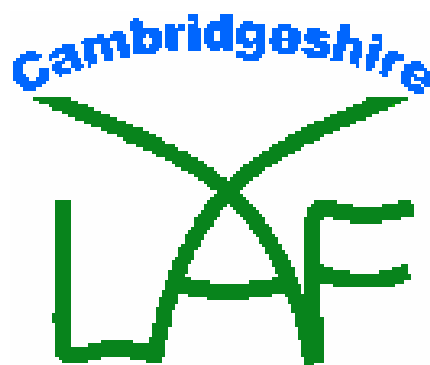


CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT

2005 – 2006



Introduction from the Chairman - Alan Sidell, May 2006

It is now almost 3 years since the formation of Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum. In the early days I think we had some difficulty in finding our way; perhaps, even, in understanding what our role was to be; how were we to relate to our appointing authority, Cambridgeshire County Council? How were we going to operate? Would we be able to make our voice heard? In the last 12 months I believe we have made a great deal of progress in answering those questions.

The introduction of Working Groups, each having a particular remit, has enabled us to be more focussed in our deliberations and has meant that we could consider more issues within an appropriate timescale than would have been the case without those Working Groups. This Annual Report includes items from each of the Group Leaders detailing some of the issues which have been considered. I think most people will agree that a lot of ground has been covered this year.

We are now acknowledged by District Councils within Cambridgeshire as a Statutory Consultee in relation to the drawing up of Local Development Frameworks. This is an important step forward as we seemed to have great difficulty in getting our message across to them in the early days of our existence. I make no apology for once again stating how important I see this particular part of our work to be. If we can ensure that high level planning documents contain positive guidance on the need for an improved and expanded Rights of Way network then we stand a real chance of seeing progress towards the achievement of our Mission Statement and General Objectives.

The publication of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan by the County Council within the last 12 months was a very positive step forward, and it is a great credit to Cambridgeshire County Council and, in particular, to the hard work of staff within the Countryside Services Team that this was the first such document to be published in England.

In looking forward to the next year and beyond, there are a number of projects being carried out by other organisations which we need to keep an eye on, and which we need to influence and embrace. Projects such as Cambridgeshire Horizons' Green Infrastructure Strategy, The National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision together with the Bridge of Reeds project sponsored by The Greater Cambridge Partnership, and several other projects around the County present opportunities for increasing the amount of access to the countryside and we need to grasp these. Opportunities also arise out of new housing developments and work is already being done by the Countryside Services Team with support from LAF in securing additions to the network. I believe there is need for us to have a vision of what a

comprehensive Rights of Way network for the whole County would look like so that these separate projects would eventually contribute towards a cohesive whole. At the very least we need to establish some principles which build on the RoWIP and which could be applied around the County. I touched on this at our meeting on 30th May and it is an issue which will need further consideration in the coming year.

Finally I would like to thank LAF members for their active participation over the last 12 months, and a special word of thanks to our Secretary, Gail Stoehr, for her diligent and timely work. I would also like to express my thanks to Kate Day and Chris Tucker of the Countryside Services Team for providing information and support to me personally throughout the year.

Alan Sidell
May 2006

Mission Statement (adopted Nov 2003)

The Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum will provide advice to help ensure significant and measurable improvements in responsible recreational access to the countryside.

Background information

The background to the Annual Report and information on the following can be found on pages 3 & 4 in the LAF First Annual Report 2003 – 2004 which can be viewed in full at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk or obtained from the Secretary on request.

- The Need for an Annual Report
- The Formation of Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum
- What is a Local Access Forum (LAF)?
- How was the LAF formed?
- Terms of Reference
- Procedural matters
- LAF independence and LAF Logo

The Forum's Third Year

Meetings and membership

Member	Interest	Area of County
Brian Alden	Access for the disabled	Hunts
May Block	Water based recreation	Cambridge
Doris Brenke	Conservation, riding	East Cambs
Philip Broadbent-Yale	Property management, heritage, walking, cycling, sailing	
Roger Buisson	Nature conservation, land management	S. Cambs
Nigel Bell	County Councillor	
Paul Hammett	Farming, cycling, walking	East Cambs
Hally Hardie	Running, orienteering	Hunts
Simon Kightley	District Councillor	
Simon King	County Councillor	
Anthony Morbey	Farming, fishing, shooting, walking, heritage	East Cambs
Antony Pemberton	Land management, rural business, farming	South Cambs
Robert Pitcher	Motorised use, disabled, ethnic minorities	Fenland
Judith Rossiter	Parish councils, rural business manager	South Cambs
Mary Sanders	Voluntary/youth work	Cambridge
Robert Sears	Farming and wildlife	Fenland
Alan Sidell (Chairman)	Walking, riding, cycling, transport	South Cambs
Jean Sinclair	Walking, cycling, canoeing, health, young people	Cambridge City
Bill Thompson	Walking	Hunts
Jill Tuffnell	Walking, local government	Cambridge City
Erika Wedgwood (Vice-Chairman)	Landscape archaeology, youth	East Cambs
Liz Wright	Horse rider, motorised users, parish councils	Fenland

There were six meetings in the reporting period.

May 2005	Anglesey Abbey, Lode, Cambridge
July 2005	Wicken Fen
September 2005	The Oliver Cromwell Hotel, March
November 2005	The Holiday Inn, Impington, Cambridge
January 2006	Anglesey Abbey, Lode, Cambridge
March 2006	The Oliver Cromwell Hotel, March

Simon Kightley and Nigel Bell joined LAF as the new District and County Councils' members respectively and Jean Sinclair and Bill Thompson both left in 2005.

Work programme

The work programme was an agenda item for all meetings and a report from each Group follows.

The Liaison, Publicity and Procedure Working Group

The Group comprising Paul Hammett, Hally Hardie, Simon King, Anthony Morbey, Judith Rossiter, Robert Sears and Erika Wedgwood was formed during the year.

We have met for discussions within the Forum meeting and on separate evenings. We have a good mixture of member interests and skills, and have used this in particular to formulate ideas for a Regional LAF Conference on access issues. The topics were agreed, a venue investigated, and a good response was received to a flyer produced to gauge the interest of surrounding LAFs. The funding was agreed by the Countryside Agency and the organisation of this event and a separate training day has been put out to tender.

Before Christmas, the Group produced and sent out a colour leaflet to Parish Councils, and other bodies involved with countryside and access issues, explaining the Forum's remit. It is hoped that this will increase general awareness of the Forum, its function as a statutory consultee, and how it is able to provide a balanced view on countryside access and recreation issues.

We were able to recommend approval of the accounts to the County Council for the past financial year and have agreed to a similar allocation for 2006/2007.

Erika Wedgwood, Group Leader

Planning and Development Working Group

The Planning and Development Working Group seeks to influence both the strategic plans and significant specific decisions of relevant planning authorities and developers in a way that achieves the Cambridgeshire LAF's aim of improving access to the countryside. This involves the Working Group keeping track of the Regional Spatial Strategy, County Council plans and the District Councils' Local Development Documents. Where such proposals contain policies relevant to access comments are provided either in support or asking for revision. A lack of policies that protect existing Rights of Way has been a particular concern. The Working Group also responds to proposals and applications for major built developments and road improvements, seeking to protect existing Rights of Way and improve the opportunities for access through routes and areas with public access. We have expressed a preference for such new means of access to be on a statutory basis rather than by short term voluntary agreement.

Roger Buisson, Group Leader

Rights of Way Working Group

The group has met during the LAF meetings to consider the issues of public rights of way. We welcomed the ROWIP produced by the County Council. This is a document which helps identify a programme for the maintenance and enhancement of the system.

There is concern as to whether there is sufficient resource available to achieve the ROWIP objectives. The group agreed that it would be helpful to meet with officers from the County Council to help reinforce the need ahead of the next budget round.

Other issues which the group considered were the need for:

- Co-operation between landowners, County Council, users and providers to help achieve improvements for DDA.
- A comprehensive waymarking programme
- Creation and publicity for circular routes with additional links in the network to help achieve these.
- Linking the network to the new housing developments within the Growth Area
- Access by boat on water and not just on land by foot, horse, cycle or vehicle
- The use of volunteers to help with the maintenance of the network.

The group also applauded the work of Cambridgeshire Horizons with the production of their Green Infrastructure Strategy. This is an exciting opportunity to create a network of linked corridors for public access and habitat across the Sub Region. We sincerely hope that this will be achieved over the next 20 years.

Philip Broadbent-Yale, Group Leader

Health Group

It was felt that it was not up to LAF to promote healthy issues specifically but to ensure that outdoor facilities were in place for people to use and enhance healthy living. During the year the Group undertook a review of the County Council and District Councils' policies and approaches to 'health'. In January 2006 the Group, having completed its review, was disbanded and members joined other groups.

The Image of Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum

Interaction with the public, groups and organisations and other LAF's

In order to understand the detail of developments and projects within and affecting Cambridgeshire LAF invited guest speakers to attend its bi-monthly meetings.

Presentations

May 2005	Cambridgeshire Horizons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Green Infrastructure Strategy
July 2005	James Fisher, Devils Dyke Project Officer Naomi Brookes Green Belt Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Devils Dyke• Green Belt Project
Sept 2005	Darren Braine, DEFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Stewardship Scheme
Nov 2005	Tim Stevens, LARA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NERC Bill
Jan 2006	Janet Watt, Environmental Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey of Registered Common Land in Cambridgeshire Presentation
March 2006	Dominic Doble, CCC ROWIP Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ROWIP

All agendas and minutes of meetings are available on <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/forum/> as are copies of supporting papers to be discussed.

A LAF leaflet has been widely distributed to groups, organisations with interest in access and the countryside and also to Parish Councils with an aim to raise the LAF profile inform and engage people and organisations.

An invitation and poster listing all the meeting dates for the year was sent to every parish. The attendance of members of the public at meetings is still unpredictable, however the number of telephone calls enquiring about LAF's work and letters to LAF from Groups and Organisations seeking LAF's support or drawing matters to LAF's attention is significant. A table detailing the range of other issues and topics discussed during the year follows.

British Horse Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation between list of streets and definitive map statement & CCC response • Non-determination of definitive map modification order & CCC response • Cycling Strategy • Comments on ROWIP • Petition, Damage to bridleways
DEFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Sports Board – joint LAF regional meetings • Countryside and Community Research Unit – Review of Local Access Forums • By All Reasonable Means' inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people • LAF Regulations 2002 report on proposed amendments & report on LAF workshop
Forestry Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Naturally Active www.naturallyactive.org
Countryside Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity Review Research Notes • Access Newsletters • CoAg Managing Public Access • Natural Benefits in the East of England • On the Right track: surface requirements for shared use routes (excluding mechanically propelled vehicles) Good Practice Guide • Dedications Research Project - invitation to bid
Ramblers Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on ROWIP • Signposting comparison

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canoe England – Access to Water • Sustrans Map & Active Travel & Mental Well-being information sheet FH07 • Northstowe and Section 106 Agreements • ODPM Growth Area funding for '06-'07 • Report on the Open Access in Eastern England event on 31/10/05 'Open Access Celebration' • 'Byways' and restricted seasonal/winter use • Bridge of Reeds • Fen Drayton Lakes - an important space to Cambridgeshire under threat • Concerns over the safety issues for carriage drivers • Stonea Camp – withdrawal of funding • Peterborough LAF – Developing Links
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LAF Budget

Budget for period	Sept 04 - Mar 05 [~]	Apr 05 – Mar 06
Labour (Secretary's fee)	£3522.62	£4281.95
General administration & other costs (eg training, public notice, letter head, Forum meetings*, annual report and members' mileage** etc)	£2356.74 [#]	£3931.81 [~]
Total***	£5,879.36	£8150.84

Notes

~ six month period

* March meeting costs not included (£157.61)

**Not all members claimed expenses during the period (£92+ liability will be included in 2006-2007).

***Excludes VAT

excludes members' mileage which was paid out of the CCC budget

~ includes members mileage costs which were paid from the CCC budget

The Advisory Role of the Local Access Forum

The regulations require that the annual report should, at a minimum set out the occasions and issues on which the LAF has provided advice during the preceding year and an indication of the bodies to which the advice was given. The table below includes the relevant items.

Date	Advised	On
May 2005	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton • A428 • Draft Service Plan • CCC Restructuring
July 2005	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement procedures
Sept 2005	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustrans cycle route (FP24 Ely) issues including procedure, surfacing & 9m high steel structure/art work • Regional Physical Activity Plan
	DEFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation relating to the amendment of the LAFs (England) Regulations 2002 • Confirmation of Byelaws relating to Countryside Recreation: Proposals for Change
Nov 2005	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Footpath adj. to Hobson's Conduit • Addenbrookes Access Road, proposed bridge over the rail • Sheep's Green Access Improvements • Cambridge and Peterborough Waste Management Facilities
	Countryside Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension Access Management Grant Scheme
	Hunts DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind power consultation
	South Cambs DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northstowe planning application • South Cambs DC on the A10 improvement works

Jan 2006	South Cambs DC / City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Development Framework
	Fenland DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fenland DC's Corporate Plan • Fenland DC's Local Development Strategy(LDS)
	South Cambs DC /CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application by Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust
	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing links & Verges • Draft Statement of Community Involvement • Hills Road consultation • Review of County Farms Estate
March 2006	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambs & Peterborough Waste Minerals Plan • Park & Ride Stakeholders meeting
	South Cambs DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowley Road Park & Ride Consultation

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