

Local Access Forums Guidance: 1

The establishment of Local Access Forums

Advice and best practice



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales is the statutory adviser to government on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment throughout Wales and its inshore waters. With English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage, CCW delivers its statutory responsibilities for Great Britain as a whole, and internationally, through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

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Note: This document should be read in conjunction with The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 - SI4002 (W.330), to which it is cross-referenced throughout, and any other guidance issued by the National Assembly for Wales.

1. Background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires 'appointing authorities' (National Park Authorities within National Parks and highway authorities elsewhere, referred to throughout as AAs) to establish Local Access Forums (LAFs). The duty to establish LAFs came into force with the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 on 1 January 2002 and all appointing authorities are required to have them in place by 31 December 2002. This document should be read in conjunction with these regulations.

This document contains CCW's advice and best practice guidelines for the establishment of Local Access Forums, with particular regard to the regulations. It is primarily intended for those within appointing authorities charged with the establishment of a LAF; although it is hoped that it will also be of interest to others involved, including potential and actual members of LAFs.

In particular it gives advice on the establishment of a LAF and the selection and appointment of members. This advice has been drawn up following experience gained from the interim Local Access Forums which were developed in Wales during 2001, in advance of the legal requirement, and which will now be reformed as statutory LAFs. In addition it draws on a report prepared for CCW and the Countryside Agency in 2000¹. The first draft of this advice was distributed as a consultation document to local authorities and National Parks in Wales and comments received have been taken into account. This document has been produced in consultation with the National Assembly for Wales.

Help with establishing Local Access Forums

This is the first in a short series of advice notes which CCW will be producing to help appointing authorities establish and run Local Access Forums. Further advice notes are planned on 'The Role, Duties and Functions of LAFs' and 'LAF Annual Reports'.

CCW is committed to assisting and advising appointing authorities with the establishment of Local Access Forums. To this end we have appointed an officer whose primary duty is to help in this process. For further details please contact:

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¹ *The membership, role and operation of Local Countryside Access Forums* (unpublished report.) Independent Research Services (2000).

2. Establishment of a forum *Reg 3*

2.1 Requirement to establish a LAF or LAFs

Reg 3(1) and Reg 3(2) require appointing authorities (AAs) to establish one or more LAFs to cover their area.

It is important that a LAF can effectively advise on matters in the area to which it relates. Thus it is likely that the appointing authorities covering large land areas in Wales will need to establish more than one LAF to ensure that they are able to advise on 'local' issues.

The number and boundaries of LAFs in an AA's area should be reviewed when the membership of all its members ceases (see 3.2 below). The LAF members themselves should be asked to advise on this.

2.2 Areas in which a LAF is not needed

Reg 3(3) and the CROW Act (S94(8&9)) allow the National Assembly for Wales to direct that a LAF is not needed for a given area if it is satisfied that one is not required.

It is envisaged that every AA in Wales will require at least one LAF. If any AA feels that a LAF is not needed for all or part of its area they should apply to the National Assembly as soon as possible, stating the reasons why a LAF is not needed in that area.

2.3 Deadline for Establishment of a LAF

Reg 3(4) states that all AAs are required to have established LAFs to cover all of their area within one year of the regulations coming into force. (Therefore they must be established by 31 December 2002.)

Attention is drawn to the fact that it can take several months to establish a LAF, particularly with regard to the appointment of members and the required newspaper advertising. The LAF is considered as being established from

the date of its first meeting. Therefore, appointing authorities need to consider the establishment of a LAF as early as possible in 2002 to enable the first meeting to take place within the time scale.

2.4 Establishment of joint LAFs

Reg 3(5) allows an AA to establish a joint LAF with one or more other AAs. This joint LAF may cover all or part of each AA's area.

AAs should consider at an early stage whether it would be beneficial to establish a joint LAF with a neighbouring authority for all or part of its area. Joint LAFs are likely to be most appropriate where there are significant cross border issues, such as an upland block or commons that straddle the administrative boundaries.

The decision to establish a joint LAF should be made at an early stage to avoid the inconvenience of amalgamating LAFs at a later date.

The National Assembly's and DEFRA's legal advisors have advised us that it will not be practical to establish joint LAFs which cross the Welsh / English border.

We would suggest that adjacent LAFs with significant cross authority or border issues, such as large commons or upland areas, should establish appropriate joint working arrangements – such as attending each others LAFs (as observers / advisors) and / or establishing a joint working group.

3. Membership of a forum *Regs 4-9*

The aim, when establishing a LAF, is to appoint a group of individuals who, by virtue of their experience, knowledge, enthusiasm and contacts, can contribute fully to a Forum which effectively advises the AA, CCW and other appropriate organisations on how best to improve public access to land in the area, with regard to the needs of land management and conservation.

3.1. Number of members

Reg 4(1) requires that a statutory LAF must consist of a Chair, a Deputy Chair and between 10 and 20 other members (or such other number of members outside this range as the National Assembly may authorise in writing). Therefore, a LAF will normally consist of between 12 and 22 members. Note that a Secretary must also be appointed but they are not counted as a member of the LAF (see section 4.1. below).

Whilst a statutory LAF can consist of between 12 and 22 members, the AA will wish to consider commencing with fewer than the normal maximum of 22 members. This will give the AA, and the LAF itself, room for manoeuvre in deciding whom (if anybody) it is desirable to appoint additionally to ensure that there is a reasonable balance and that all relevant interests are represented.

The shortlist of applicants that meet the standard for appointment set by the AA may be drawn upon for up to one year from the date on which the first appointments are made. Thereafter vacancies may only be filled by the procedure set out in the regulations.

We would advise that attempts should be made to keep the number of 'other' members within the 10-20 range. If an AA feels that this is not possible, application should be made to the National Assembly at the earliest possible time, stating the reasons why a greater number of members are required. Permission is only likely to be granted where there are

exceptional circumstances, such as when a LAF covers an exceptionally large area or if there are exceptionally diverse access issues. However, in cases such as these, the AA should first consider whether it is appropriate to establish more than one LAF to enable all the local issues to be dealt with adequately.

3.2. Period of appointment

Reg 4(3) states that all members of a Forum are to be appointed for three years from the date of the first meeting, or a shorter period specified by the AA.

To enable the effectiveness, membership and geography of a LAF to be fully reviewed, the intention is that all appointments should terminate on the same date, three years from the date of the first meeting. Thus, members appointed after the first meeting should be appointed until the same date as those members who are appointed from the outset.

Shortly before the termination of all of the members' appointments the AA will need to run through the same process of recruitment of members as before the original formation of the LAF. Existing members will be eligible for reappointment.

3.3. Selection of Members

Regs 7-9 outline steps that an AA must take when appointing members, both initially and when the appointment of all members expires (see 3.2. above). Attention is drawn in

particular to the fact that when considering membership AAs must place an advertisement inviting expressions of interest in a local paper.

It should be kept in mind throughout the selection process that the task is to achieve a well-balanced and effective LAF with all relevant interests represented. The following paragraphs give advice on meeting these aims.

3.3.1 Procedure for selecting members

Expressions of interest and nominations are likely to come through four main sources:

a) Appointing authority membership

Regs 6(1) and 6(2) state that an AA must appoint one member (but no more than one member) of the LAF who is either a member or an officer of the AA and that a joint LAF with more than one appointing authority must have two (but not more than two) members from the AAs.

It is entirely a matter for the AA to decide who their LAF member should be. Members and officers of the AA, other than those appointed in accordance with this regulation, cannot be appointed as a member of the LAF in any capacity.

b) Expressions of interest received through newspaper and other advertising

Reg 7b requires an AA to place an advertisement in a newspaper circulating in the locality of the LAF giving persons an opportunity of expressing an interest in becoming a LAF member.

All applications for membership arising directly from newspaper advertisements should be considered fairly and equally along with all other applications and nominations.

Although the regulations only require an advertisement to be placed in one local paper we would strongly advise that AAs

should consider more extensive advertising to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the opportunities. Formal advertisements can often get lost amongst 'situations vacant' and 'public announcements'. In addition to a paid for advertisement, it is recommended that AAs should also issue a press release and place the advertisement on their web site. Other organisations, such as landowning and access groups could be asked to advertise the opportunities. We would recommend keeping the advertisement as short and 'eye-catching' as possible. Additional details can be sent to those requesting it. A suggested advertisement is appended. (Appendix I)

c) Nominations for membership by organisations

Reg 7c allows AAs to invite organisations having an interest in the functions of the forum to nominate persons for consideration.

Persons nominated do not have to be a member of the nominating organisation. We suggest that AAs consider which organisations are relevant within their area and invite such organisations to put forward a name, or names, for consideration.

The AA may in some cases decide to invite other local and National Park authorities to nominate potential members. This is particularly likely to be appropriate where a National Park authority is the AA. In such cases we would advise that a representative of the relevant highway authority / authorities should be involved in some way – either as a member or an observer (see 6.4 below).

d) Membership of an existing forum

Some authorities already have existing forums that deal exclusively or partly with

experience of the members and their ability to play a full role in the work of the LAF.

In particular the following issues need to be taken into account:

a) Function of the LAF

It is important that all members of the LAF agree to work within the context of the functions of Local Access Forums as defined in the CROW Act (S94(4)). It should be noted that this section of the Act enables the National Assembly to prescribe additional functions in regulations, but they have chosen not to do so.

Thus, the only statutory function of a LAF is:

To advise the local authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others 'as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area'.

This is a wholly positive function and persons whose motives appear to be inconsistent with this should not be appointed.

b) Balance

Reg 7e and the CROW Act (S95(2&4)) make it a statutory responsibility for the AA to ensure that there is a reasonable balance between a) the interests of users of local rights of way and the new right of access to open country and b) the owners and occupiers of access land or land over which rights of way subsist.

It is vital that this 'reasonable balance' is achieved. Clearly, some members will be either effectively neutral, or have an interest in both access and landowning interests. This should be taken into account in achieving overall balance.

c) Achieving social inclusion

Reg 7f requires AAs, when considering which persons to appoint as members of a LAF, to have regard to the need to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, a fair balance between persons of different genders, races, ages, disabilities and other characteristics.

The process of achieving social inclusion must not contravene discrimination laws. They should thus follow the Nolan principles and adhere to the spirit of the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. <http://www.ocpa.gov.uk>.

d) Breadth of knowledge / interest

It is important that all relevant interests are represented on a LAF. We would suggest that AAs draw up a list of those interests prior to selecting the members. (e.g. landowners, farmers and others with legal rights over the use of land, walkers, horse riders, cyclists, the disabled, etc.) In addition to owners/occupiers and users of access, the CROW Act (S95(2)(c)) requires AAs to appoint representatives of 'any other interests especially relevant to the authority's area'. Those individuals able to bring knowledge and representation of more than one interest will bring added value to the LAF. It is important that members of LAFs are willing and able to play a full part in all aspects of a LAF's work.

e) Individual appointments

Although many LAF members will probably be members of, and nominated by, specific organisations, it should be stressed that it is the named person, and not the organisation, that is appointed to the LAF. Thus, it is important that the member makes a commitment to attend all meetings, as deputies are not allowed to attend as members. (Although at the discretion of the Chair a deputy can attend as an observer.)

access issues. The experience and expertise gained by members of these forums is valuable and they should be invited to apply for membership of the statutory LAF. However, these individuals should be considered with all other nominations, and applications and should not automatically become members of a new statutory LAF.

Suggested procedure for selecting members

1. Invite expressions of interest and nominations.

See notes above.

2. Send 'Guidance for Prospective Members' and application form to all those expressing interest.

Suggested application form and 'Guidance for Prospective Members' included as appendices II and III.

3. Receive application forms back.

4. Consider forms with regard to the CROW Act, statutory LAF regulations & CCW's suggested criteria for the selection of members. In particular an AA must have regard to Regs 7d-f and 8.

5. Draw up a shortlist of applicants that meet the AA's requirements for appointment.

6. Hold interviews (if necessary).

It is likely that some members will be appointed on the strength of their application forms and any prior knowledge of the applicant that the AA may have. However, in some cases the most suitable candidates will not be apparent without interviews.

7. Decide upon persons to be invited to become members, again with regard to the CROW Act, LAF regulations & CCW's suggested criteria for the selection of members.

8. Send out letters to confirm appointments.

Appointments should be for three years and should commence from the date of the first meeting.

3.3.2. Criteria for selection of members

Suggested criteria for selecting members

It is essential that a LAF member will:

- * be committed to the function of the Forum as stated in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:

the function of a Forum will be to advise the local authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others 'as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area'.

- * be willing and able to play a full part in all aspects of a LAFs work - persons who are only willing or able to represent a narrow specific interest may not be suitable members;

It is desirable that a LAF member will:

- * have a wide range of experience of access issues in the area;
- * have experience of working on, and contributing to, similar forums or working groups in the past;
- * reside in, be particularly familiar with, or have any other interests especially relevant to the area of the Forum;
- * be able to network with a wide range of organisations and individuals, with an aim to advising on their views and disseminating the LAFs work.

Once all nominations have been received it is the job of the AA to decide upon the initial membership of the LAF. This is a crucial process as the effectiveness of the LAF depends to a large part on the knowledge and

4. Administration of a forum *Regs 10-11*

4.1. LAF Secretary

Regs 10(1) and 10(2) require AAs to appoint a named person as LAF Secretary and outline the Secretary's primary duties. The Secretary must attend all meetings of the LAF but they are not a member of the LAF for the purposes of the number of members and they are not eligible to vote.

The LAF Secretary will normally be an employee of the AA, although this is not a requirement of the regulations. Whilst the Secretary is ultimately responsible for the administration of the LAF in compliance with the regulations, their appointment does not preclude others from assisting with administrative tasks - drafting of minutes and organisation of venues, for example, could be delegated to another person. The Secretary will be required to preside over the first meeting and conduct the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair at the second meeting.

4.2. Expenses

Reg 11 requires an AA to defray all reasonable expenses of the Chair, Deputy Chair and members (but not observers).

This does not cover loss of earnings, or other expenses directly relating to employment, but it does include travelling and care costs for children and elderly or disabled dependants. All costs directly attributable to membership of the forum should also be reimbursed. This may include photocopying documents for meetings, postage, telephone calls and incidental expenses when attending meetings on behalf of the LAF. Such meetings would include training, LAF workshops, LAF committees and fact finding visits. We would suggest that a claim form is made available at each meeting.

5. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair *Reg 12*

Reg 12 outlines, in some detail, the procedure that must be adopted in electing a Chair and Deputy Chair. Attention is drawn in particular to the fact that the Chair and Deputy Chair must be elected by secret ballot as the first item of business at the second meeting of the LAF. Only members of the LAF can stand for these positions. The Secretary presides over the election.

We suggest that candidates be proposed by another member of the LAF. It is for the LAF itself, at its first meeting, to decide, subject to

the regulations, how it wishes to conduct the election. All those wishing to stand for election could be asked to provide a brief note of their skills and interests for distribution to the members before the second meeting to enable the members to make as informed a choice as possible.

6. Conduct of meetings of a forum *Reg 15*

6.1. Timing & venue of meetings

Reg 15(1) states that the first two meetings of the LAF will take place at such a time and place as the AA sees fit. The Secretary presides over the meetings and the AA sets the agenda. From the third meeting onwards the LAF itself agrees the venues and times but they must meet at least twice in each twelve-month period, calculated from the date on which it is established (i.e. its first meeting).

Based on experience with existing informal access forums we advise that generally LAFs should aim to meet at least 3-4 times a year. The minimum provision in the regulations may not provide sufficient time for the LAF to effectively discharge its functions during the early years. However the regulation recognises that the statutory demands on the LAF may subside in later years.

6.2. Public Access

Reg 15(2) requires that all LAF meetings must be open to the public, unless the person presiding rules that it is necessary to exclude them from certain items of business.

Exceptionally, the public may be excluded for reasons of personal or commercial confidentiality.

We would advise that the AA and the LAF members should use their best endeavours to ensure that the meetings are well publicised. The AA could, for example, place a notice of the meeting in a local paper circulating throughout the area covered by the LAF. Once appointed the LAF members should publicise the meetings through any channels open to them. The organisation of publicity for the meetings could be an early agenda item for the LAF.

Ease of access for the public should be taken into account when considering the timing and location of the meetings. For example, evening meetings may be easier for the public to attend and a LAF could consider varying its location to give all residents of the area a chance to attend. The availability of facilities such as disabled access, public transport links and car parks should also be taken into account.

6.3. Regulation of procedures

Reg 15(5) allows a LAF to regulate its own procedures providing it complies with the regulations and has regard to any guidance given from time to time by the National Assembly.

We advise that a LAF should develop its own Terms of Reference, with due regard to the CROW Act and the regulations. The Terms of Reference should be adopted and signed by all LAF members. Model Terms of Reference are included as Appendix IV.

6.4. Observer and advisor status

Reg 15(8) provides for the chair to invite observers and / or advisors to a meeting and that they may contribute if the person presiding considers it appropriate. Reg 15(9) lists those organisations that may attend LAFs as observers without invitation.

Observers and advisors will have a crucial role to play in LAFs – in particular with regard to advising on subjects with which the membership are not familiar and in disseminating the LAF's work. It is suggested that at an early meeting of the LAF (once the Chair is in post) the members agree a preliminary list of observers and advisors. Some of these will be invited to attend all meetings whilst others may be invited on an ad-hoc basis when required. The Chair may

invite either a named individual or a representative of an organisation.

As the Chair of a LAF is not appointed until the second meeting it will not be possible to invite observers / advisors until the third meeting – although observers listed in Reg 15(9) may attend and it should be kept in mind that the public will be able to attend all meetings.

It should be noted that only one statutory observer may attend from each of CCW and NAW under Reg 15(9). Any additional CCW/NAW observers will need to be invited in accordance with Reg 15(8).

6.5. Bilingual Meetings

In some parts of Wales it will be appropriate to provide translation facilities. This includes both verbal translation at meetings and translation of agendas, minutes and papers etc. We would suggest that LAFs follow the normal procedure of their appointing authority / authorities, keeping in mind that the public will be able to attend. Where translation is not automatically provided the LAF members should be asked for their views on the matter.

7. Notification of appointments etc *Reg 17*

Reg 17 requires the AA to notify CCW of the names and addresses of LAF members, send CCW a copy of each approved annual report and provide CCW with other information as may reasonably be required.

AAs should forward a list of LAF members to CCW's Access Forums Officer (address at bottom of section 1) as soon as possible after the first meeting. In addition, CCW is available to assist AAs with the establishment of LAFs and we will provide a central point for all LAF related information.

APPENDIX I Suggested advertisement inviting expressions of interest

..... County Council



..... Local Access Forum

Invitation for expressions of interest in becoming a member of the Forum

..... County Council is currently in the process of forming a statutory Local Access Forum, as required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The Forum will consist of between 12 and 22 members.

The function of the Forum will be to advise the local authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others, as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.

The Forum will meet at least twice a year and will probably meet more often. It is important that members can attend all meetings, as deputies will not be permitted. These are unpaid positions but Forum members will be able to claim reasonable expenses.

Any person wishing to be considered for membership can obtain further details from:

**Access Officer, County Council,.....,
.....Postcode. Telephone: xxxxx xxxxxx**

APPENDIX II – Suggested guidance for potential LAF members

..... County Council



..... Local Access Forum

GUIDANCE FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

Background

..... County Council is currently in the process of forming a statutory Local Access Forum (LAF), as required by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).

The function of the Forum will be to advise the local authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and other bodies exercising functions under Part I of the CROW Act, as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. These bodies must, by law, have regard to relevant advice given by the Forum.

Regulations require the Forum to meet at least twice a year. However, it is anticipated that meetings will generally take place more frequently at a time and place agreed by the Forum members.

Areas of Work

The LAF will advise upon aspects of public access in the area, including public rights of way and the new right of access to open country and registered common land. The Forum will consider all forms of access, including horse riding, cycling and off road driving, and not just access on foot. The exact nature of this work will be decided

upon by the LAF itself, in agreement with the local authority. However, work in the first year of the Forum is likely to include:

- consultation on draft maps of open country and registered common land;
- commenting on the Countryside & Rights of Way Act draft regulations which the National Assembly for Wales is drawing up; and
- considering improvements to rights of way in the area.

There are certain issues upon which a Local Access Forum must, by statute, be consulted. These include:

- the preparation of draft maps of open country and registered common land;
- the appointment of wardens as respect to access land;
- the making of Byelaws relating to access land;
- the preparation or review of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan; and
- applications for long-term exclusions or restrictions on access to access land.

Criteria for Selection

The following is a list of criteria against which applications will be judged. However, applicants will not necessarily have to comply with all of the criteria to be successful.

It is essential that a LAF member will:

- be committed to the function of the Forum:

the function of the Forum will be to advise the local authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area;

- be willing and able to play a full part in all aspects of a LAFs work - persons who are only willing or able to represent a narrow specific interest may not be suitable members.

It is desirable that a LAF member will:

- have a wide range of experience of access issues in the area;
- have experience of working on, and contributing to, similar Forums in the past;
- reside in, be particularly familiar with, or have any other interests especially relevant to, the area of the Forum;
- be able to network with a wide range of organisations and individuals, with an aim to disseminating the LAFs work.
- be able to attend all meetings of the Forum (deputies will not be permitted).

These are unpaid positions but Forum members will be able to claim reasonable expenses including care costs for children and elderly or disabled dependants.

It is anticipated that the first two meetings will be held on --/--/02 and --/--/02 at xxxxx.

If you wish to be considered for membership please complete the enclosed application form and return by --/--/02 to:

Access Officer, County Council,
Address, GG76 IGB.

If required, interviews will be held on --/--/02.

APPENDIX III – Suggested application form for potential LAF members.

..... Local Access Forum

Application for membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone number: _____

Daytime telephone number: _____

Occupation: _____

How did you learn of the Local Access Forum? _____

Please state why you feel you would make a good member of the Local Access Forum. In particular, you should relate your response to the 'Criteria for Selection' enclosed on the 'Guidance for Prospective Members'.

Continue on a plain sheet of paper if necessary.

I declare that the information I have given is to the best of my knowledge and belief true and complete.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In order to ensure that our equal opportunity policy is effective, we would be grateful if you would complete the details below. This form will be separated from the application form and will not be used in the selection process.

Gender: Male / Female

Age:

Ethnic Origin

Please tick:

White

Black Caribbean

Black African

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Other – please describe _____

Disability Survey

Are you disabled? If 'yes' please describe the nature of your disability.

Can you speak Welsh?

Please tick:

Fluent

Working Knowledge

Learner - Beginner

Learner - Intermediate

Learner - Advanced

No

APPENDIX IV - Model Terms of Reference for Local Access Forums

Title

1. The Local Access Forum shall be known as the ***** Local Access Forum.

Roles and Responsibilities

2. The function of the ***** Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the relevant local and National Park authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and others as appropriate as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area in ways which take account of land management, social, economic, environmental and educational interests.
3. The ***** Local Access Forum will fulfil this role by advising on issues of particular local relevance, including:
 - a. supporting the implementation of the new right of access to open countryside;
 - b. improving the rights of way network; and
 - c. developing recreation and access strategies that cater for everyone.
4. The ***** Local Access Forum will work to:
 - a. develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside;
 - b. respect local circumstances and different interests whilst operating within national guidance;
 - c. provide advice on issues of principle and good practice;
 - d. engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible; and
 - e. where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of differing views, and suggest how they might be resolved.

Membership

5. The membership will include:
 - a. a Chair and Deputy Chair elected in accordance with the LAF regulations;
 - b. a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 other members, which must include a balanced representation of i) recreational access users and ii) landowners and occupiers - together with representation of other interests especially relevant to the area.
6. The membership will:
 - a. be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group;
 - b. represent a cross-section of interests in the area; and
 - c. live or work within the area or have a sound knowledge of the area.
7. Members will be expected to:
 - a. adhere to the sections relating to LAFs in the CROW Act and regulations and these Terms of Reference;
 - b. show commitment to achieving the aims of the Local Access Forum through constructive working with other members;
 - c. be able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings and to network outside meetings;
 - d. have sufficient experience of access to the countryside in the local area to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving access provision; and
 - e. be capable of working with a wide range of interest groups.

Administration

Secretariat

8. The ***** Local Access Forum will have a Secretary appointed by the appointing authority who will be responsible for:
 - a. providing support to the chair of the Forum;
 - b. ensuring that the Forum is set up and run according to the CROW Act, Local Access Forum regulations and these Terms of Reference;
 - c. managing any resources dedicated to its work;
 - d. arranging and promoting meetings, including arranging the delivery of papers and information to Forum members and the public;
 - e. producing minutes of Forum meetings.
14. One representative of each of the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly for Wales and any officer of the appointing authority will automatically have observer status.
15. If necessary, Local Access Forum committees will be set up by the Chair after agreement with the members.
16. The chairing, membership and terms of reference of committees will be agreed by the Chair and members.
17. All meetings of the LAF will be held in public. However, the person presiding, following a request from a member or members, may decide that the public should be barred for particular items for reasons of personal privacy or commercial confidentiality.

Meetings

9. Meetings will be held at least two times a year, and more frequently as and when necessary, to be agreed by the LAF and the appointing authority.
10. Meeting agendas will be agreed between the Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary – although any member may suggest agenda items for consideration.
11. Meetings will be advertised in advance and the minutes published.
12. The Chair will invite observers/advisors to the meeting when appropriate.
13. Observers/advisors will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the Chair.

APPENDIX V – Suggested agenda items for first two meetings

Realistically the first two meetings of a LAF will primarily be concerned with the formation of the LAF itself and briefing of the members on their roles and responsibilities.

Reg 15(1) provides for the AA to set the agenda. It is suggested that the following should be the main agenda items at these meetings.

First meeting

1. Introduction by AA (including summary of likely early work).
2. Briefing on the CROW Act, the regulations and CCW Guidance.
3. Procedure for claiming expenses.
4. Explanation of appointment procedure for Chair and Deputy Chair.
5. Nominations for Chair and Deputy Chair.

Those individuals nominated for Chair and Deputy Chair should be asked to provide a short written note of their skills and interests, to be distributed, by the LAF secretary, to members in advance of the second meeting.

Second meeting

1. Election of Chair & Deputy Chair.
2. Agreement of Terms of Reference.
3. Discussion regarding additional members and observers.
4. Timing and venue for future meetings.