

**Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting
Tuesday 7 April 2026**

Present

Gail Johnson (GJ) (Chair)
Steve Taylor (ST) (Vice–Chair)
Sue Coles (SC)
Cllr Mike Ford (CF);
Anna Hammond (AH);
Debbie Luff (DL);
Petronella Nattrass (PN)
Alan Marlow (AM)
Alan Taylor (AT))
Aileen Wood (AW)

Officers

None present

Unable to provide online access via TEAMS at this meeting

Opening discussion:

HCAF support

HCAF members welcomed receiving the LGR update sent out by Abby Sullivan, but were disappointed not to receive the update of HCC Countryside Service activity/actions as indicated to representatives at the HCAF agenda meeting. Combined with the pre-meeting changes and that actions are taking a lot longer to resolve, Members are becoming increasingly concerned at the diminishing support to the Forum. The lack of a Forum Officer report outlining current CS activity and forthcoming issues deprives HCAF of the opportunity to engage in a proactive way with HCC. Members do understand the current pressures that the Team must be working under, but would like to find a resolution to this please.

Item 1: Apologies

None Received

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes of the meeting 13 January 2026 were accepted with comment that a minor amendment need to be made before adding to the webpage.

ACTION: GJ

3. Matter Arising not elsewhere on the agenda

- Active Travel paper submitted and JW had advised the Chair that members of HCC AT Team will attend the HCAF meeting on 7th July 2026

4. Update from Jonathan Woods

The update from JW on Countryside Service Activities had not been received but the Chair was able to provide some information that was given at the HCAF Agenda meeting, as follows:

- Manydown – bridleway v. restricted byway. No further news on this.
- Byways Policy – updated policy presented to Executive Members, but no changes agreed.
- Engagement with planners – no direct news (see Item 8)
- CAP Annual Delivery Plan – it is understood that this is ready and will now be presented at the July meeting.
- Local Government update – information distributed by Abby Sullivan to Members
- Landowner Representatives – there are two candidates. GJ to progress with JW.
- Staff changes – no update.

Item 5: ORPAs

GJ contacted Stuart Giddings direct to clarify a process for volunteer groups clearing ORPAs. A paper was presented to HCAF members outlining the agreed process (see attached paper). There was a short debate as to why volunteers could not clear vegetation from U roads that were also ORPAs. GJ said that Stuart Giddings had made it very clear that he could only endorse the clearance of non-metalled ORPAs by insured volunteer groups. Paper to be published on HCAF website.

Item 6: Draft joint LAF letter to Mayoral candidates

The text of this letter was discussed and agreed that the structure and emphasis on what LAFs have to offer required further work. All Forum members to provide their thoughts to GJ by end of April who will co-ordinate responses and recirculate a draft accordingly. GJ said that whilst the LAFs share common goals it was evident that there were differences. As we do not yet know for definite who the Mayoral candidates will be, the timing of letter would be critical. Once the letter had been agreed it was suggested that it could be adapted to suit difference audiences including sending it out to the new unitary authorities who will be in place before the Mayor is elected. GJ to inform other LAFs about this action.

- What can LAFs offer Mayors and new Authorities?
- Check on what the 2 new Surrey Authorities have done regarding LAFs.
 - **ACTION Gail Johnson and all forum members**

Item 7: Path Management Project Proposal

‘Climate & Weather’ is one of the current top 10 risks to countryside access identified by HCAF and registered in the HCC Countryside Access Plan. A paper was circulated by ST which questions whether more could be done regarding resilience of PRow and to prepare for changing weather patterns. Particularly around water and drainage management. The paper proposed to seek HCAF agreement to investigate path design, drainage and maintenance practices across the Hampshire PRow network, and assess that against best practice elsewhere with a view to providing evidence-based advice. DL mentioned damage to BOATS in the South Downs which are in the area covered by the South Downs Local Access Forum. However, this proposed project is about learning lessons to mitigate damaged caused by water erosion and drainage which can be shared with other LAFs. HCAF agreed to convene a sub-group to work the issue
Group ST, GJ, AM, PN and DL.

Action: ST to contact Jonathan Woods to clarify how/whether HCC would like to participate

Item 8: Sub-groups

Planning

HCAF confirmed that it would like to continue its engagement with planners. Alan Marlow updated the meeting regarding the presentation given by Abby Sullivan who attended the Ramblers meeting recently. It was agreed that GJ would contact Philip Millard, who had joined the 2050 Vision team, to help identify the correct person to liaise with.

GJ had shared a draft paper with Members that was produced by Doug Jones of the SD LAF about Spatial Planning. GJ to ask what the LAF was proposing to do with it.

Action: Gail Johnson

NB: GJ undertook this action and was informed by Philip that he was now part of the Spatial Planning team. His former two colleagues are now in Transport Planning and has joined the ROW team in Access.

Accessibility

Online meeting convened.

Main discussion points –

- Often overlaps between different social groups e.g. disabled user and low income; particularly relating to access and transportation
- Looking at HCC policy and practices; design and structure
- Plans to focus on main routes; planning and development.
- Looking at local groups and activities to improve access to the Countryside e.g. kissing gates rather than stiles
- Examining Dunbridge PC example and sharing good ideas
- A quick survey did not specify any furniture on RoWs
- Give people enough information to make their own decision about suitability of path accessibility

Guidance Report to be developed and to be made available for HCAF October meeting.

Action: Anna Hammond

MOD

AT said that there was nothing to report and probably nothing will happen until the MOD liaison Kathleen Letch-McMillan returns from Maternity Leave.

9. AOB

HCAF representation survey was discussed and it was agreed not to pursue this idea. However further discussion took place as how HCAF could demonstrate its relevance. AT suggested that we should list the Forum's achievements.

Action: GJ to follow up with Forum members.

Drones

Gail Johnson

GJ read out an email from an equestrian colleague expressing concerns over the use of drones in the countryside and a near miss incident that had recently taken place. It had been reported to the police and to the BHS Accident/Incident Reporting website.

A general discussion took place and concluded that the Forum should recommend HCC reviews its guidance on use in the countryside.

Action: GJ to send a copy of the email to Jonathan Woods with HCAF's recommendation.

Dates of Future Meetings :

7 July 2026 starting at 09.30 at County Hall to include the AGM

- Noted meeting planned for Welborne has been deferred

6th October 2026 starting at 09.30 at County Hall

Both meetings to be supported by HCC.

Meeting closed at 1230.