Local Access Forum Annual Reports
Advice on production and contents
The Countryside Council for Wales is the statutory adviser to government on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment throughout Wales and its inshore waters. With English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage, CCW delivers its statutory responsibilities for Great Britain as a whole, and internationally through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
Local Access Forums Guidance: 3

Local Access Forum Annual Reports

Advice on production and contents
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Foreword by LAF Secretary
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  - Other matters considered
LAF committees
Programme of works for the coming year
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Part 1 - Background information

1. Introduction to this guidance

This document gives the Countryside Council for Wales’ guidance on the production and contents of Local Access Forum Annual Reports. It is a slightly amended version of the interim guidance issued in 2003.

The National Assembly for Wales regulations¹ require appointing authorities to prepare an annual report for each LAF for which it is responsible as soon as possible after the end of the financial year. The relevant regulation is included below.

Regulation 16 Annual reports

(1) An appointing authority must, in relation to each forum for which it is the appointing authority, prepare and approve, as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 March in each year, an annual report.

(2) An annual report prepared under paragraph (1) must include –

(a) information relating to the performance of the forum’s functions during the twelve-month period ending on the date referred to in paragraph (1); and

(b) a programme of works which has been agreed between the forum and the appointing authority which the forum plans to undertake during the twelve months commencing immediately after that date.

(3) A copy of the annual report must, when it has been approved, be made available for inspection by members of the public at the offices of the appointing authority during normal office hours free of charge.

(4) An appointing authority must, on application by any member of the public, provide that person with a copy of the annual report prepared and approved under this Regulation, or of any part thereof, on payment of the cost of postage and such further sum not exceeding 10 pence per page as the appointing authority may require.

2. Purposes of the annual report

The annual report will serve several purposes:

a) A summary record of the preceding year's work.
Minutes of individual meetings and other documents produced will give greater detail but the annual report will summarise the LAF’s work.

b) A work plan for the coming year.
This will be the plan agreed between the LAF and the appointing authority, in accordance with regulation 16(2)(b). It is acknowledged that changing priorities and pressure of other work may prevent the plan being adhered to in full.

c) A ‘publicity’ document.
The annual report must, by statute, be made available for public inspection and it must be available for the public to buy. It will therefore be of advantage to the LAF and the appointing authority if it is well presented and gives a ‘professional’ image. In particular, consideration should be given to the use of colour, including photography, especially on the cover.

3. The Process

Although the regulations require that the annual report is prepared and approved by the appointing authorities it is important that the LAFs themselves are fully involved in the process and are happy with the final report.

In some cases it may be agreed by the LAF members that the Appointing Authority should produce a draft report for discussion and approval by the full LAF.

However, to involve the LAF fully, we would suggest that a committee of the LAF is established to work with the secretary and other appropriate appointing authority staff on the production of the report. It is important that the process is not too lengthy but equally it is important that a report is produced which is acceptable to both the appointing authority and the LAF members and fulfils the three purposes in section 2 above.

A suggested process appears on the following page.
PRODUCTION OF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORTS

SUGGESTED PROCESS

To keep the process manageable it is important that the full LAF agrees to delegate production and related decision making to the appointing authority and committee of the LAF. Therefore, by the time the report goes to the full LAF it should only be a case for ‘rubber-stamping’

1. Members of LAF committee are agreed. This should be done at the last full LAF meeting before 31 March in each year.

2. FIRST COMMITTEE MEETING - LAF committee and appointing authority staff meet to agree process, timetable, broad content of the annual report and ongoing committee involvement before second meeting.

3. Appointing authority prepare first draft of annual report with input from committee members as agreed at first meeting.

4. SECOND COMMITTEE MEETING – LAF committee and appointing authority staff meet to discuss first draft of report.

5. Appointing authority amend report as appropriate, again with input from LAF members as agreed at committee meeting.

6. REPORT GOES TO FULL LAF FOR AGREEMENT – This should ideally be the first meeting after 1 April.

7. Any changes agreed at full LAF meeting are made and report is approved by the appointing authority.

8. Copy of the annual report is sent to CCW as required by LAF regulation 17(b).

9. Copies of annual report are distributed as appropriate. For example:
   - LAF Members
   - local libraries
   - district local authority offices
   - community councils
   - authority members/directors and other relevant staff
   - on the appointing authority’s website
Part II - The body of the report

4. Foreword

It is suggested that a two part foreword should be included. One section each to be written by:

a) the LAF secretary on behalf of the appointing authority; and

b) the LAF Chair on behalf of the LAF. Each of these sections could provide an overview of experiences from the year ended and aspirations for the year ahead.

5. Introduction to the annual report

It will be useful by way of introduction to include a brief section outlining the background to the LAF.

Example:

INTRODUCTION

The xxxxx Local Access Forum was established in May 2002. The Local Authority had a statutory duty to establish the LAF as required by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The statutory function of the Forum is to advise the authority, the Countryside Council for Wales and others as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, with regard to the needs of land-management and the natural beauty of the area. All meetings of the Forum are open to the public.
6. The year reviewed

6.1 Reporting on the statutory function

This section of the annual report should relate to the LAFs performance of its statutory function during the year ending 31 March. This function, as included in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 is:

94 (4) It is the function of a local access forum, as respects the area for which it is established, to advise-

(a) the appointing authority.
(b) any body exercising functions under Part I in relation to land in that area,
(c) if the appointing authority is a National Park authority, the local highway authority for any part of that land, and
(d) such other bodies as may be prescribed.

as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.

94 (5) The bodies mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (4) shall have regard, in carrying out their functions, to any relevant advice given to them by a local access forum under this subsection or any other provision of this Act.

We would not advise that every single issue discussed at the LAF needs to be covered in the annual report – many minor issues, especially of an administrative nature, are best covered solely in the minutes of each meeting. However, the LAF and appointing authority should agree which issues are significant enough for inclusion in the report. In general, this should concentrate in particular on matters where the LAF has given advice to one or more of the statutory advisees. It is important that the response of the statutory advisee is given, although for advice given towards the end of the reporting year it is possible that any response will be too late for inclusion in that year's annual report. In such cases provision will need to be made to include the advice again, together with the response, in the following year's annual report.
We would suggest one of two ways for the layout of this section.

a) As a sub-divided list
This method has the advantage of being easy to use for reference purposes. We would suggest that it is either in date order or in alphabetical order of the topics considered.

Example 1:

**ADVICE GIVEN BY LAF 2002-03**

**Topic Considered:** Access for Disabled People  
**Date(s) Considered:** 23 July 2002  
**Advice Given to:** County Borough Council  
**Advice Given by LAF:** When erecting new furniture on Public Rights of Ways, or replacing existing furniture, the utmost consideration should be given to the needs of less-abled persons. The County Borough Council should prepare a policy document on the issue, in consultation with the LAF and other appropriate bodies and individuals.  
**Response:** Agreed in principle by County Borough Council who will prepare a policy document and report back on a regular basis.

**Topic Considered:** Regulations on Provisional Maps of Open Country & Common Land  
**Date(s) Considered:** 19 September 2002  
**Advice Given To:** Welsh Assembly Government  
**Advice Given by LAF:** Various comments on the procedure.  
**Response:** The final regulations incorporated some of the alterations suggested by the LAF.

b) As a text narrative
Depending on the skill of the writer, this can give a more lively presentation.

Example 2

**ADVICE GIVEN BY LAF 2002-03**

**Access For the Less-abled**
At its July meeting, the Forum considered the needs of less-abled persons and unanimously agreed to advise the Authority that it felt that when erecting new or replacement furniture on Public Rights of Way the utmost consideration should be given to the needs of less-abled persons. It was of the view that the County Borough Council should prepare a policy document on the matter, in consultation with the LAF. The Council agreed to this.

**Regulations on Provisional Maps of Open Country & Common Land**
The Forum considered the Welsh Assembly Government’s consultation on regulations for Provisional Maps at its September meeting. Various comments were made on the procedure, some of which were incorporated into the final regulations.
6.2. Other matters considered

It is probable that many items considered by Local Access Forums will not result in the Forum offering advice to any body. This is likely to be for one of two reasons:

a) the Forum does not wish to give any advice on a certain topic. It is still important that significant items in this category are included in the report so that readers know that the matter was considered; or

b) the item considered is by way of a presentation to the Forum for the purposes of training/briefing.

Example: (this could also be laid out as a text narrative as above)

OTHER MATTERS CONSIDERED

Topic Considered: The Role, Duties & Functions of Local Access Forums
Date(s) Considered: 23 July 2002
Summary: A presentation by the Countryside Council for Wales

Topic Considered: Draft Map of Open Country & Registered Common land
Date(s) Considered: 19 September 2002
Summary: The LAF considered the map for its area but did not wish to comment on it

7. LAF Committees

LAF regulation 13 allows for the establishment of committees of a LAF. The annual report should include an appropriate brief summary of each committee’s meeting dates, remit, membership, work and recommendations.

Example: (this could also be laid out as a sub-divided list as above)

LAF COMMITTEES 20xx-20xx

Annual Report Committee

The Annual Report sub-committee met twice, on 21 February and 19 May. It assisted the appointing authority with the production of the report.

Access for the Less-Abled Committee

This committee met three times, on 22 July, 15 August and 19 September. It considered the authority’s current policies on providing countryside access for less-abled persons. The committees recommendations were discussed and endorsed by the full LAF on 27 September – see section on LAF advice for details.
8. Programme of works for the coming year

Regulation 16(2)(b) requires that a LAF annual report includes a programme of works which has been agreed between the forum and the appointing authority which the forum plans to undertake during the twelve months commencing immediately after the 31 March.

It is important that a LAF’s work programme incorporates agenda items proposed by LAF members themselves. However, some of a LAF’s work is likely to be as a result of consultations from other bodies. Primarily these will be:

a) the local and National Park authorities;
b) the Countryside Council for Wales;
c) the Welsh Assembly Government.

To enable the forward year’s work plan to be included in the annual report it will be necessary for these bodies to inform the LAF secretary, ideally between January and March, of their plans for referral of work to the LAFs.

The published programme of work will primarily consist of a list, with additional information as appropriate.

An example of a work plan for inclusion in the annual report appears below.

Example:

WORK PLAN 2003 - 2004

(A) Items expected to be referred to LAF by other bodies.

Local Authority

Cycling Strategy
The authority is producing a cycling strategy which the LAF will be advising on.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that all local authorities produce a ROWIP by 2007. The LAF will be involved throughout the production process.

LAF Annual Report
The authority will be producing a LAF annual report. The Forum will be involved throughout the process. It is anticipated that a LAF committee will be established to consider this.

Welsh Assembly Government

Removal of Obstructions from Public Rights of Way
The Welsh Assembly Government will be consulting on these, and various other CROW Act Part II regulations during the year.

Countryside Council for Wales

Draft Maps of Open Country & Registered Common Land
CCW will be consulting on the draft maps for the LAF’s area during the year. As statutory consultees, the LAF will be invited to comment on the maps.

Revised Country Code
The Countryside Council for Wales and the Countryside Agency are substantially revising the Country Code. The LAF will be consulted on the proposals.
(B) Items proposed by LAF members and others

Management of Access in the Llanfynwy Valley
The LAF has set up a pilot project to examine and advise on the management of access in this area.

Disabled Access
The LAF will be discussing and advising on the improvement of access for disabled persons in the area.

Effects of Access on Nature Conservation
The LAF will be considering the effects of the new right of access on nature conservation. It is hoped to get a specialist speaker to brief the LAF on the subject.
PART III Appendices

Details of the appointing authority, a map of the LAF's area, meetings, recruitment process and membership should be entered in appendices at the back of the report.

9. Appendix I - Appointing authority details
This brief section of the report should give details of the appointing authority (AA).

The following information should be included:

Name of Appointing Authority (authorities if a Joint LAF)
Secretary's details – name and contact details

10. Appendix II – Map
A map should be included which shows the area covered by the LAF.

11. Appendix III - Meeting details
The dates and venues of all the meeting should be listed.

Example:

During the year the following meetings were held, all of which were open to the public:

May 24 2002 at the Old School, Penbryn
Aug 28 2002 at the Council Offices, Brynban
Nov 30 2002 at the Old School, Penbryn
Feb 21 2003 at the Council Offices Brynban.

12. Appendix IV - Recruitment details
The size and scope of this section will vary depending upon whether or not the Annual Report covers a year in which the entire membership of the LAF is recruited.

12.1. Annual Reports covering years when the entire membership has been recruited

Note: Any changes in membership which occur outside of the complete all LAF recruitment process should be recorded as in paragraph 12.2. below.

Regulation 4(3)

A person's membership of a forum continues until the expiry of the period of 3 years from the date of the first meeting of the forum, or such shorter period as is specified by the appointing authority in the letters of appointment referred to in paragraph (2), unless that person's membership terminates in accordance with regulation 14.

It should be noted that any LAF member appointed during the three year period should have the same membership end date as the existing members so that all the Forum appointments cease on the same date.

It is important that the recruitment of members is seen as a transparent and open process. To this end it will be appropriate for the annual report to contain details of the process that the appointing authority went through to recruit the members in years when the entire membership is appointed. This will be:

a) on initial establishment of the LAF
b) every third year thereafter, when the period of appointment for all members ends.
Thus, for the majority of LAFs (i.e. those established before 31 March 2003) such details will be in the 2002/03 annual report and every third year thereafter (i.e. 2005/06 and 2008/09 etc.). This section should contain information on the steps taken to ensure that regulation 7, which outlines the statutory recruitment process for LAFs, is complied with. The following table summarises the issues which should be covered.

### APPOINTMENT OF THE LAF MEMBERS

This table summarises the information that we recommend should be given on each section of regulation 7. It is best presented in a text format rather than as a table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Annual Report to Include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. When considering what persons to appoint as members of a forum, an appointing authority:</td>
<td>a list of the individuals and organisations consulted;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) must consult such individuals and organisations having an interest in the functions of the forum as it thinks fit;</td>
<td>(i) the name(s) of the newspaper(s) in which an advertisement appeared;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) the date on which the advertisement(s) appeared;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) the deadline date given for expressions of interest to be received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) must place an advertisement in a newspaper circulating in the locality of the forum giving persons an opportunity of expressing an interest in becoming a member of a forum;</td>
<td>a list of organisations invited to nominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) may invite any organisation having an interest in the functions of the forum to nominate a person for consideration by the appointing authority for membership of the forum;</td>
<td>(i) a brief summary of the steps that were taken to ensure compliance with this regulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) brief details of any problems which were encountered in finding suitable members fulfilling these criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) must have regard to the desirability of appointing persons who reside in, or are otherwise particularly familiar with, or who have other interests especially relevant to, the area of the forum;</td>
<td>(i) a brief summary of the steps that were taken to ensure compliance with this regulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) brief details of any problems which were encountered in finding suitable members fulfilling these criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) a brief summary of the balance of persons on the forum relating to each of the stated categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) must ensure that the membership of the forum achieves a reasonable balance between the interests of users of local rights of way or the rights of access conferred by section 2(1) of the Act and of owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist;</td>
<td>(i) a brief summary of the steps that were taken to ensure compliance with this regulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) brief details of any problems which were encountered in finding suitable members fulfilling these criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) must have regard to the need to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, a fair balance between persons of different genders, races, ages, disabilities and other characteristics.</td>
<td>(i) a brief summary of the steps that were taken to ensure compliance with this regulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) brief details of any problems which were encountered in finding suitable members fulfilling these criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) a brief summary of the balance of persons on the forum relating to each of the stated categories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12.2. Annual reports covering years when the entire membership has NOT been recruited

In two years out of three only a few changes are likely to be made to most LAF's membership. In these years the report should merely contain a brief section highlighting those members who left during the year and those new members who joined. If appropriate, details should be included of why any departing members left the LAF and the reasons why any new members were invited to join. The report should also contain details of any consultation which occurred prior to deciding who to invite as new members.

13. Appendix V - Membership details

This section should contain brief details of all persons who have served as members of the LAF during any part of the preceding year. Names and relevant interests should be listed - although it is essential that agreement is reached with all members for their details to be included. The Chair and Deputy Chair should be highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Appointed to LAF</th>
<th>Date LAF Membership Terminated</th>
<th>Brief Background Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Bloggs</td>
<td>3 April 02</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Farmer, Member of NFU and Llantwyn Graziers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Evans</td>
<td>3 April 02</td>
<td>4 August 02</td>
<td>Manager of Llanmelyn Outdoor Education Centre, keen rambler and member of local caving club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further reading

**LAF Annual Reports**  
All appointing authorities are required by statute to produce annual reports to cover the year ending 31 March. These can be obtained from the relevant LAF Secretary. Agendas, minutes and other papers are also available for individual LAF meetings.

**Government Act**  

**National Assembly for Wales**  

**Countryside Council for Wales**  


Local Access Forums in Wales Annual Report & Directory