



**PLYMOUTH LOCAL ACCESS
FORUM**

Floor 1
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Tel: 01752 304469

Fax: 01752 304819

Email: laf@plymouth.gov.uk

Web: www.plymouth.gov.uk/laf

6 June 2013

When calling or telephoning please ask for: **Mr Ross Johnston**

PLYMOUTH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

DATE: MONDAY 17 JUNE 2013

TIME: 10.30 AM

**PLACE: COUNCIL HOUSE, PLYMOUTH (NEXT TO THE
CIVIC CENTRE)**

Committee Members–

Mr Fairchild, in the Chair

Mr Stewart, Vice Chair

Mr Attrill, Mr Curno, Mr Emery, Councillor K Foster, Councillor Fox, Mr Goddard, Mr Harvey, Ms Hitchens, Mr Pawley, Mrs Rodgers, Mr Skinner, Mrs Stewart and Councillor Wheeler.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf

Members are requested to sign the attendance list at the meeting.

PLYMOUTH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

To appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year.

2. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Forum Members.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this Agenda.

4. MINUTES

(Pages 1 - 6)

The Forum will be asked to confirm the minutes of the 18 March 2013.

5. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

To receive reports on business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

6. TRACKING RESOLUTIONS

(Pages 7 - 8)

To monitor progress on previous resolutions.

7. ANNUAL REVISION OF THE LAF TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Pages 9 - 16)

To review the PLAF's terms of reference.

8. PARKS AND GREEN SPACES UPDATE

(Pages 17 - 18)

To receive a letter in response to the Forum's letter to the Greenspace Manager on parks and green spaces.

9. CO-OPERATIVE WAY BROCHURE

To receive a verbal update from the Public Rights of Way Officer on the progress of the Co-operative Way brochure.

10. IMPACTS OF ASH-DIEBACK

(Pages 19 - 24)

To receive an update and information on the impacts of Ash-Dieback.

11. LAF ENGAGEMENT PLAN

(Pages 25 - 30)

To receive a report on the plan of engagement between Natural England, Defra and the Local Access Forums.

12. WORKING GROUPS

To agree any working groups for items on this agenda.

13. WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages 31 - 32)

To receive the Forum's Work Programme for 2013 - 2014.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

(Pages 33 - 34)

To consider any correspondence received and note any correspondence sent by the Forum.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 10:30am on Monday 2 September 2013 at the Council House, Armada Way, Plymouth.

16. ISSUES ARISING FROM FORUM MEMBERS

To discuss any issues brought forward by members of the Forum.

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Plymouth Local Access Forum**Monday 18 March 2013****PRESENT:**

Mr Fairchild, in the Chair.

Mr Stewart, Vice Chair.

Mr Attrill, Mr Curno, Mr Emery, Councillor K Foster, Councillor Fox, Mr Harvey, Ms Hitchens, Mr Pawley, Mr Skinner and Councillor Wheeler.

Apologies for absence: Mr Goddard, Mrs Rodgers and Mrs Stewart.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.40 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the forum will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

42. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was made by a member in accordance with the Code of Conduct –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mr Pawley	South West Coast Path Update (minute 47 refers)	Is the Plymouth local representative for the South West Coast Path	Personal

43. **MINUTES**

Members reviewed the minutes and commented that Minute 34 (c) should read ‘on 21 April 2013 the South West Coast Path (SWCP) Association would be hosting a walk of the Plymouth section of the South West Coast Path as part of a walk of the entire SWCP which was taking place between 3 April and 7 May 2013, in celebration of the SWCP Association’s 40th anniversary’.

Agreed that subject to minute 34 (c) being amended as above the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2012 are confirmed as a correct record.

44. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair’s Urgent Business.

45. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS**

The Forum noted the tracking resolutions document and agreed that unless items had been satisfactorily completed then the item should remain as white, and so

remain as an outstanding resolution. Therefore the following items will be returned to white on the tracking resolutions document:

17.12.12 Minute 34;

17.12.12 Minute 37 (1);

17.12.12 Minute 37 (2).

46. **STEPPING STONES TO NATURE PROJECT UPDATE**

The forum received a summary report on recent Stepping Stones to Nature (SS2N) projects and the SS2N Annual Report 2011 – 2012.

In response to questions raised it was reported by Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer, that –

- (a) selection of SS2N sites had been decided from a number of factors with deprivation being one;
- (b) although most SS2N sites were in the north of the city, value had been added to other woodland sites located in the south, although they had not been formally acknowledged as SS2N sites;
- (c) aluminium signs had been ordered to replace the theft of two signs at Forder Valley.

47. **SOUTH WEST COAST PATH UPDATE**

Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer, informed the Forum that –

- (a) the section of the SWCP between Jennycliff and Bovisand was closed in December 2012 following geotechnical investigation which had showed evidence of potential instability;
- (b) the section of the SWCP had been regularly monitored over the winter months without signs of worsening; the path will be reopened at the end of March 2013;
- (c) development had begun on installing steps at the Royal William Yard with work anticipated to be completed by 30 May 2013. A footpath would be installed in late April 2013 connecting the Royal William Yard with Devil's Point;
- (d) the SWCP Association's 40th anniversary walk of the SWCP was due to begin on 3 April 2013, with the Plymouth section of the path being walked on Sunday 21 April 2013, departing from Jennycliff at 10:15am.

It was commented by Dave Pawley, Forum Member that –

- (e) the closing date for registration for the SWCP Association's 40th anniversary walk had been extended and everyone was encouraged to register for the walk either online at <http://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/40th-anniversary/> or by telephoning the SCWP Association office on 01752 896237.

48. **PLYM VALLEY CYCLE TRAIL UPDATE**

Agreed that this item is deferred until the Forum's next meeting.

49. **CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CPRE) UPDATE**

Bob Harvey, LAF member, gave a verbal update on the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and informed members that –

- (a) the CPRE were in favour of renewable energies on a small scale and were campaigning against large renewable energy constructions, such as solar farms and wind farms;
- (b) it was believed that the economic benefits from large renewable energy constructions would not be delivered in the UK and would instead improve the economies of other nation states where energy companies operating these sites were based, such as EDF Energy in France;
- (c) the operation of large renewable energy farms was also doubted and it was believed that the amount of energy produced would be inadequate and that energy companies spending money on construction would need to recoup this money from customers, therefore adding to the already significant problem of fuel poverty;
- (d) the CPRE were campaigning to ensure that tidal energy schemes would be delivered as a major renewable energy solution as water was thought to be a constant source of energy, whereas sun and wind (for solar and wind farms) were more infrequent;
- (e) countryside in urban areas was high on the CPRE agenda and it was hoped that a CPRE representative would soon work with Plymouth on this issue;
- (f) tree diseases were now a genuine issue across the entire UK with ash dieback becoming a serious threat to the future of ash trees in both urban and rural environments.

Agreed that the impact of ash dieback in Plymouth is added to work programme as an item to be discussed at a future meeting.

50. **CONFERENCE UPDATES**

Ray Fairchild, Chair, updated Forum members about the recent National LAF Conference held in Sheffield on 27 February 2013. Members were informed that –

- (a) the conference was very informative and very well attended, with 71 out of 82 LAFs represented;
- (b) the following items were discussed during the conference –
 - Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey;
 - LAF involvement in Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs);
 - Hampshire Heritage PATHH – Providing access to Hampshire’s Heritage;
 - National Planning Policy Framework;
 - Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) update;
 - LAF Annual reports.

John Skinner and Bob Harvey, LAF Members, updated the Forum on the LAF Regional Conference held in Bovey Tracey on 5 March 2013. Members were informed that -

- (c) the conference was interesting with its main theme focussing on the behaviour of dogs in the countryside;
- (d) the main speaker at the conference was Stephen Jenkinson who was excellent and very motivating;
- (e) Plymouth LAF could host a future event with Stephen Jenkinson as the main speaker and invite other local LAFs to attend.

Agreed that –

- (1) Ross Johnston, LAF Secretary, would email the Chair’s notes from the National LAF Conference to all Forum Members;
- (2) Ross Johnston, LAF Secretary, would email a link on the Hampshire Heritage PATHH to all Forum Members;
- (3) Bob Harvey would investigate the idea of inviting Stephen Jenkinson to provide a session on dogs to the Plymouth LAF and other local LAFs.

51. **WORKING GROUPS**

a) **UNRECORDED FOOTPATHS WORKING GROUP**

Robin Pearce, Public Rights of Way Officer, informed the Forum that –

- (a) there had been no meetings of the ‘unrecorded footpaths working group’ since the last Forum meeting;
- (b) the Forum could assist in the development of PROW by identifying areas with unrecorded footpaths and presenting them as detailed local packages of footpaths to be adopted as PROW, similar to the Whitleigh: Safer and Sustainable Travel Project.

Agreed that Patricia Hitchens is appointed as the Forum’s representative for the Whitleigh: Safer and Sustainable Travel Project and will provide progress updates at future LAF meetings.

52. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The forum noted the work programme for 2012 – 2013.

53. **CORRESPONDENCE**

The forum noted its correspondence.

54. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Agreed the dates for the next municipal year as follows:

- Monday 17 June 2013 at 10:30am;
- Monday 2 September 2013 at 10:30am;
- Monday 16 December 2013 at 10:30am;
- Monday 17 March 2014 at 10:30am.

55. **ISSUES ARISING FROM FORUM MEMBERS**

Members of the Forum commented that Plymouth LAF should attempt to make contact with the Royal Forestry Society to establish whether a project could assist with Plymouth’s urban forest lands, similar to that of a project in Torbay which aims to preserve and improve forest and woodland areas.

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PLYMOUTH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

TRACKING RESOLUTIONS

Date / Minute number	Resolution	Explanation / Minute	Action	Progress
17.12.12 Minute 34	Robin Pearce, PROW Officer, is requested to provide an update to all Forum members by email on the South West Coast Path's recent landslip at Jennycliff.		Robin Pearce	Robin Pearce provided a verbal update at the LAF meeting on 18.3.13.
17.12.12 Minute 37 (1)	Robin Pearce, PROW Officer, is requested to provide an up to date priority list of footpaths to be adopted as PROW;		Robin Pearce	Sent to members on 7 June 2013.
17.12.12 Minute 37 (2)	Robin Pearce, PROW Officer, is requested to provide members with details of how many footpaths have been adopted as PROW in the past 12 months;		Robin Pearce	Sent to members on 7 June 2013.
17.12.12 Minute 37 (3)	a further working group is set up in February 2013 to review the evidence supporting the footpaths that are at the top of the priority list.		Ross Johnston	Agreed that this working group would be put on hold until further notice.
18.03.13 Minute 48	<u>Agreed</u> that this item [Plym Valley Cycle Trail] is deferred		Ross Johnston/	Added to the work programme for 2013/2014

	until the Forum's next meeting.		Steph Rodgers	
18.03.13 Minute 49	<u>Agreed</u> that the impact of ash dieback in Plymouth is added to work programme as an item to be discussed at a future meeting.		Ross Johnston	Added to the work programme for 2013/2014
18.03.13 Minute 50 (1)	Ross Johnston, LAF Secretary, would email the Chair's notes from the National LAF Conference to all Forum Members;		Ross Johnston	Emailed to all members on 25 March 2013.
18.03.13 Minute 50 (20)	Ross Johnston, LAF Secretary, would email a link on the Hampshire Heritage PATHH to all Forum Members;		Ross Johnston	Emailed link to all forum members on 25 March 2013.
18.03.13 Minute 50 (3)	Bob Harvey would investigate the idea of inviting Stephen Jenkinson to provide a session on dogs to the Plymouth LAF and other local LAFs.		Bob Harvey	



= Complete resolution



= Outstanding resolution

Plymouth Local Access Forum**Terms of Reference****1. Title and Forum Area**

- 1.1 The Forum shall be known as the Plymouth Local Access Forum.
- 1.2 The area to be covered is the whole of the area within the boundaries of Plymouth City and that area for which Plymouth City Council is the responsible authority.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 The purpose of the Plymouth Local Access Forum shall be to advise the relevant Section 94(4) bodies (see Appendix B) on how to make the outdoors more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation, in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests, and with regard to issues of particular local relevance.
- 2.2 The Plymouth Local Access Forum shall:
 - Contribute to the development of any Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Plymouth;
 - Promote a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside which can be implemented through Community Strategies, Local Transport Plan, AONB Management Plans and Planning Policy;
 - Advise upon the management and maintenance of access, balancing the provision of access against the needs of conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and the needs of residents, landowners and land managers;
 - Identify and respect local circumstances and different interests while operating within national guidance;
 - Advise on developing additional opportunities for everyone to enjoy the rights of way and access network.
- 2.3 In providing advice the Local Access Forum will have regard to:
 - The needs of land management;
 - The desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area;
 - The management and maintenance of access whilst balancing this against the needs of biodiversity, wildlife management, the interests of landowners and managers, and countryside management projects in and around Plymouth;
 - Guidance issued by the Secretary of the State;
 - Any Position Statement agreed by the Forum.
- 2.4 The Forum will promote liaison with any Local Access Forums established in Devon, Cornwall, Torbay, South Hams, West Devon and Dartmoor and actively encourage the attendance of such authorities to Forum meetings with observer status.

2.5 The Role of Plymouth City Council

- To advertise and appoint members to the Forum taking into account the need for fairness, transparency and compliance with the Council's policy on equality and diversity;
- To take account of the advice given when making decisions;
- To provide feedback to the Forum on advice the Forum has given;
- To provide a secretary for the Forum, and ongoing Officer support, training and advice;
- To provide a meeting venue and refreshments where necessary;
- To publicise the Forum;
- To reimburse Forum members expenses for travel and child care and subsistence cost directly incurred in respect of members' duties.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership to the Forum will be representative of one or more fields of interest as defined below rather than any particular organisation of which they might also be a member: -

- Local people who enjoy outdoor recreation in the area;
- Owners and occupiers of access land, or land over which the public have access;
- Other interests considered to be relevant to Plymouth which include, but are not limited to tourism, outdoor education, sport and recreational provision, disability awareness, local business interest, the military, health promotion and wildlife and cultural heritage.

3.2 Members shall be appointed to the Forum by Plymouth City Council in accordance with the Member Selection Criteria in Appendix A. The purpose of the Member selection process is designed to ensure a fair distribution of interests and ensure members have the knowledge and experience necessary to enable them to make an informed and constructive contribution to the work of the Forum.

3.4 Members shall be appointed for an initial period of three years after which they will be eligible for appointment for a further period of three years only. In the event that a seat becomes vacant during the initial term of appointment the replacement member shall continue that same term of appointment.

3.5 A member may resign his/her seat by giving notice of resignation in writing to the Secretary of the Forum.

3.6 Plymouth City Council may terminate the appointment of a member of the Forum if:

- He/she becomes an elected member of Plymouth City Council;
- He/she is absent from all meetings of the Forum in a 12-month period without the prior agreement of the Council;
- He/she fails to comply with the requirements set out in clause 3.8 below;
- He/she has failed to comply with clause 3.11 below;
- He/she fails to comply with the members code of Conduct (See Appendix C).

3.7 The Plymouth Local Access Forum has places for 22 members of which three places are reserved for Plymouth City Council Elected Members.

3.8 Before appointment members shall confirm:

- Their ability to devote their own time to attend meetings and training events as required;

- Their commitment to represent the Plymouth Local Access Forum over any other organisations of which they may be a member;
- Their ability and willingness to network with a wide range of interests outside of Forum meetings;
- Their commitment to working within the Terms of Reference.

3.9 The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed by election by the Forum at the first meeting held following the City Council's AGM. The term of office for this appointment shall be until the first meeting of the Forum following the City Council's subsequent AGM. Elected Members of Plymouth City Council will not be eligible for appointment to either position but shall be entitled to vote in elections.

3.10 The method of appointment for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Local Access Forum shall be as follows:

- Voting shall be by secret ballot;
- Election for the post of Chair shall take place first, with all members of the Forum (including those standing for the position concerned) being entitled to vote. A member may vote for him/herself;
- The secretary will announce the result of the election to the post of Chair;
- In the event of a tie on the first round of voting for the post of Chair, a second round of voting will be held in which the only candidates standing will be those whose scores were tied. Again, all members may vote including those standing;
- Election for the post of Vice-Chair will then take place and preferably candidates eligible to stand for the position shall be those drawn from a different category or type of interest (set out in paragraph 3.1) to that of the newly elected Chair;
- The secretary will announce the result of the election to the post of Vice-Chair;
- In the event of a tie on the first round of voting for the post of Vice-Chair a second round will be held in the same manner as that of the Chair's election.

3.11 Members shall disclose the nature of any direct or indirect interest in any matter brought up for consideration at a meeting of the Forum.

3.12 Members shall identify their own training needs.

4 Administration

4.1 Plymouth City Council shall provide a secretary responsible for the administration of the Forum who shall be neither an elected Member of the City Council nor a member of the Forum.

4.2 The Forum shall normally meet at least quarterly and additional meetings arranged where necessary.

4.3 Meeting agendas shall be agreed between the Chair and the Secretary.

4.4 Meetings shall be advertised in advance and held in public.

4.5 Agendas, papers and minutes of the meeting shall be available to the public.

4.6 The public shall be able to ask questions on the business of the Forum at the discretion of the Chair.

4.7 The Chair may, where appropriate, invite observers to the meeting who shall be able to contribute to the meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

4.8 The declaration of interests shall be an agenda item at the start of each meeting.

4.9 All papers for meetings will be sent to members at least five days in advance and should be supported by a clear recommendation wherever possible.

4.10 A consensus should be reached on all matters discussed but where this is not the case opposing views will be recorded.

4.11 The quorum for meetings of the Forum shall be 7 members.

5 Allowances

5.1 Members may claim travelling costs for attending Forum meetings and authorised training events and where appropriate a carers allowance is payable at rates in line with the City Council Members Allowance Scheme.

Appendix A – Membership Selection Criteria

Requirements	Essential	Desirable
Skills	<p>Good communication and interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Ability to work as part of a team.</p> <p>Ability to consider competing interests in a strategic manner to find agreed solutions</p>	<p>Proven ability to network and liaise with wider interests</p>
Knowledge	<p>Knowledge/appreciation of countryside issues with particular reference to Plymouth</p> <p>Knowledge of the conflicting interactions between recreation, land management and conservation.</p>	<p>An understanding of administrative procedures in central or local government</p> <p>An understanding of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000</p>
Experience	<p>Experience of using public rights of way or access land for recreational purposes</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Experience of managing land over which public rights of way or access land subsists</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Experience of tourism, outdoor education, sport and recreational provision, disability awareness, local business interest, the military, health promotion or wildlife and cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Experience of public speaking</p> <p>Experience of attending formal public meetings</p>
Equal Opportunities	<p>A commitment to further equal opportunity issues in the work of the forum</p>	<p>Knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995</p>
Other Requirements	<p>Willingness to commit to attending Local Access Forum meetings and training events for up to 3 years</p> <p>A commitment to making the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation in ways, which address social, economic and environmental interests.</p>	

Appendix B – Section 94 (4) bodies

- the appointing authority(ies) (which will be a highway authority or National Park authority)
- any county, unitary, district or borough council within the area of the Forum
- the Secretary of State (in effect this means any Government Department with a Secretary of State, e.g. Defra and MOD, as well as 'executive agencies' such as the Planning Inspectorate and the Highways Agency)
- Natural England
- the Forestry Commission
- English Heritage
- Sport England (the English Sports Council)
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards
- Parish and town councils

Appendix C – Plymouth Local Access Forum Code of Conduct

PART 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Scope

(1) A member must observe the Plymouth Local Access Forum's code of conduct whenever he or she -

- (a) conducts the business of the Forum;
- (b) conducts the business of the office to which he or she has been appointed; or
- (c) acts as a representative of the Forum,

and references to a member's official capacity shall be construed accordingly.

(2) This code of conduct shall not, apart from paragraphs 3 and 4(a) below, have effect in relation to the activities of a member undertaken other than in an official capacity.

(3) Where a member acts as a representative of the Forum on another relevant Local Access Forum, he must, when acting for that other Local Access Forum, comply with that other Local Access Forum's code of conduct.

(4) In this code, 'member' refers to appointed members of the Plymouth Local Access Forum.

(5) In this code, 'Forum' refers to the Plymouth Local Access Forum.

2. General Obligations

A member must:

- (a) promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person;
- (b) treat others with respect; and
- (c) not do anything which compromises or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Forum.

3. A member must not in his or her official capacity, or any other circumstance, conduct himself or herself in a manner that could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or the Forum into disrepute.

4. A member:

- (a) must not in his or her official capacity, or any other circumstance, use his or her position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for himself, herself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and
- (b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Forum, act in accordance with the Forum's requirements.

5. A member must, if he or she becomes aware of any conduct by another member who he or she reasonably believes involves a failure to comply with the Forum's code of conduct, make a written allegation to that effect to the Forum Secretary as soon as it is practicable for him or her to do so.

PART 2 INTERESTS

Personal Interests

6. (1) A member must regard himself or herself as having a personal interest in any matter if the matter relates to an interest in respect of which notification must be given or if a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting to a greater extent than other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of Plymouth, the well-being or financial position of himself or herself, a relative or a friend or -

- (a) any employment or business carried on by such persons;
- (b) any person who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;
- (c) any corporate body in which such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or

(2) In this paragraph:

- (a) 'relative' means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons; and
- (b) 'partner' in sub-paragraph (2)(a) above means a member of a couple who live together.

Disclosure of Personal Interests

7. A member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the Forum at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

Prejudicial Interests

8. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, a member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest.

(2) A member may regard himself or herself as not having a prejudicial interest in a matter if that matter relates to -

- (a) another relevant Local Access Forum of which he or she is a member;
- (b) another Local Access Forum in which he or she holds a position of general control or management;
- (c) a body to which he or she has been appointed or nominated by the Forum as its representative;

Participation in Relation to Disclosed Interests

9. (1) a member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must :

- (a) withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting, unless he or she has obtained a dispensation;
- (b) not seek improperly to influence a decision about that matter.

10. For the purposes of this Part, "meeting" means any meeting of the Forum.



Plymouth Local Access Forum
c/o Ross Johnston
Democracy and Governance
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Street Scene

Environmental Services

Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth PL1 2AA

T 01752 606034

E streetsceneservices@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouth.gov.uk

Please ask for: Gareth Harrison-Poole

Date 12 March 2013

My Ref

Your Ref

Dear Members of the Local Access Forum

We are always pleased to receive considered and proactive suggestions on how we can improve the services we provide.

As you will already be aware over the past 3 years we have been working with our Transport colleagues on a range of different projects that have resulted in the dedication of permanent public rights over council owned parks and green spaces. This has led to new public rights of way being created in Radford Woods, Woodland Woods, Southway Woods, Ham Woods, Efford Valley and Forder Valley Nature Reserve.

You will have noted that we have been working on a site by site basis meeting the dedication of public rights with varying degrees of capital investment in each site which includes path resurfacing, signage, interpretation, drainage works and any other work that we feel is necessary. These projects are planned out on the back of community engagement so that we deliver improvements requested by local users of that particular green space. We feel this is important because much of the access within our nature reserves is informal and is generally below the standard considered for adoption as a highway. We feel that the improvements we have been making offer a more sustainable long term solution and allow us to work together to provide a more friendly and accessible network of paths.

We have had regard to your advice and whilst we agree with the preamble to your request we cannot agree that it will deliver the benefits you set out. In fact we believe it will result in a negative impact on both our green spaces and the quality of the PRow network. We have therefore decided not to follow your advice and we offer the following reasons as justification for this decision: -

1. If we were to follow your recommendation we would require a significant capital investment to cover the cost of the statutory signage (signs at junctions with the existing public highway). If for example we were to create 100 paths using this process we would be looking at approximately £30,000 as up front capital to achieve the dedicated signage. This amount is equal to that of two years capital budget allocated to PRow meaning we would be able to do nothing else during this term. When we look at the work we have carried out in the project sites around the city this would seem to us a difficult sacrifice to make.

2. Whilst we are happy to create PRoW in council owned parks and green space we must also maintain our position as land managers and there are sites we would resist PRoW being created in. The Hoe for example hosts many events and if we were to allow a highway to cross it the council or others holding events there would incur additional costs in securing temporary closure. The excessive timescales required to put a temporary closure in place combined with the public ability to object to such closures could put events at risk of not happening. We might also wish to be cautious about allowing public access to sites that are environmentally delicate or fragile. We need to retain the ability to carefully consider each route created in terms of our wider responsibilities towards the management of each site. To do this for all sites we manage in one go is currently not feasible due to resource levels.

3. We believe that in light of the points highlighted above it would be difficult for us to justify the cost and time required against the public benefits and we believe would result in an inaccessible and badly maintained network of paths.

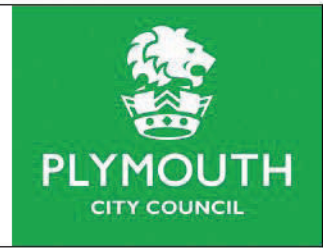
We trust you will reconsider your views on this topic in light of our comments. We believe you will be able to agree that we have a proven track record of delivering new high quality public footpaths on Council owned land and we believe that this work should continue in the same vein. We are happy to take advice from you on which sites you believe we should focus on and on the specifics for each site but we believe the forums attention would be best placed dealing with paths where the landowners are not actively seeking opportunities to promote public access.

Regards

Gareth Harrison-Poole
Greenspace Manager
Environmental Services

IMPACTS OF ASH-DIEBACK

Local Access Forum report – 17 June 2013



Report

The impacts of ash tree dieback, caused by the *Chalara fraxinea* fungus, are a serious issue for the UK. The Government has now taken action against the impact of ash tree dieback by producing a management plan which lists a number of actions to limit the spread of the disease.

The Management Plan sets out action around four key objectives:

- Reducing the rate of spread of the disease
- Developing resistance to the disease in the native ash tree population
- Encouraging landowner, citizen and industry engagement in surveillance, monitoring and action in tackling the problem
- Building economic and environmental resilience in woodlands and in associated industries

The actions announced in the Plan include research into the resistance to Chalara, outlines funding to assist landowners with replanting of diseased young ash trees, and details how Government are working with engaging citizens, landowners and industry on surveillance.

The management of our trees and woodlands, whether for timber production, for their biodiversity and landscape benefits or for access and recreation, is a long term endeavour. The full impact of Chalara will not be seen for at least a decade as infected mature trees will continue to survive for several years.

The Government has discussed with stakeholders and other interested parties what appropriate action might therefore be taken to slow the spread of Chalara and mitigate its impact. Importantly, the Plan recognises that;

'There is low probability of dispersal on clothing and footwear or via animals and birds. Transmission by routes other than wind and planting material are likely to pose a comparatively low risk, but the risk cannot be ruled out.'

Therefore, the Forestry Commission (FC) is reviewing its guidance in light of this Management Plan. In particular, they will be filming the spring signs of Chalara when trees come into leaf. This will be available online to help with the identification of the disease.

In the meantime, the advice to walkers and climbers remains the same. The Forestry Commission are not closing forests or advising owners of infected sites to do so but do ask that if you are visiting an infected or suspected wood, take some simple precautions:

- do not remove any plant material (firewood, sticks, leaves or cuttings) from the woodland;
- where possible, before leaving the woodland, clean soil, mud, leaves and other plant material from footwear, clothing, dogs, horses, the wheels and tyres of bicycles, baby buggies, carriages and other vehicles, and remove any leaves which are sticking to your car;
- before visiting other countryside sites, parks, garden centres and nurseries, thoroughly wash footwear, wheels and tyres in soapy water;
- follow the instructions on any signs.

Reference

The British Mountaineering Council, Ash dieback: new management plan launched [online]. Available from <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/ash-dieback-new-management-plan-launched> [accessed 5 June 2013].

Recommendations

1. The Local Access Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.
2. The Local Access Forum is asked to note that further information on tree diseases and in particular ash-dieback can be found at <http://treedisease.co.uk/>
3. The Local Access Forum is asked to note that the Government's Chalara Management Plan can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chalara-management-plan>

Ash dieback disease

Ash dieback is a disease of ash trees caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback in affected trees and often leads to tree death. Ash trees showing symptoms of *Chalara fraxinea* are now widespread across Europe and in 2012 it was detected for the first time in Britain – initially in a consignment of infected trees sent from the Netherlands to a nursery in the south of England, but later in trees planted in the natural environment. Surveys have now confirmed the presence of ash dieback disease at more than 150 locations in England and Scotland, including established woodlands. *Chalara fraxinea* is being treated as a quarantine pest under national emergency measures; it is important that suspected cases of the disease are reported.

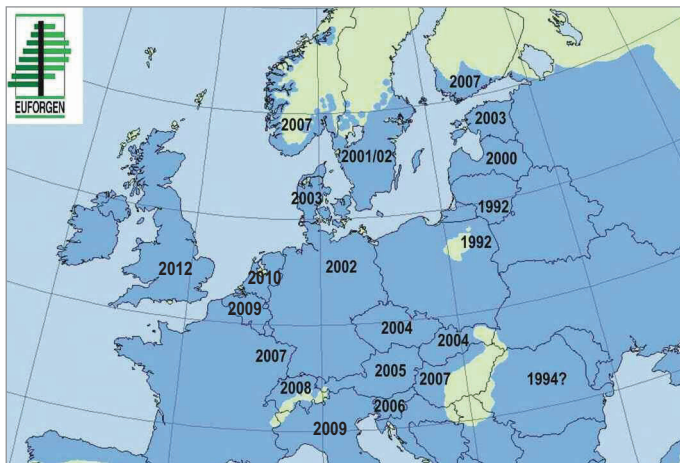


An ash tree infected with *Chalara fraxinea*, sometimes known as *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus* (which describes another life stage).

Distribution

In Britain, most of the outbreaks of ash dieback disease in the natural environment are confined to East Anglia and Kent, although a small number of outlying cases have been confirmed in northeast England and Scotland. Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the most frequently affected species but *Fraxinus angustifolia* is also highly susceptible. In contrast, *Fraxinus ornus* and certain Asian ash species such as *Fraxinus mandshurica* are considered more resistant. In common ash, trees of all ages can be affected but mortality is particularly common in saplings.

Distribution of common ash in Europe (blue shading) and date of first confirmed finding of *Chalara fraxinea*.



Courtesy of T. Kirisits

Symptoms to look out for

Symptoms of the disease can be visible on leaves, shoots, stems and branches of affected trees. In severe cases, the entire crown shows leaf loss and dieback, which is often associated with the formation of epicormic shoots on branches and the trunk.

Foliage

Leaves typically show wilting and black-brownish discoloration that extends into the midrib and leaf stalk (❶). The shrivelled leaves remain attached to shoots if these are girdled quickly.

Branches and stems

Lens-shaped lesions centred on a dead side shoot are often visible on stems and branches (❷). As the lesions girdle, wilting and dieback of shoots and branches, particularly in the upper crown, may be seen. Underneath the bark lesions, the wood is often strongly stained (❸) with the stain often extending longitudinally beyond the dead bark.

Whole tree

Severely affected trees suffer extensive shoot, twig and branch dieback (❹) and often have prolific epicormic shoots. *Chalara fraxinea* can be isolated from roots, as well as leaves, shoots and branch/stem lesions. Root-attacking fungi such as honey fungus can hasten the death of woodland trees affected by ash dieback.



Courtesy of T. Kirisits



Courtesy of T. Kirisits



Courtesy of T. Kirisits



How the disease spreads

Leaves are normally only infected by the airborne spores of the fungus. Spores are produced on fallen ash leaves and shoots in the litter layer usually between June and September in the year after infection. The spores appear to be able to disperse over tens of kilometres. Over longer distances the risk of spread is likely to be via the movement of diseased ash plants. Movement of logs from infected trees may also be a pathway for spread although the risk of this is considered low.

How you can help

- You can report suspect trees via the Forestry Commission Tree Alert page at: www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert
- You do not need to take any particular action if you own infected ash trees, unless served with a Plant Health Notice.
- You can help to slow the spread of ash dieback disease by locally burning, burying or composting fallen ash leaves.
- You can check out www.forestry.gov.uk/biosecurity for advice on good working practices for biosecurity.

Other disorders of ash trees

There are a number of disorders of ash trees in Britain that may be mistaken for infection by *Chalara fraxinea*:

- A sporadic but widespread disorder also known as 'ash dieback' has previously been identified in Britain but the cause is thought to be mainly physical rather than biological. Affected trees typically suffer from severe crown dieback but there may be recovery growth in the form of secondary shoots and 'epicormics'. Large, mature trees are most often affected, and crown symptoms are most marked in trees adjacent to arable land where root disturbance is thought to play a part in their decline.
- Cankers on ash shoots, branches and stems can be caused by the common fungal pathogen *Nectria galligena* or the bacterial pathogen *Pseudomonas savastanoi* pv *fraxini*. The ash bark beetle *Leperisinus varius* can also cause bark necrosis.
- The activities of the ash bud moth *Prays fraxinella* can be mistaken for infection by *Chalara fraxinea* in spring when its larvae mine into the base of shoots causing them to wilt and die.
- Frost and drought can cause similar damage in the form of dead shoots on ash trees.

For more information on ash dieback disease

Visit our website at www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara for the latest information on the outbreak, a distribution map of confirmed disease locations and images of symptoms.

You can also download our free **Tree Alert** app to your smartphone or tablet via the App Store and Google play.

For information on other tree pests and diseases

- **Forestry Commission (Plant Health)**
www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases
- **Forest Research (Disease Diagnostic Advisory Service)**
www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/ddas
- **Fera (Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Action Plan)**
www.fera.defra.gov.uk/treehealth

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Plan of Engagement between Natural England, Defra and the Local Access Forums

1. Purpose

1.1 This plan summarises the role of Local Access Forums (LAFs) and clarifies the relationship between the LAFs, Natural England and Defra. It is designed to be a dynamic document that informs and guides all three parties to direct and focus effort, and has been produced in part, as a result of feedback received from the LAFs at the 2013 conference and in general discussions. It will be kept under regular review and revised as necessary.

1.2 In parallel Natural England will produce a LAF Annual Report to Defra which will highlight achievements and current issues.

2. Introduction

2.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are advisory bodies established under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. LAFs are established by local highway authorities and National Park Authorities (termed the Appointing Authorities in the legislation) and their main function is to provide independent advice to the Government and to section 94 bodies¹ on the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and on other matters prescribed.

2.2 'Guidance on Local Access Forums in England' was issued by the Secretary of State in 2007. It remains an essential reference guide which details respective roles and responsibilities and can be found on the LAF section of the Natural England Website and on Huddle².

2.3 Whilst LAFs have clear statutory duties, they can add value to their local access agenda by going beyond their statutory brief and embracing a wider role.

2.4 There are currently 83 active LAFs in England and they are made up of voluntary members appointed by the Appointing Authority. The Appointing Authority provides secretariat support for the meetings as well as expenses for the LAF members.

2.5 The importance of LAFs was recognised in the Natural Environment White Paper, June 2011, particularly in para 4.33 which recognised that *'Clear, well maintained paths and bridleways are important to give people access to the natural environment and can be enjoyed by cyclists, walkers and horse riders. There is considerable scope to improve and extend this network for example through LAFs and Rights of Way Improvement Plans.'*

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.

² Huddle is the Defra social network which has a section dedicated to Local Access Forums.

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3. The LAF role

3.1 The primary purpose of LAFs is to provide advice to a range of organisations specified in the CROW Act, 2000 and in supplementary regulations and guidance. Specifically to:

‘advise 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, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed (Secretary of State, Guidance on LAFs, 2007, para 3.1.1).’

The LAFs set their own priorities depending on local issues and what is of interest to the group members, as well as providing a local input to consultations and draft policy documents.

Matters of interest are likely to include:

- the management of access land;
- the condition of PROW and work to record PROW;
- improvements to the network of routes and open spaces in an area including PROW and access land;
- provision of greenspace (including woodland and coast);
- relationship with other sectors with an interest in providing opportunities to enjoy open air recreation including health, sport tourism, land management and biodiversity;
- how local authorities prioritise their spend on access and recreation;

3.2 Each forum meets at least twice per year, but generally more often. Members of the public are entitled to attend meetings and may be permitted to contribute to discussion.

3.3 Members serve in a personal capacity to represent interests rather than particular organisations.

4. Role of the Appointing Authority

4.1 Appointing authorities have a duty to support their forum and contribute to its effectiveness, by:

- setting the Terms of Appointment for forum members;
- appointing suitable forum members and notifying them of their Terms of Appointment;
- providing a secretary to administer the forum;
- publicising the forum agenda, minutes and papers for public inspection;

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- publishing the forum's annual report (and if necessary assisting with writing), and sending a copy to Natural England;
- assisting LAFs with producing their Annual Report Proforma (see below), and adding comments where required;
- meeting the forum's reasonable running costs and reasonable training needs;
- providing suitable venues and refreshments for forum meetings;
- maintaining a good working relationship with the forum, and assisting the forum in developing its forward work programme, promotional material and events, etc;
- helping the forum to develop criteria for measuring effectiveness; and
- reimbursing members' expenses in respect of travel and subsistence costs, and any expenses for the care of children or dependants (and notifying the forum members of the rules for claiming expenses).

4.2 As a section 94(4) body, an appointing authority should also:

- have regard to relevant advice from the LAF;
- consult the LAF at an early stage on relevant (not just statutory) matters;
- provide information, reports, background papers, speakers etc;
- give timely feedback on advice received from the LAF;
- raise awareness of the LAF amongst officers and members throughout the authority.

4.3 The appointing authority must ensure the LAF is made up from a range of different people from the local community representing landowners / managers, access users (such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and other interests (such as health and conservation. Members are appointed to provide **independent, constructive, relevant, inclusive, incisive** and **informed** advice which takes account of a broad range and balance of local interests about access issues and priorities affecting the local area or which influence national policy.

5. Defra role

5.1 Defra is the Government department with responsibility for policy on access and recreation in England, including access to open country under the CROW Act and management of public rights of way. Defra is also responsible for policy on local access forums.

5.2 Defra's core purpose is to improve the current and future quality of life. It brings together the interests of farmers and the countryside; the environment and the rural economy; the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. This is achieved by integrating environmental, social and economic objectives - putting

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sustainable development into practice every day, and by championing sustainable development as the way forward for Government.

5.3 Defra will work with ministers and departments to promote LAFs and their work. It will work with Natural England to report annually to ministers, based on the information gathered from the LAF annual reports. It will also provide Natural England with the direction for LAFs from Ministerial interests.

5.4 Defra is responsible for the creation of regulations and guidance to support the CROW Act. It keeps this under review and updates it as necessary.

5.5 Defra is keen to support the success of LAFs and will assist with the development and delivery of training when possible.

6. Natural England role

6.1 Natural England is the Government's advisor for the natural environment in England. Its job is to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations. Its work is a significant component in the delivery of the Government's aspirations for improving the natural environment in England as described in the Natural Environment White Paper of 2011, and is the lead body for the Government's Biodiversity 2020 programme.

Natural England is charged with conserving the natural environment as a resource for people to enjoy, understand and study. We are also responsible for promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open air recreation.

Natural England's access and engagement work includes supporting the maintenance and promotion of 13 National Trails and managing 143 National Nature Reserves (NNRs), delivering coastal access, regulating open access and working in partnership with others to deliver and promote responsible public access and engagement.

6.2 Natural England's statutory role in respect to LAFs is limited and covers:

- receiving copies of all local access forum annual reports; and
- being notified of changes made to forum arrangements and changes in the Secretary.

6.3 In addition, as a section 94 body (see paragraph 2.1) Natural England welcomes advice from the LAFs on:

- the operation of open access restrictions, management and mapping;
- the condition of National Trails;
- access to the coast;
- the implementation of HLS/conservation management on access land;
- the effects of HLS/conservation management on rights of way;

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- facilities and services for visitors at National Nature Reserves;
- opportunities afforded to LAFs through engagement with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); and
- other matters relating to the provision of access and opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural environment.

6.4 In addition to its statutory function, Natural England provides support to LAFs by championing their role at national and local levels and by facilitating the exchange of good practice. To do this, where resources allow, Natural England will:

- maintain an online LAF workspace (e.g. Huddle) which enables LAF members, NE and Defra to communicate and work together nationally;
- produce an annual national LAF report for Defra;
- facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice gathered from meetings, annual reporting, meetings and events. To support this, in 2013/14 Natural England will issue a quarterly newsletter and will create a themed good practice section on Huddle;
- facilitate the provision of external Regional Coordinators who support LAFs by providing advice, training and facilitation as well as encouraging the production of annual reports and organising regional LAF meetings and conferences;
- hold a regular LAF Chairs conference;
- provide focussed input to LAF meetings (through an agreed targeted plan of engagement), particularly regional groupings, seeking to attend where it can make a difference;
- maintain a LAF section on its website which includes information and up to date contact links to all LAFs;
- manage communication between LAFs, Defra and Natural England (and other national bodies) via meetings, email, Huddle (in effect providing a conduit between local LAF interests and Defra / Ministerial interests).

Martin Shaw, Natural England, May 2013

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Proposed work programme	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A
Potential Site Visits											
Working Group Issues											
Unrecorded Footpaths											
Planning Application responses											

= Suggested work programme items



Natural England
1st Floor, Temple Quay
House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6EB

T 0300 060 1505

Dear Local Access Forum Secretary

Natural England and Local Access Forums

From 1st April this year your LAF local contact is Jane Yates.

Your local contact will be in touch with you, and all the LAFs in their patch, between April and June this year to discuss and agree how Natural England will be able to support your LAF for the rest of this year. This will most likely involve a more targeted approach and there will be opportunities for you to discuss how Natural England can work with you and help you to achieve your priorities this year, resource permitting.

We are also currently in the process of contracting LAF Regional Coordinators to help support your work as we recognised their importance to you in your feedback to us.

Within the next two months you will receive the first edition of a quarterly newsletter which will provide opportunities to share good practice between LAFs, information from Natural England and Defra, and will include more details about relevant Natural England contacts along with some details of how we would like to work with and support LAFs over the course of this year.

Natural England remains fully committed to supporting LAFs and looks forward to working with you again in the coming year.

Yours

Rob Leek
National LAF Lead Adviser

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