

## **Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2013 to March 2014**

**Name of LAF:** Joint Local Access Forum for Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire

**Name of LAF Chair:** David Waterstone CBE

**Name of LAF Secretary:** Graeme Stark

**Number of LAF members:** 17

**Number of LAF vacancies:** 5

### **1 - Involvement and Representation**

**What interests does your current membership cover?** Walking, running, cycling, horseriding, trailbiking, 4x4ing, riparian access, estate management, farming and disability access.

**What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing?** Young people and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are underrepresented in the membership of the JLAf.

**Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors:** The current application forms do not ask applicants to identify their age or ethnicity and it is not therefore possible to identify whether young and BME people are applying to join the JLAf.

### **2 - Operation of LAF**

**What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications, monitoring of Huddle etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective?** The dates of JLAf meetings are made available one year in advance to allow members to plan around these dates.

Agendas, background papers, minutes and other information is published online to make them as widely available as possible. Agendas and background papers are sent out two weeks in advance of meetings to allow plenty of time for preparation.

**How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team?** The Appointing Authorities look for new members who can work constructively with one another. The Chair and Vice-Chair encourage members to work as a team and encourage participation from all members.

**In what ways do you reach consensus?** Discussions are held in an open and constructive atmosphere. Furthermore, working groups have been set up to address specific issues so that they can agree proposals which will be acceptable to the JLAf as a whole.

**How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts?** The clear and fair leadership of the Chair and Vic-Chair has avoided conflicts arising.

**Give up to 3 examples of where you have encountered operational difficulties (e.g. lack of resources); explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate such issues:**

1 - The Outdoors Access Officer, who was JLAf Secretary was employed by Bath and North East Somerset with contribution from the partner authorities of Bristol City and South Gloucestershire and provided support to the JLAf. The post of Outdoors Access Officer was made redundant as a result of restructure and budget cuts in the host authority, public rights of way team. The future funding of the post was in doubt within the supporting authorities

2 - Attendance by the majority of the JLAf has been very good over the last 12 months; however, a small number of JLAf members have regularly been absent over the last 12 months and the JLAf has not therefore been able to benefit from their contributions.

3 - n/a

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### **3 - Partnership and Progress**

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not? Yes.

Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not? Yes.

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area? Yes.

Main or notable achievements? Working with the Ramblers Association to finance and staff a team of volunteers to maintain rights of way.

### **4 - Profile and Direction**

Has anything changed over the last year? The Outdoors Access Officer, who was the JLAF Secretary and provided support to the JLAGF, was made redundant as a result of budget cuts within the hosting authority public rights of way teams. As a result, a new Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the partner authorities to continue the JLAF secretariat within Bath and North East Somerset Council's public rights of way team duties with reduced contribution from the partner authorities

What changes / barriers can you see ahead? There is a significant likelihood of further cuts to the Appointing Authorities' Public Rights of Way Teams' budgets which would have a knock-on effect for work carried out with the JLAF.

What are your priorities for the year ahead (list up to 3)?

- 1 - Establishing 'Walkers Are Welcome' schemes
- 2 - Recruiting new members
- 3 - Increased joint working with the Local Nature Partnership

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities? Mentoring and advice from other successful Walkers Are Welcome schemes

### **5 - Section 94 Bodies**

Give up to 3 examples of advice given by your LAF to section 94 bodies:

- 1 - JLAF Responses to South Gloucestershire Council's Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document
- 2 - JLAF Responses to Bristol Health & Wellbeing Strategy Consultations
- 3 - JLAF Responses to Bath and North East Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy Consultations

### **6 - Open Access Work**

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on? None.

How many cases have you responded to? None.

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases: None.

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**7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year. Please add numbers into the boxes below and only count specific consultations once even if advice has been given on them a number of times. If a consultation covers more than one subject area, please count them separately as appropriate.**

Public meetings (e.g. LAF meetings)	3	Working groups	2
Training days	0	Definitive map modification orders	1
Highway orders	0	Green Infrastructure strategies	3
Gating orders	2	Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	0
Cycle projects	1	Disabled access	0
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders	0	Housing development schemes	0
Planning applications	4	PROW network and projects	8
ROWIP planning and objectives	1	Local development frameworks and planning strategies	3
Local Nature Partnerships	1	Recording of paths and promoting use	1
Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access	0	Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	0
Slipways and landing stages - public access to	0	Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	1
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council	0	Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	0
Shoreline management plans	0	Rail freight interchange strategic development	0
Network rail and rail crossing closures	0	Access and nature conservation	1
Horse routes and equestrian provision	1	Multi user routes	1

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National Parks	0	Coastal access	0
Motorised vehicle access	1	Access to MOD land	0
New town & village green registration government consultation	0	Natural England consultations	0
Defra consultations	1	Commons grazing proposals	1
Highways Agency consultations	0	Department for Transport consultations	0
Other (please specify):			

**8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority:** Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire Councils feel that the JLAF has made a positive contribution to outdoors access in the area and can see a great deal of potential with the Walkers Are Welcome Schemes being established by local communities in partnership with the JLAF. The Appointing Authorities would like to thank the JLAF for their hard work over the last 12 months and for the constructive way in which they have dealt with changes to the JLAF as a result of loss of the Outdoors Access Improvement Officer post.

**9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:** A major concern during the period has been to find ways of minimising the effects of the cold wind of austerity on access to the countryside and, in particular, the impact on the rights of way system. We have worked with the Ramblers' Association to finance and establish a volunteer team to maintain the public rights of way network; not everything has gone smoothly but we can reasonably claim that our teams are now well established and doing very useful work.

Our focus now is shifting to encouraging all those concerned with spending money on access to think of this as an investment not only in gaining health-related advantages but also in terms of straight forward economic return to the community. To this end, we are seeking to work more closely with Sirona, who carry out B&NES Council's public health work, on health matters and to encourage communities to promote Walkers Are Welcome schemes which, where they have been established, have shown themselves capable of creating benefit for local businesses as well as promoting the health of the community.