

Annual Report 2017/2018

What is the Local Access Forum?

The North Somerset Local Access Forum (LAF) was established under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, its role being to advise the appointing authority, North Somerset Council, on the improvement of public access to land for open-air recreation and enjoyment whilst having regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area. Although established by North Somerset Council, the LAF is an independent body. It works under national regulations (revised in March 2007) with a statutory obligation to provide independent and impartial advice.

Who is on the Local Access Forum?

The LAF is a group of seventeen local members of the public (including three North Somerset Councillors) with an interest in access to the countryside. The membership reflects a variety of interests as shown in the table.



List of current members' names with their predominant area of interest.

Rights of way and access land users

- Tim Raines • Jonathan Brownnett
- Adrian Read • Julie Main
- Barbara Bennett • Rhiannon Robinson

Landowning interests

- Bernard Gray • John Harris
- Robert Parsons • Richard Jones
- Ian Clemmett

Other interests

(for example tourism and conservation)

- Robert Rischmiller • John Knight
- Carolyn Stubbs • Gillian Hopkins
- Rod Lees

North Somerset Council members

- Cllr Ann Harley • Cllr James Tonkin
- Cllr Peter Burden

New members who joined the forum in 2017 – 2018

- Peter McAleer • Martin Neal

Activities of the LAF during the year

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England Coast Path – North Somerset section update

During the last year a lot of work has been undertaken to finalise the route alignment. The forum's England Coast Path working party have been discussing with Natural England and overseeing progress. Natural England have advised that they will be submitting reports on the route to the Secretary of State towards the end of 2018.

Landowners and other stakeholders will then have the opportunity to make representations to the Secretary of State before a final decision is taken on the route.

Weston to Brean Cross cycle route

The route was officially opened in July 2017 and further surface improvements on adjoining paths are planned in 2018/19

The route has been very popular with over 70,000 users recorded in the last 12 months.

Other routes

Clevedon to Portishead

The Forum was informed in October 2014 about a proposal for a pedestrian route parallel to the B3124 which would link Walton, Weston-in-Gordano and Portishead to Clevedon. The length of the route is 7km. The route has now been protected in planning terms by being included as a route in the North Somerset Core Strategy. The route is an aspiration and delivery will be dependent on funding being identified.

The Forums members have requested that all new access route be multi-user routes.

Strawberry Line extension update

Further work has been undertaken during the last year to secure a route at North End Yatton as a public bridleway. The forum received a presentation from North Somerset Council's Sustainable Transport Manager on a proposal to extend the Strawberry Line between Yatton railway station and Clevedon following part of the old railway track bed. Consultations are ongoing with landowners and other stakeholders.



Joint Local Transport Plan 3 update

The Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP) which covers South Gloucester, Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset, which received final approval in March 2011, is still on track. The plan covers major funding bids as well as annual funding.

Funding opportunities for the North Somerset Rights of Way Improvement Plan are likely to be collected from LTP3 funding streams. The forum has prioritised the following LTP schemes:

- The extension of the Strawberry Line to Clevedon (possibly working with North Somerset Council's own green travel plans to provide sustainable routes for its staff linking Yatton railway station with Clevedon).
- Linking Tyntesfield and Portishead with the bridleway network.
- A multi-user route linking Nailsea to Clevedon

A new LTP4 is in the pipeline and the LAF will be updated when it goes out to consultation in 2019.



Major planning applications

The forum has been updated during the past year on large planning applications affecting access in the district.

Bristol Water Strategic Supply Scheme – reinstatement of the line is nearly complete and Shute Shelf tunnel on the Strawberry Line has been reopened.

Hinckley C Connection Project.

National Grid are now progressing the Hinckley C Connection Project. Work has started at the Langford sub-station and the project to install new pylons for the 400Kv line between Bridgwater and Seabanks is due to be completed in 2025.

70 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in North Somerset will be affected by the project between Loxton and Portbury. Of the 70 PRoW, 68 will be kept open and available with managed access supervised by the contractor's staff (four will be temporarily closed and two temporarily diverted).

North Somerset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2017 (revised 2010)

The plan has been in existence for eight years and out of a total of 78 actions:

- 18 have been completed
- 42 are ongoing
- 15 outstanding actions to be reviewed.

North Somerset Council are in the process of updating the plan and the forums Improvement Plan Working Group have submitted comments to North Somerset Council's Public Rights of Way Team.



Other updates

Definitive Map Modification Orders

Elaine Bowman presented a letter from the Secretary of State which directs the authority to determine twenty applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO). Eight must be determined by December 2017, six by June 2018, and six by December 2018. A report was taken to the Public Rights of Way Sub Committee in November 2016 which will streamline the reports which need to be presented plus establishing changes in working practises. Other resources are to be pursued. Currently, the PRow Team is composed of three and a half full-time equivalent staff, but with only one full-time equivalent staff working on DMMO applications.

Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Andy Mallender, AONB Project Officer, gave an interesting presentation on access projects and covered work undertaken by their Young Ranger Project and how they are marketing the AONB to a variety of audiences within Somerset and further afield.

Motorised Mobility Access – LAF member Rhiannon Robinson gave a very informative presentation on the classes of mobility vehicles that can legally use the PRow network. Rhiannon advised that one of the main issues that restricted access to access network was poorly designed gates and latches.

Improvements to the network

In the last year 156 stiles have been removed from the network and have been replaced with self-closing metal pedestrian gates. In addition to this, 41 bridge structures have been repaired or renewed.

Volunteering update

'Woodspring Ramblers' have been working with North Somerset Council's PRow Team since May 2010 and are now undertaking two work days a month on repairing or replacing rights of way furniture in addition to vegetation clearance. Working with the landowners, the parish council and ourselves, the group have installed five footbridges, removed numerous old stiles and installed 36 pedestrian gates, seven kissing gates and undertaken 10 path clearances during the last twelve months.

We again appreciate the continued support of the volunteer group. Their contributions have resulted in genuine improvements to the network with access benefits to all users including walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

The Forum continues to forge stronger links with parish and town councils. Through a buddy system forum members attend parish or town meetings, including one following the publication of the forum's Annual Report. During the year, parish and town council representatives from Tickenham have attended meetings.

The Forum normally meets four times a year starting at 6pm at North Somerset Council offices in either Weston-super-Mare (Town Hall) or Clevedon (Clevedon).

The following meetings were held during 2017/18:

- Tuesday 11 July 2017 – Uphill Methodist Hall
- Tuesday 10 October 2017 – North Somerset Council, Castlewood, Clevedon
- Tuesday 23 January 2018 – North Somerset Council, Castlewood, Clevedon
- Tuesday 24 April 2018 – North Somerset Council, Castlewood, Clevedon

Would you like to get involved?

All forum meetings are open to the public and press. Members of the public have the right to speak to the forum on matters that appear on the agenda, subject to written notice to the committee clerk of their wish to speak one working day before the meeting.

Meeting Dates for 2018/19

- Tuesday 16 October 2018

Dates for January 2019, April 2019 and July 2019 to be confirmed.

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Agenda, reports and minutes can be viewed on the committee's section of the website at

www.n-somerset.gov.uk