



Rotherham Local Access Forum

By

Ken Whetter

Why do we need a LAF?



The Local Access Forum (LAF) is:

- A voluntary group of people interested in public access to land including walkers, cyclists, horse riders, motorised trail riders, disability rights representatives and landowners.
- A statutory body that was set up in every Local Authority in England under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- A group that is supported administratively by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and meets around every 3 months to decide and oversee improvements to the network of rights of way and public land.

What does the LAF do?

- Provides advice on improvement of public access to land.
- For the purposes of open-air recreation, enjoyment and any lawful purpose.
- “Land” not clearly defined in the Act, but includes buildings and other structures and land covered with water and excludes any land to which access would cause trespass or an offence.
- Covers all users when advising on improvements to public access including canoes and motorised vehicles. Excludes vehicles when advising on access for any other lawful purpose apart from on byways

Who does the LAF advise?

Mainly:

- The appointing local authority, that is RMBC.
- Any county, unitary, district or borough council with the forum's area.
- The Secretary of State (that is, any Government Department).
- Natural England
- The Forestry Commission
- English Heritage

But also:

- Sport England
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conservation Boards
- Parish and town councils.

How does the LAF work?

- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
- Links with other plans, e.g. the Local Transport Plan
- Influencing decision makers and seeking feedback from them.
- Forum meetings
- Sub groups.
- Site visits
- Keeping in touch with neighbouring LAFs and the Regional LAF.
- Keeping in touch with public opinion
- Focusing on relevant issues and prioritising activities
- Annual reports and measuring effectiveness

So, what has the LAF ever done for Rotherham?

- Improvements in specific parishes
- Influencing major restructural developments, e.g. Waverley, Kiveton, Dinnington.
- Supporting funding applications for major access improvement schemes; e.g. Connect 2 route into Rother Valley Country Park; the Bluebell Way..
- Advising on highway improvement schemes; e.g. A57 at Todwick and on Sheffield Parkway.
- Advising on local transport improvement projects; e.g. Rotherham to Sheffield riverside and canal paths.
- Managing an annual CROW improvement budget which is separate from the normal maintenance ROW budget.

CROW Act Improvement Schemes



New steps – Kimberworth



Path construction – Rawmarsh

CROW Act Improvement Schemes



Path revetment at Laughton en le
Morthen



Path revetment at Maltby

CROW Act Improvement Schemes



Use of verges at Thorpe Hesley



Verge clearance at Whiston

What next for the LAF?

- Deliver the Annual Plan for 2013/4. Review our ROWIP.
- Extend the “reach” of the LAF by linking better with key strategic bodies with shared interests e.g. Health & Wellbeing Board; Canal & Rivers Trust; Green Infrastructure; HS2 Ltd.
- Advise RMBC and other bodies on the prioritisation of public access improvements, focusing on areas of the borough currently not well provided for.

*Suggested areas of mutual interest between
Health & Wellbeing and LAF.*

- Creating and encouraging healthy lives & physically active communities.
- Access to national and local information to inform decision making.
- Improving public access for all.
- Encouraging greater use of existing network of paths and rights of way and trails.
- Building in public access routes in major new planning developments.
- Joint initiatives.

Questions?

Comments?

Thank you for your time and interest.