Apply to join the Dorset Local Access Forum

Information about the Dorset Local Access Forum

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Apply to join the Dorset Local Access Forum?

Are you ….
- Interested in Public Rights of Way and green space for travel and leisure?
- Able to advise on the strategic development of Public Rights of Way and green space?
- Representative of landowners, access users and other access related interests?
- Free to attend three meetings a year and occasional other meetings?

People with energy, enthusiasm and expertise are invited to apply to join the Dorset Local Access Forum.

The Forum provides a unique opportunity to bring together people with varied interests in the access network. Land managers, access users and people with wider interests meet and discuss issues and reach a consensus to guide the future development of Dorset’s Public Rights of Way and green space network.

The Forum is an independent body advising Dorset County Council, Dorset’s district and borough councils, Government and numerous other relevant organisations on how to maximise the potential of the access network so that it meets the public’s needs today and in the future.

If you feel that you can contribute positively to the work of the Dorset Local Access Forum then read this pack and complete an application form today!

Examples of areas of interest for potential applicants are:
- Walking/Rambling
- Dog walking
- Running/Orienteering
- Cycling - road, off road, mountain biking
- Equestrians - riders/carriage drivers
- Motorised vehicles/Motor cycles
- Water based activities/sports
- Youth services/organisations
- Older people/carers/related services and organisations
- People with disability and/or their representatives
- Ethnic minority communities
- Agriculture/Forestry - land owners, managers, tenants
- Landscape/Nature Conservation
- Businesses/Economy Tourism providers
- Health
- Education
- Public Transport
1. What is a Local Access Forum?
A Local Access Forum (LAF) is an independent, statutory body advising organisations about how to improve public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

LAFs were established under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000* (sections 94 and 95) and are governed by *The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007*.

LAFs exist to represent the interests of everyone in the country concerned with public rights of way (PRoW - footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways) and other public access/green space.

Any organisation/individual can consult LAFs. Certain organisations - section 94(4) (CROW) - are required to consult and have regard to advice given by LAFs in carrying out their functions. LAFs can freely provide advice to any organisation with regards to outdoor access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 94(4) bodies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointing authority(ies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ie Highway Authority or National Park Authority</td>
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<td>Any county, unitary, district or borough council within the area of the forum</td>
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<td>Secretary of State</td>
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<td>ie any Government department with a Secretary of State, eg Defra, MOD, executive agencies - Planning Inspectorate, Highways Agency.</td>
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<td>Natural England</td>
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<td>Forestry Commission</td>
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<td>English Heritage</td>
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<td>Sport England</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards</td>
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<td>Parish and Town Councils</td>
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**Examples of third party bodies**

- Landowners
- Police
- Transport Providers

2. What is the Dorset Local Access Forum?
The Dorset Local Access Forum (DLAF) is a joint forum between Dorset County Council, Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils. It is an independent, statutory, advisory body covering the whole of the administrative area of the county of Dorset.

Dorset has a network of approximately 4,600km of PRoW. Bournemouth and Poole has a network of approximately 95km of PRoW and 126km of cycleways. Overall public green space includes Access Land, local and long distance routes, picnic sites, parks and conservation areas.

3. What is the Dorset Local Access Forum for?
The main role of the Dorset Local Access Forum is to provide guidance to improve opportunities for people to have access to and use PRoW to enjoy Dorset’s countryside, coast and communities.
Local Access Forums are advisory bodies to all levels of local and national government and other agencies, for example Natural England, Forestry Commission, AONB Conservation Boards, Town and Parish Councils, on matters such as changes to legislation, national and county policy, implementation of outdoor access and other access related matters.

The role of the Dorset Local Access Forum is to:

- Respond to restriction consultations on Open Access Land for Dorset and to perform a statutory duty to advise on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, as described in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

- Contribute in an advisory capacity to the development and implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Bournemouth, Dorset, and Poole.

(There are 2 RoWIPS in Dorset. The Dorset RoWIP and the Joint Bournemouth and Poole RoWIP)

- Promote the appropriate use of opportunities to enjoy the countryside.

- Advise upon the management and maintenance of access, balancing the provision of access against the needs of biodiversity, wildlife management and of land owners and managers.

- Advise on developing additional opportunities for everyone to enjoy the rights of way and access network, for example, for those with disabilities.

- Advise and support various broader strategic access related matters, for example, public health, sustainable transport, planning and development, recreation and play, climate change, tourism, economy, diversity and equality, landscape - agriculture, forestry, environmental conservation, community and culture.

- Contribute to the work of numerous strategic groups and their plans, for example, Local Transport Planning, Local Development Frameworks, Local Nature Partnerships, Local Economic Partnerships, Health and Well-being Boards.

The Forum tends to focus on broader, strategic issues as opposed to specific matters. However it can use specific cases to highlight strategic problems.

4. Role of the appointing authority

The role of the appointing authorities is to support the Forum and to help it to be effective. They are responsible for providing Officer support - meeting preparation/circulation of information/advice, covering member expenses for travel and carer responsibilities, training and publishing the DLAF Annual Report. The main contact for the DLAF is the Forum Coordinator.
5. Membership
The Dorset Local Access Forum is made up of local volunteers.

Membership of the Forum is open to all members of the public and is widely advertised. It is intended that members will represent an area of interest rather than the views of any specific organisation to which they belong. In this way the Forum will represent a broad range of views within Dorset. The legislation requires membership of the Forum to be balanced between representatives of user and land management interests.

Members should promote the role and work of the DLAF through their own networks within their communities and areas of interest they represent.

Members are appointed for a period of up to three years. Each year a third of members retire with the option of reapplying.

The DLAF has a maximum of 21 members including 3 Council members representing Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Councils. The local authority representatives are expected to take particular care to avoid prejudicing the independence of the Forum's advice.

Members of the Forum are people who either:

- Enjoy countryside activities, eg walking, horse-riding, running, cycling, horse carriage driving, motorised users.
- Own, manage and/or farm land traversed by PRoW - including landowners, tenants, farmers, foresters, conservationists.
- Have an access related interest, eg environmental conservation, health, economy, tourism, planning, sustainable transport.

Members contact details are usually made available to other Forum members, but are not published. Members of the public are asked to contact Forum members by contacting the Forum Coordinator or Secretary.

6. Other Local Access Forums
Members are encouraged to liaise and share best practice, ideas etc with Forums across England and this is facilitated by their own online webspace - Huddle - to which they can be given access once recruited as a member. Email the Forum Coordinator to arrange access.

Huddle is also a means for Defra and Natural England to provide information and training to members.

DLAF members are encouraged to maintain strong links with their neighbouring LAFs particularly with regards to cross boundary issues. The Dorset Local Access Forum has four neighbouring LAFs.


Devon Countryside Access Forum: http://www.devon.gov.uk/devon_countryside_access_forum.htm


7. Recruitment Process
Members to the Forum are jointly appointed by Dorset County Council (DCC), Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils with DCC taking the lead.

Applications are invited by publicity and by letters/emails to numerous organisations and recommended individuals.

Candidates will be selected based on their relevant experience and knowledge and the needs of the Forum at that time - in aiming to achieve a forum that is broad and balanced in membership.

Members are appointed for a term of up to three years.

8. Meetings
Meetings are normally held three times a year. Meetings are usually on a Friday in November, March and July from 10:00am to 13:30pm. Members are expected to attend all meetings and to contribute positively to the advisory role of the Forum by engaging in constructive debate and seeking consensus where possible. Members may also be required to attend additional site visits, workshops, training, conferences and working group meetings between the three main Forum meetings.

Dorset County Council arranges the venue for meetings of the Forum - usually at Dorset County Council. The meetings are informal under an elected Chairman and discuss issues brought to the Forum's attention from a range of sources, for example:

- Forum Members
- Officers from the appointing authorities
- Members of the public
- Section 94(4) bodies (CROW 2000 s94) and other "third party" individuals/organisations. (See table in section 1).
- Any other organisation/individual who wish to seek the views/advice of the Forum with regards to outdoor access for recreation and travel and wider associated issues.
- National Consultations

When appropriate Officers from the three Highway Authorities attend meetings, answer questions and respond to invitations to advise the Forum on issues under discussion.

Members are encouraged to raise items for the agenda and produce accompanying reports. The DLAF coordinator can advise and support members with regards to reports.

A Chair and Vice-Chair are elected on an annual basis.

Where a consensus cannot be reached on any issue, each member has one vote.

9. Public Access to Meetings
The general public can attend meetings as observers. However if a member of the public wishes to address the Forum they need to make representations in writing to the DLAF secretary a minimum of two weeks prior to the Forum meeting.
A period of not more than 5 minutes per person and not exceeding 20 minutes in total is available for representations from members of the public at each Forum meeting. The Chairman has discretion to extend public speaking as appropriate at each meeting.

A limited period is available, after representations have been made, to deal with any issues raised.

Agenda, minutes and reports relating to the Dorset Local Access Forum are available to the public and may be found on the Forum’s webpages.

10. Are Forum members paid?
No, all members are volunteers and give their time freely. However, members can claim reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred as part of Forum duties including travel, childcare or care of other dependants. Other than travel/carer costs associated with Forum meetings and workshops, expenses must be agreed with Dorset County Council in advance, and receipts will normally need to be provided. Expense claim forms should always be used and can be obtained from the DLAF Secretary.

**Travelling Allowances**
Members of the Forum will be able to claim travelling allowances for attendance at meetings. The current rates are as follows:

- Car - 45p per mile
- Motorcycle - 24p per mile
- Bicycle - 20p per mile
- Rail - standard fare
- Other public transport - actual cost

Parking fees - actual cost may be claimed.

**Carer’s Allowance**
A carer’s allowance of up to £7.00 per hour, ie actual expenditure incurred up to a maximum of £7.00 per hour, will be paid for care of dependants, whether children, elderly people or people with disabilities, while a member is attending meetings of the Forum. The allowance will not be payable to a member of the claimant’s own household. Members who claim a carer’s allowance are required to certify that the amounts claimed (up to the permitted maximum) have actually been incurred by signing the declaration on the reverse of the claim form.

11. Useful Links and Information

**National Guidance and information for LAF members**

**Local AccessForum Page**
[https://www.gov.uk/local-access-forums-participate-in-decisions-on-public-access](https://www.gov.uk/local-access-forums-participate-in-decisions-on-public-access)

**LAF Regulations**
LAF Guidance
DEFRA archived pdf file "revised guidance on Local Access Forums" (2007) which details the role and work of Local Access Forums and Forum Members.

LAF newsletter
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-access-forum-newsletter

Legislation relating to PRoW, Open Access Land, and public green space can be complex and Forum members are not expected to have an in-depth understanding of this. The appointing authorities will provide information, support and advice when required. General information can be found on https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/overview and the following links.

Rights of Way and Open Access Land
https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam

Countryside Code
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code

Natural England
Government advisor for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England’s nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. Information on PRoW, landscape, parks, trails, nature reserves, recreation, protected sites and species, wildlife and habitat conservations and data.
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

Defra
The UK government department responsible for policy and regulations on environmental, food and rural issues.

EFRA

Local Information and guidance for DLAF members

Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)
Webpage
http://www.dorsetforyou.com/footpaths/improvementplan

link to pdf of Dorset RoWIP

Dorset County Council – Dorset Coast and Countryside
Find out about Dorset’s coast and countryside, country parks, PRoW and other public open space and how it's managed and opportunities to get involved.
https://www.dorsetforyou.com/countryside

Poole Borough Council
Walking and cycling webpages
http://www.poolieuk/transport-and-streets/cycling-and-walking/
Bournemouth Borough Council
Leisure webpages
http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/AttractionsLeisure/AttractionsLeisure.aspx

Poole and Bournemouth Rights of Way Improvement Plan
Webpage and link to pdf of the Poole and Bournemouth RoWIP

Key contacts for the Dorset Local Access Forum

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<tr>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Access Development Officer, Dorset County Council</td>
<td>Tara Hansford Forum Coordinator and Secretary</td>
<td><a href="mailto:t.s.hansford@dorsetcc.gov.uk">t.s.hansford@dorsetcc.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>01305 221779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA to Head of Environment</td>
<td>Mavina Alexander Administrative support</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mavina.alexander@dorsetcc.gov.uk">mavina.alexander@dorsetcc.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>01305 224218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRoW Officer, Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils</td>
<td>Philip Elias B&amp;P Officer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:P.Elias@poole.gov.uk">P.Elias@poole.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>01202 262017</td>
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