

TERMS OF REFERENCE

NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AND COUNTY JOINT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Updated July 2008

Title

1. The Forum shall be known as the **Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum**

Purpose

2. The primary purpose of the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the appointing authorities and to Natural England on how to make the countryside, urban routes and green spaces, and the coast more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests. The forum will encourage and assist access provision, giving advice on issues of particular local relevance.
3. The Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum will give advice on three main topics:
 - a. development of recreation and access strategies which cater for the widest possible range of people;
 - b. improving the rights of way network; and
 - c. implementation of the statutory right of access to the countryside.

Role

4. The Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum will work to:
 - a. develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside, urban routes and green spaces, and the coast
 - b. respect local circumstances and different interests while operating within national guidance;
 - c. provide advice on issues of principle and good practice which is consistent with national guidance;
 - d. engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible; and
 - e. where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of differing views, and suggest how they might be resolved.

In carrying out these functions, the Northumberland National Park and County Local Access Forum shall have regard to:

- a. the needs of land management;
- b. the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area;
- c. guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State;
- d. proper liaison with neighbouring authorities and local access forums.

Membership

5. The membership will:

- a. be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group or coalition of like interests; and
- b. include a cross-section of local interests.

6. The membership will include a Chair, independent of the appointing authorities, a Vice Chair, ideally from a different interest group and up to twenty members, making twenty two members in total. This number will include up to three members nominated by the appointing authorities.

7. Members in total must represent a broad range of experience of, and demonstrable interest in,

- a. recreational use, for example walking, riding, climbing, cycling, mobility issues
- b. land management, for example, tenants, landowners and occupiers, and others with an interest in the land;
- c. nature conservation, heritage, tourism, health, business, education and transport.

Members who are not aligned to a single interest group but are able to bring a wide public view are particularly valuable.

8. Members will be appointed by the appointing authorities according to selection criteria which assess if candidates have sufficient experience of access in Northumberland to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving access provision.
9. Before appointment members will be asked to confirm:
 - a. their support of the positive purpose of local forums;
 - b. commitment to working within the terms of reference and achieving the aims of the local forum through constructive working with other members; and
 - c. that they are able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings, training and to network with a wide range of interests outside meetings.

Administration

10. Meetings will be held at least twice a year and more frequently when necessary. The quorum will be seven members excluding the Chair.
11. Meeting agendas will be agreed between the Chair and the Secretary.
12. Meetings will be advertised in advance and held in public.
13. Agendas, papers and minutes of meetings will be available to the public.
14. The Chair will invite observers to the meeting when appropriate.
15. Observers will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the Chair.
16. The public will be able to ask questions on the business of the meetings at the discretion of the Chair.
17. The Vice Chair may chair any meeting of the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum in the absence of the Chair.
18. The appointing authorities (Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland County Council) will have the right to review the chairing and membership of the local forum on an annual basis if necessary.

Terms of Reference Agreed: 14th May 2003
Terms of Reference Updated: 24 July 2008