

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CHAIRS MEETING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To request members steer about the upcoming LAF Chairs Meeting on 20th July 2022.

2. BACKGROUND

After several attempts we have now been successful in arranging an online meeting to restart the LAF Chairs meetings. It has been several years since the last meeting but officers and LAF members alike agree the potential value of these meeting in terms of information sharing and networking among neighbouring Forums.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS

Introductions

Summary of LAF functioning - each Chair giving a summary of how their LAF functions

- How many times a year it meets, and time of day (that influences who is able to be a member).
- Membership (balance of different stakeholders)
- Focus - for example, the balance between rural and urban, PROW and other types of access
- Achievements and challenges.

What should be the Region?

Discussion about which geographical areas should be included in these meetings.

Current Forums attending the meeting –

- Bracknell Forest LCAF,
- Mid and West Berkshire LAF (covers; Wokingham, West Berkshire and Reading areas)
- Surrey CAF
- RBWM LAF

Suggested Forums to invite –

- Hampshire CAF
- Oxfordshire CAF
- Buckinghamshire LAF
- Slough LAF (not currently running)

Question - *Would RBWM LAF members support the suggested Forums being invited to attend the LAF Chairs meetings?*

NE/Defra engagement/communication

Concerns have been raised namely by Mid and West Berkshire LAF members about the apparent lack of interest of Government in the Work of LAFs (which probably means Natural England, since most responsibilities are delegated to it).

Previously there were National LAF conferences/meetings, provision of Huddle platform for all LAF members to communicate with each other and directly with NE.

Update from NE (Senior Specialist: Public Access, Recreation and Rights of Way in January 2022 was:

“The intention is to replace HUDDLE with a SharePoint site once we have secured some staff resource to devote some time to LAF work”

Question: *Would RBWM LAF members support the suggestion of the Chairs jointly writing a letter to the responsible Minister? (who is Lord Benyon, former MP for Newbury and West Berkshire resident - as well as being its largest landowner!).*

Active Travel/Climate Change

Discussion of Active Travel England (ATE) plans and possible consequences for LAF working.

The new executive agency ATE was launched in January 2022 by the Department for Transport with Chris Boardman as it's national commissioner.

Active Travel England will be responsible for driving up the standards of cycling and walking infrastructure and managing the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects that improve both health and air quality.

ATE's establishment follows the Government's commitment of £2bn for cycling and walking over this parliament.

Cross boundary working

Discussion of any current cross boundary working projects or requirements. Success stories for bench marking and sharing. Location specific issues.

Question: *Do RBWM LAF members support this agenda?*