriate.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM FOR ESSEX

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Applications will be measured against the following:

REQUIREMENTS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
KNOWLEDGE	Knowledge of an area of interest identified for representation at the forum	Experience of a range of interests to be represented at the forum and of the interaction and issues which exist between these different interest groups
	---	Knowledge of the Essex area and local groups relevant to that member's predominant interest
	---	Basic knowledge of Rights of Way and countryside legislation, including the CroW Act 2000.
SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE	Good communication and interpersonal skills at all levels	Previous experience as a member of a committee
	An ability to recognise the validity of the views of others and to work constructively with competing interests to seek consensus	For the Chair and vice Chair: Experience of chairing formal public meetings or demonstrable success in a comparable situation
COMMITMENT	Willing to commit to attending and preparing for the majority of the LAF meetings per year for a membership term of one to three years plus occasional briefing/training events	---
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	---	Understanding of the broad principles of the Disability Discrimination Act
	---	Understanding of the broad principles of Equal Opportunities

To ensure a balance of interests which is representative of the area, it has been agreed that representation of the following interests is **desirable** (although not essential)

- Walking
- Dog Walking
- Cycling
- Other Sports (land, air and water)
- Equestrian (riding and driving)
- Motorised vehicle use
- Disabled access
- Tourism
- Rural Business
- Conservation
- Land-owning/managing;
- County borough/district Parish Councillors
- Ethnic minority groups

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM FOR ESSEX

APPLICATION FOR FORUM MEMBERSHIP

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr/Prof

Home address:

.....
.....
.....

Home telephone no

E-mail address

BACKGROUND

Length of residence in the Essex area (years)

Occupation and any professional qualifications
.....

Date of Birth(day) / (month) / (year)

INTEREST

Which area of interest would you like to represent? Please rank the top three interests you feel you could represent, marking 1 against the interest you could best represent, 2 for the next (if any) and 3 for the next (if any)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Business (B&B / Public House) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian (riding and/or driving) | <input type="checkbox"/> Land-owning / managing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorised vehicular use | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic minority groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

EXPERIENCE

Please describe the relevant skills, knowledge and experience that you would bring to the forum (continue onto additional page if necessary).

Please include:

- **How long you have held each interest**
- **A brief description of your activity within each interest (e.g. 'riding horses daily on bridleways or 'smallholder with arable and livestock over 50 acres and operating a Bed and Breakfast) and the issues relating to that interest,**
- **The extent of your understanding of rights of way and countryside legislation, including the CRow Act**
- **Anything else you think is relevant to being a member of the forum**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Why do you want to be a member of the forum ?

What qualities will you bring to the forum ?

Are you prepared to assist in the development or preparation of reports or other work to meet the outputs of the forum in accordance with the CRoW Act and its regulations ?

Are you a member of a local or national group with interest in the Countryside ? Please specify and state positions held and duration, and any achievements and experiences through this; please also include youth organisations you are involved with, if any

Are you prepared to undertake training to widen your understanding of the issues dealt with by the forum?

What do you see as the most important issues for the Local Access Forum to tackle?

Constitution of the Local Access Forum for Essex

1. Name

The Forum shall be called The Local Access Forum for Essex but shall be hereinafter referred to as the Forum. The Forum has been established by Essex County Council (the Appointing Authority) in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

2. Status of the Forum.

2.1 The Forum is a statutory advisory body and as such has no decision making powers

2.2 The Forum is independent and does not form part of local government.

3. The Function of the Forum

3.1 The function of the Forum is to advise

- the Appointing Authority, or
- any body exercising functions under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, or
- any other body as may be prescribed

as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.

3.2 In carrying out its functions the Forum shall have regard to

- the needs of land management,
- the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area, and

guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

4. Size of Membership

The Forum shall consist of no fewer than 10 and not more than 22 Members. For the avoidance of doubt the Appointing Authority shall decide upon the precise number of members at any given time.

5. Terms of Membership

5.1 Members of the Forum shall be appointed by the Appointing Authority in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

5.2 A Member of the Forum shall be appointed for not less than one and not more than three years.

5.3 Members of the Forum shall be persons who appear to the Appointing Authority to be representative of:-

5.3.1 Users of local rights of way or rights of the public in relation to access land.

5.3.2 Owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist, or

5.3.3 Any other interests especially relevant to the authority's area.

5.4 Where the Forum consist of not more than 16 Members not more than two Members of the Forum may also be Members of a district or County Council or National Park authority for any part of the area of the Forum.

5.5 Where the Forum consists of no fewer than 17 Members not more than three Members of the Forum may also be Members of a district or County Council or National Park authority for any part of the area of the Forum.

5.6 A Member of the Forum may resign by notice in writing to the Appointing Authority.

6. Termination of Membership of the Forum
 - 6.1 The Appointing Authority shall terminate the appointment of a Member of the Forum if they are satisfied that he has become a Member of a district or county council or National Park authority and as a result paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 of this Constitution have not been complied with.
 - 6.2 The Appointing Authority may terminate the appointment of a Member of the Forum if:-
 - 6.2.1 without the consent of the Appointing Authority he has been absent from all meetings of the Forum during a period of one year, or
 - 6.2.2 he has failed to comply with paragraph 8.2 of this constitution
7. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
 - 7.1 The Forum shall have a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman who shall be appointed by election from amongst the Members of the Forum.
 - 7.2 The first Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Forum shall be appointed at the first meeting of the Forum.
 - 7.3 The period of appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be determined by the Forum, but in each case it may not exceed the period of appointment as a Member of the Forum.
 - 7.4 The Forum should attempt to maintain a reasonable balance between the interests which are represented by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman as set out in paragraph 5.3 of this Constitution. In order to achieve this the Forum shall take such steps with regard to the selection of candidates for election as Chairman and Vice-Chairman to ensure that so far as practicable the Chairman or Vice-Chairman each represent a different category of interest as set out in paragraphs 5.3.1 to 5.3.3. However, where each was appointed to

the Forum on the basis of an interest under paragraph 5.3.3 the Forum should ensure that the Chairman and Vice Chairman do not in any way represent the same interest.

8. Meetings

8.1 The Forum shall hold no fewer than two meetings every year.

8.2 A Member who is directly or indirectly interested in any matter brought up for consideration at a meeting shall disclose the nature of his interest to the meeting.

9. Access to Meetings and Documents of the Forum

9.1 A meeting of the Forum shall be open to the public.

9.2 Copies of the agenda for a meeting of the Forum and copies of any report for the meeting shall be open to inspection by members of the public at the offices of the Appointing Authority namely County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

9.3 Any document which is required by sub-paragraph 9.2 above to be open to inspection shall be so open out least three clear days before the meeting except that

9.3.1 where a meeting is convened at shorter notice, the copies of the agenda and reports shall be open to inspection from the time the meeting is convened and

9.3.2 where an item is added to an agenda, copies of the document adding the item to the agenda and the copies of any report for the meeting relating to the item shall be open to inspection from the time the item is added to the agenda.

9.4 For the avoidance of doubt nothing in this paragraph requires copies of any agenda, document or report to be open to inspection by the public until copies are available to Members of the Forum.

- 9.5 An item of business may not be considered at a meeting of the Forum unless either,
- 9.5.1 Sub-paragraph 9.3 above has been complied with, or
- 9.5.2 By reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified in the minutes the Chairman is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.
- 9.6 The Forum shall prepare an annual report on the discharge of its functions which shall be published by the Appointing Authority.
10. Secretary to the Forum
- 10.1 The Secretary to the Forum shall be employed by the Appointing Authority and shall be responsible for the administration of the Forum.
- 10.2 For the avoidance of doubt the Secretary may not be a member of the Forum or an elected member of the Appointing Authority.
11. Alteration of the Constitution
- No alteration or addition shall be made to this Constitution other than by the Appointing Authority as required.
12. Members Expenses
- 12.1 The Appointing Authority shall meet the reasonable expenses of the Forum or its Members.
- 12.2 For the avoidance of doubt reasonable expenses incurred by Members of the Forum shall be limited to expenses incurred by them in connection with their attendance at meetings of the Forum, but only in respect of
- 12.2.1 travel and subsistence costs, and
- 12.2.2 any expenses of arranging the care of their children or dependants.

The Local Access Form for Essex

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Local Access Forum for Essex (The Forum) has been established under and in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is a statutory advisory Forum with the primary purpose of providing strategic advice to the County Council as Appointing Authority and other relevant bodies on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation, in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests, issues of particular local relevance and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.

2. General Terms

2.1 In carrying out its functions The Forum shall have regard to:

- the needs of land management
- the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area and
- the guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State

2.2 The membership of the Forum must be balanced between different interests in the countryside so that it can provide well-argued unbiased advice and guidance.

2.3 The Forum does not have decision making powers, nor is it a statutory body for consultation on matters such as public path orders for which separate statutory procedures already exist.

2.4 The Highway Authority must consult the Forum prior to making byelaws relating to access land, appointing wardens for access land and when developing the rights of way improvement plan.

3. The Purpose of the Forum (or the Key Objective and aims of the Forum)

The key objective of the Forum is to provide guidance and contribute towards improving opportunities to enjoy the Essex countryside and to improve it's management.

In order to achieve this objective the Forum aims to:

- Respond to the Draft and Provisional Maps of Open Access Land for Essex and to perform a statutory duty to advise on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, as described in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Contribute in an advisory capacity to the development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan(s) for Essex.
- Promote the appropriate use of opportunities to enjoy the countryside, and to foster better understanding of the varying needs of the different types of users.
- Advise upon the appropriate management and maintenance of access, balancing the provision of access against the needs of biodiversity, wildlife management and of land – owners and managers.
- Advise on developing additional opportunities for everyone to enjoy the rights of way and access network, in particular for those with disabilities.