

LAF National Conference 2013

A well organised Conference, interesting and informative.

Three topics presented to the whole conference and three workshops to be chosen from a List of nine.

The first topic

MENE presented by Natural England. Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment.

Between 1996 and 2005 a series of surveys were carried out to determine people's use of the natural environment. In 2009 Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned TNS to undertake MENE.

MENE captures information on all visits to the natural environment including those to local, informal green space. It also discovers people's attitudes to the natural environment.

The use of the natural environment is linked to the health of the population.

The second topic

ROWIPs of the future Presented by Defra

This presentation spoke about Open Access, the need for well-maintained paths and bridleways, the duty of Local Highway Authorities to review their ROWIP's and to consult with LAF's. It stated the need for Woodland to be accessible to the community; for National Nature Reserves and National Trails. It spoke of the need to improve the condition of canals and to inspire people enjoy rivers and canals. The Defra Green Infrastructure Partnership should be adopted in day-to-day planning decisions.

All this is included despite the budget cuts we are experiencing.

The third topic

PATHH Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage – Sue Hants LAF

An account of a LAF led exercise in Discovering Lost Ways.

The LAF involved 120 volunteers; looked at paths in 274 parishes and 15 wards in Southampton.

Obtained Grants (£46,600)

Identified 5 possible Prow's 3 of which were accepted by 2012

(The full details of this, as with other presentations, can be found on the Conference report on HUDDLE.)

I feel that this example of a LAF involving itself in practical work is to be noted.

Workshop 1

HUDDLE an introduction by Clare Griffin of the Peak District LAF

Workshop 2

Impact of cuts on Rights of Way management Chaired by Charles Ecroyd Cumbria LAF

Cumbria All was working well until budget cuts – County budget dropped from £850,000 to £600,000 and is dropping further, LAF travelling expenses are paid BUT there is no budget, members supply the secretarial cover. They are responsible for calling their own meetings; there is no training.

Do we let it drop or do we move into self supporting mechanism? Chairman

West Sussex The County Council is asking parish volunteers to carry out pathwork. Maps are provided by the county. The county is shifting its support from paid workers to volunteers.

Many areas are making or considering making use of volunteers.

Workshop 3

Working with Volunteers Edwina Edwards Peak District LAF
Joan Dryburgh Derby & LAF

Examples of ways volunteers are involved:

Wildlife and Visitor surveys, Education, Rangers, Wardens, Guides, cycling, Health. Practical / Conservation work, maintaining rights of way.

In Derbyshire & Derby LAF has helped replace open access discs on 9 areas of Open Access land.

LAF's must consider Health & Safety and legal issues.

This is an overview of the topics of the conference. I felt that it was a day well spent and was interested to see and hear how many different approaches there were by different LAF's

John Williams