



Contents

- 1. What is a Local Access Forum?**
- 2. What is the Dorset Local Access Forum?**
- 3. What is the Dorset Local Access Forum for?**
- 4. Role of the appointing authority**
- 5. Membership**
- 6. Other Local Access Forums**
- 7. Recruitment Process**
- 8. Meetings**
- 9. Public Access to Meetings**
- 10. Are Forum members paid?**
- 11. Useful links and Information.**



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 & 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.

Dorset has a network of approximately 4,600km of PRoW and 123kms of cycletracks/lanes. Bournemouth and Poole has a network of approximately 95km of PRoW and 126km of cycletracks/lanes. Overall public green space includes Access Land, SANGS, picnic sites, parks and conservation areas.

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.

Section 94(4) bodies
Appointing authority(ies) ie Highway Authority or National Park Authority
Any county, unitary, district or borough council within the area of the forum
Secretary of State ie any Government department with a Secretary of State eg Defra, MOD, executive agencies – Planning Inspectorate, Highways Agency.
Natural England
Forestry Commission
English Heritage
Sport England
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards
Parish & Town Councils
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 Council and BCP Council. It is an independent, statutory, advisory body covering the whole of the administrative area of the county of Dorset.

3. What is the Dorset Local Access Forum for?

The main role of the Dorset Local Access Forum is to provide advice & guidance to help build a network of public rights of way and public greenspace that 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 & 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 on the development and implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council.

(There are 2 RoWIPS in Dorset. The Dorset Council RoWIP and BCP Council 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 & development, recreation & play, climate change, tourism, economy, diversity & equality, landscape – agriculture, forestry, environmental conservation, community & 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 & secretarial support – setting the ToRs recruitment, publicising the forum agenda, minutes & papers, providing meeting venues, covering member expenses for travel and carer responsibilities, training, publishing the DLAF Annual Report and general advice. 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 Council and BCP Council. 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, horseriding, 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

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.

Hampshire Countryside Access Forum [Local Access Forum - Hampshire Countryside Access Forum | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/local-access-forum)

Devon Countryside Access Forum [Devon Countryside Access Forum - Public Rights of Way](https://www.devon.gov.uk/public-rights-of-way)

Wiltshire & Swindon Countryside Access Forum [Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum - Wiltshire Council](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-and-swindon-countryside-access-forum)

Somerset Local Access Forum <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/get-involved/community/somerset-local-access-forum/>

7. Recruitment Process

Members to the Forum are jointly appointed by Dorset Council (DCC) and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council where Dorset Council is the lead authority.

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 3 years.

8. Meetings

Meetings are normally held three times a year. Meetings are usually on a Thursday 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 3 main Forum meetings.

Dorset Council arranges the venue for meetings of the Forum – either virtually via Teams or at Dorset Council, County Hall. The meetings are informal under an elected Chairman and Vice- chairperson and discuss issues brought to the Forums 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 by the members of the Forum.

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

9. Public Access to Meetings

The 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 2 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 dependents. 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 (subject to change)

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

Car – 45 p 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 (subject to change)

A carer's allowance of up to £7.00 per hour, i.e. 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 & information for LAF members

Local Access Forum Page:

<https://www.gov.uk/local-access-forums-participate-in-decisions-on-public-access>

LAF regulations

Extract from “the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (CROW 2000) details the Statutory Instrument No18 36 Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/268/contents/made>

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.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402151656/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/crow/laf-guidance.pdf>

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 & 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>

[New Countryside Code launched to help people enjoy the outdoors - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Natural England

Government advisor for the natural environment in England, helping 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 & species, wildlife & 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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

EFRA

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/>

Local Information and guidance for DLAF members

Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

Webpage

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/rights-of-way-improvement-plan>

link to pdf of Dorset RoWIP

<d1aedb08-8446-6d87-774b-d94f9546cb8e> (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

Dorset Council – Dorset Coast & Countryside

Find out about Dorset's coast and countryside, country parks, PRow and other public open space and how its managed and opportunities to get involved.

<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/countryside>

BCP Council

Leisure webpages

<http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/AttractionsLeisure/AttractionsLeisure.aspx>

Public Rights of Way

[Public rights of way \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](http://Publicrights.of.way(bcpcouncil.gov.uk))

BCP Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Webpage

[Rights of way improvement plan \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](http://Rights.of.way.improvement.plan(bcpcouncil.gov.uk))

Key contacts for the Dorset Local Access Forum

Officer	Name	Email	Telephone
Strategic Outdoor Access Development Coordinator	Tara Hansford Dorset Local Access Forum Coordinator	tara.hansford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305 221779
Secretarial/technical support	Luke Horton	Luke.horton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305 221830
PRow Officer, BCP Council	Philip Elias B&P Officer	P.Elias@poole.gov.uk	01202 262017