

Cornwall Local Access Forum

Annual Review Form

April 2023 to October 2024

Name of LAF	CORNWALL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
Name of LAF Chair	Victoria Burton-Davey
Name of LAF Secretary	none allocated

Total number of LAF members at date of report (Note 9 vacancies)	19
Number of members representing users of public rights of way or access land	10
Number of members representing owners and occupiers of access land or land over which PROW subsist	4
Number of members representing other interests (Note 4 Councillors + 1 other)	5

1. LAF achievements? (Please give examples to illustrate how your LAF has improved public access to land for the purpose of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area)

Consultation by the Appointing Authority has been limited by the reluctance on their part to seek advice from CLAF. Policies and strategic planning documents have been neglected by the Council, and this neglect feeds into a broader picture of underfunding and lack of priority for access and PROW. Their modus operandi has severely impacted this LAFs ability to make a positive material difference in Cornwall.

However, we have some achievements to list:

There has been an improvement in administrative support, though not through the appointment of staff dedicated to supporting CLAF, but through the work of officers and supporting staff doing their best to offer some continuity whilst juggling many other commitments. The staff lay-offs at Cornwall Council have had a continued adverse effect across services.

Communications are improving: a new website has been built and is about to go live (a technical hitch had held this up). The improved website and some social media communications will help improve the accessibility of the forum and perhaps begin to improve the level of consultation from the Council.

Recruitment has also improved, with several new members joining us over the past year. New ideas and enthusiasms coming into the forum will help CLAF meet the challenges of the coming year, and plan ahead.

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There has been discussion about implementation of policy and design of gates and access ways, and Accessibility Working Group activity, towards improving (though frustrating slowly) better access for all types of PRoW users. Much more proactive consultation is needed in this area. Recruitment of other members keen to work in this area, or experienced in the challenges it brings would be welcomed, and should be actively sought.

Member activity and implementation of an access inclusivity scheme at Feock is having a positive effect on health & wellbeing in the area: The Active Feock scheme helps people to keep active and feel connected, happier and healthier while being able to live longer in their own homes and communities.

The Multi Use Trails Working Group has continued to consult and advise on several projects. Members have also been working to improve access through supporting and advising on projects to link trails and other PRoW, potentially creating a coast to coast trail in the County.

2. What are the main challenges affecting your LAF's ability to deliver improvements to public access in the coming year?

To echo last year's report: continuing restrictions on local authority funding means the Council does not have the resources to meet its legal liability for maintenance of the rights of way network in Cornwall, with consequent deleterious effect on public access.

Lack of consultation from departments within Cornwall Council means CLAF is unable to fully meet its remit.

New ELMS scheme funding for laudable biodiversity projects is creating new challenges to access: where longer term schemes see areas once regularly cleared through farming practices, sometimes densely planted or populated with natural habitat which can restrict access. A focus on improved access should be identified as a priority for DEFRA if this proves to be an increasing issue in County.

3. What are your top three priorities for the year ahead?

To remind Cornwall Council of the need to complete the Access Strategy Review and RoWIP (now 8 years out of date) and to consult CLAF on this.

Improvement in communication with Cornwall Council departments, so that can understand the LAFs role and value as a consulting body. This will hopefully lead to more consultation on issues where CLAFs broad, experienced, and skilled membership can have a positive effect on policy and decision making within County.

Improved communications with local Parish and Town Councils to better focus our understanding of what needs to be prioritised within County.

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4. Is there any particular support or training that you need to deliver your priorities?

We need allocated administrative support in order to meet our challenges.

We need better technical support/infrastructure if blended meetings are to continue.

Training days from the Appointing Authority need re-establishing.

LAF activity in 2023-2024

Number of full LAF meetings held	6	Number of sub-group meetings held	
Number of working groups led by others	0	Number of training days provided by the Appointing Authority	0

Partners the LAF worked with during 2023 - 2024 (click on a box or type 'x')

Local Nature Partnerships	1	Local Enterprise Partnerships	0
Health and Wellbeing Boards	1	LEADER funding Local Action Groups	0

Please add numbers to the following differentiating between formal consultations and general advice given by the LAF on particular subjects. If a consultation covered more than one subject area, please count separately.

	Consultations	Advice
Green Infrastructure strategies		
Public Space Protection Orders (including gating orders)		
Transport (LTP, traffic management, rail, DfT, Highways Agency)	1	1
Water / Coast (slipways, flood defence, EA, shoreline)	0	0
Public open space (protection orders, commons, village greens)	0	0
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders		
Planning applications		
Housing development schemes	1	

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Local development frameworks and planning strategies		
PROW creation, diversion or closure - number of each		
Right of Way Improvement Plan review		
Route improvements (to PROW and other multi-user/cycling/horse-riding/walking routes)		
Promotion of access, open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area	1	
Definitive map and recording PROW		
Parish Council or other grant schemes		
Disabled access / access for people with mobility issues?	1	
Vehicular access and issues relating to motorised use of PROW		
Nature conservation (including SSSIs)		
Land use and planning matters (e.g. informal advice on land development)		
Greenspace including Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves		
Open Access land restrictions		
Coastal Access/National Trails	1	
NNR dedication		
Agri-environment scheme issues (HLS and new Countryside Stewardship) e.g. expiring permissive access agreements, effects of land management options on public access etc.		
Forestry and woodland		

Any other LAF activity (please specify)

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5. Summarise any feedback received from section 94(4) bodies¹

1. Please provide any comments from your Appointing Authority

None received.

7. Comments from LAF Chair

The past eighteen months have seen improved communications and membership, and I am very pleased to have been instrumental in these changes.

The membership is very keen to work for improved access in Cornwall: I hope that Cornwall Council will begin to recognise the valuable free resource which CLAF embodies, and we can start to see growing consultation from departments across Council.

8. Any important information to bring to the attention of Natural England

Reverting, once again, to the previous comments above about Section 94 bodies in general; the Forum has previously, through its Secretary, written to everyone possible body that we could identify, with very little effect. Question: is there a role for NE to publicise the role of LAFS nationally, to encourage relevant bodies to consult their local LAFS? If there is, please act upon it.

¹ The Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, Section 94(4) specifies that it is the function of a local access forum, as respects to the area for which it is established, to advise the appointing authority; the local highway authority; other bodies exercising functions under CROW Act Part 1 (Natural England, Forestry Commission and English Heritage) and such other bodies as may be prescribed. These other bodies are set out in the LAF Regulations 2007, paragraph 21, and include: any conservation board established by the Secretary of State, any parish or town council in the area covered by the LAF, and Sport England.

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9. Any other comments

Thank you to the support of Cornwall Council officers and staff who work to overcome staffing and funding shortfalls in order to support us as best they could over the last eighteen months.

Cornwall Council needs to get its priorities straight regarding public access and maintenance of PRow in the County, as this is an increasingly recognised area of value for public health and wellbeing.

DRAFT