



# Northumberland National Park & County Joint Local Access Forum

## 10th Annual Report

1 May 2012 – 30 April 2013



Pennine Way - airlifting flags on the Border Ridge March 2013

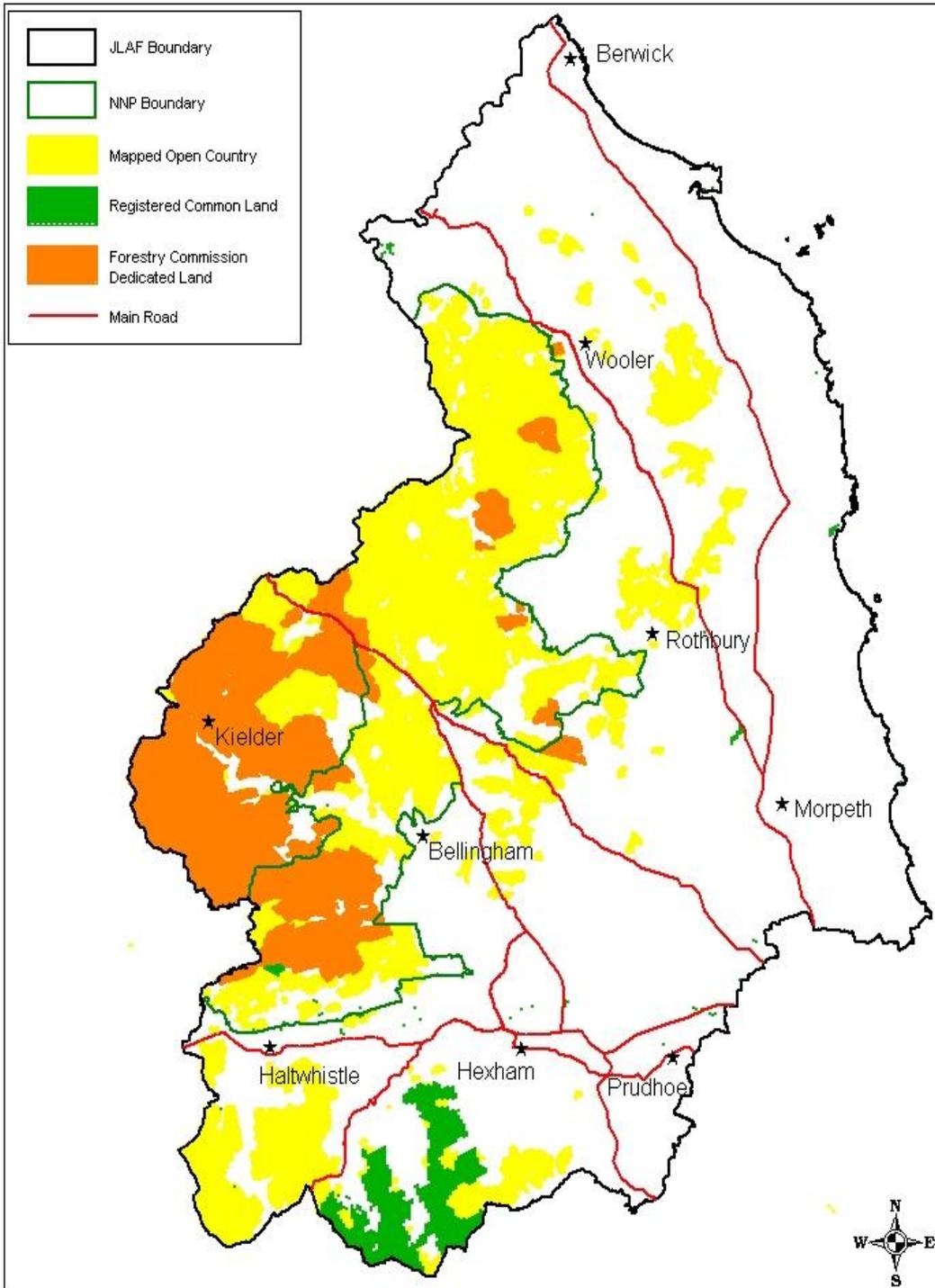
# Northumberland National Park & Countryside Joint Local Access Forum Areas of Open Country and Registered Common Land



Scale 1:501790

Compiled by Northumberland National Park Authority on 24 September 2007

Northumberland National Park Authority



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## Purpose of the Annual Report

The purpose of this annual report is to inform the public, as our stakeholders, of the aims, aspirations and achievements of the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) over the past year and to also discharge our statutory duty within the Local Access Forum Regulations.

### Background to the JLAF and Objectives as derived from the DEFRA Guidance on Local Access Forums in England (published February 2007)

The Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) is a statutory advisory body established by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Appointed by the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and Northumberland County Council (NCC), the JLAF advises these authorities and other Section 94 (4) bodies including the Secretary of State; Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); Ministry of Defence; Natural England; Forestry Commission; English Heritage; and town and parish councils in Northumberland.

The JLAF also covers the part of the North Pennines in Northumberland. It has representation on the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership Access Working Group and also the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership. The JLAF has a remit to formally advise the two Partnerships and will work with them on relevant access issues (DEFRA Guidance Para 3.2.2).

Membership of the JLAF has been carefully balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group or coalition of like interests and includes a cross-section of local interests in the countryside, such as recreational use, land management, education, nature conservation, tourism, business, transport and access for all. Members are appointed on an individual basis according to their knowledge and expertise of issues relating to local access. They are neither representative of, nor responsible to, any single interest group.

From within the membership of the JLAF, working groups have been formed which examine specific issues and recommend a course of action for the JLAF membership as a whole. These working groups meet between the main meetings and can examine issues in much more detail than might be possible at the larger, more infrequent main meetings.

### Objectives

1. To advise the Access Authorities, Natural England (NE) and all other Section 94 (4) bodies on all access related matters.
2. To encourage wider public access and recreation in the countryside.
3. To advise on consultations and long-term access land closures in a timely manner.
4. To encourage measures that will educate the public on access rights, opportunities and responsibilities.
5. To advise on ways towards ensuring:
  - that all 'access land' is accessible from a public highway road or public rights of way (PRoW);
  - that all routes promoted with public funding are maintained, open and accessible to legitimate users;
  - that information on restrictions is accurate, accessible and understandable.
6. To advise on measures to minimise the impact of recreational off-road driving and motorcycling on the landscape.
7. To engage with statutory bodies, access user groups, land managers and members of the public over access matters.

## **Chairman's Remarks**

### **JLAF CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2012 - 2013**

Ten years on from the formation of the JLAF and we still have two of our founder members – Ted Liddle and Nick Rossiter, as well as David Brookes from Northumberland County Council. The JLAF were saddened by the sudden death of one its most active members and supporters, Peter Nicholson, who was also a member of the National Park Authority.

One of the main topics then was the impact of Open Access on Hadrian's Wall and the surrounding land. The very genuine fears that land owners had at the time, fortunately, have not materialised, and we have a very valuable and much used route along the wall which is of significant benefit to the local economy. Whether Open Access as a whole has really been value for money for everyone is open to debate, but we look forward to being involved in Coastal Access when it arrives in Northumberland.

My first JLAF meeting at Rothbury's Jubilee Hall seemed full of people! That may have been a trick of my memory, but it has raised one of the most pressing items which we do need to address is raising our profile, so that members of the public know who we are and what we do. Comments in the JLAF Review of 2012 made interesting reading – not least of which was that very few members, or even officers, of the NNPA seemed to know who we were or what we did. With the interest and publicity which will accompany the building and opening of The Sill, perhaps it is an appropriate time to make people aware of what we are doing to improve access throughout the county.

Even in 2003 there were budget cuts for rights of way as there have been ever since. Although we are now at the critical point where any more cuts will simply make maintenance and improvements to rights of way unviable. The use of volunteers is clearly one option, but is not a solution. We are equally concerned at the very limited administrator's time which we are being allocated, as this has been halved since 2011.

I am sure these will be just a few of many challenges we will face in the future, with the help and support of our members and the officers from the Northumberland County Council and the National Park.

Gill Featonby  
JLAF Chairman (from October 2012)

## Joint Local Access Forum Meetings 1 May 2012 – 30 April 2013

The JLAF holds four meetings a year throughout Northumberland to ensure equality of access, with themed afternoon site visits prior to evening meetings; as far as possible the JLAF meet in village halls using local suppliers for refreshments. Information is available on the website. Due to budget constraints meetings were held twice at National Park offices in Hexham.

**July 2012:** Theme: '*Addressing consultations*': venue *National Park*: Members considered their responses to a number of key consultations they had been asked to comment on including Defra's consultation on improvements to the policy and legal framework for PROW and NCC's Local Development Plan Core Strategy Issues and Options. Members benefitted from input from the County Council's Planning Team and Countryside Departments. The evening session held at National Park offices in Hexham included considering the implications of the NPA's Review of the JLAF and Natural England's 'Paths 4 Communities' project.

**October 2012:** Theme: '*Liaison meeting with the North Pennines AONB*': venue *Allendale area*: Members met with representatives from the North Pennines AONB for discussions around opportunities for potential access improvements in the East Allen Valleys. This included visiting various projects associated with tourism and access in the Allen Valleys Heritage Assets project including developments at Deneholme and the Allen Mill site as well as visiting Allenheads to look at pony trekking links, the Studden Dene Bridge and blacksmith's shop and Heritage Centre developments. In the evening members met in Whitfield and looked at issues including Defra's Red Tape Challenge, Coast AONB updates, grade separated crossings, and Paths 4 Communities.

**January 2013:** Theme: '*Dukeshouse Wood Community Project*': venue *National Park*: Members met with representatives from this project looking to regenerate Duke house Wood if HLF funding was obtained. Members also learned about the project 'Old Routes through Dukeshouse Wood and Dukesfield Arches' and provided both projects with useful advice on opportunities for access and recreation. In the evening a presentation on 'the Sill' by the Sill Learning and Participation officer was given, discussions on updates from the National Park and NCC were received plus the Defra triennial review were main focus.

**April 2013:** Theme: '*10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting*': venue *Cramlington / Stannington*: Members were joined by members, past members and guests, including Natural England, County Council and Tony Gates (National Park Chief Executive) who gave a short speech, for a small gathering to celebrate 10 years of the JLAF. This was followed by a visit to Northumberlandia led by Northumberland Wildlife Trust who provided some background to its creation and management as well as future plans for the site and discussion with JLAF members on the use of such a site for access and recreation activities. In the evening members discussed topics which included mobility scooters on rights of way and issues arising from the Regional Meetings. L Lazzari, National Park, informed members of the airlift of flags onto the Border Ridge . and the horrendous weather conditions which had delayed the removal of the existing boardwalk at Auchope Cairn.

### Representation on:

- North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group
- Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership
- National Park Management Plan Action Plan Focus Group
- Local Nature Partnership
- Kielder Water and Forest Development Trust

## JLAF Work Plan and Priorities 1 May 2012 – 30 April 2013

Area	Task/Action required	Progress
<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment on RoWIP annual work plan.</li> <li>• Monitor implementation of RoWIP.</li> <li>• Ensure RoWIP meshes with the Local Transport Plan</li> </ul>	Ongoing regular liaison with County Council
<b>Quarterly meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select venues/themes for meetings throughout Northumberland including meetings with the North Pennines AONB and Northumberland Coast AONB.</li> <li>• Organise targeted site visits relevant to current access and recreational issues; input from appointing authorities.</li> <li>• Ensure follow-up activities are actioned.</li> </ul>	Ongoing; targeted; noting key/relevant issues
<b>Working Groups</b> Working Group North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing working with parishes.</li> <li>• CROW closures and consultations.</li> <li>• Horse riders and track usage.</li> <li>• Policy statements as required.</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Working Group South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing working with parishes.</li> <li>• CROW closures and consultations.</li> <li>• Policy statements as they arise.</li> <li>• Smoutel Ford consultation.</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
<b>Continue to raise JLAF Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building contacts/liaison opportunities with neighbouring LAFs and Section 94/4 bodies.</li> <li>• Promote county-wide 'joined-up-thinking' on access and recreation including urban areas.</li> <li>• Improving/enhancing liaison with appointing authorities</li> <li>• Continue to recruit members from varied backgrounds.</li> <li>• Enhancing working with Parish Councils.</li> <li>• Attend Regional meetings and training events to foster networking and exchange of information.</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing Annually Ongoing Ongoing
<b>Continue training members of the JLAF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help identify individual/forum training needs.</li> <li>• Take part in training events, workshops etc.</li> <li>• Monitor training needs e.g. Rights of Way legislation.</li> <li>• Targeted visits for JLAF members e.g. site visits.</li> <li>• Increase 'Huddle' activity.</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
<b>Oversight of regional routes; monitor CROW open access and PROW for ease of use by public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine choke points.</li> <li>• Advice on priorities for maintenance.</li> <li>• Ensure that National Trails are maintained to standard required for their legal status.</li> <li>• Meet statutory requirement re consultations.</li> </ul>	Ongoing As required As required  As required
<b>Monitor developments</b>	Monitor proposed developments which can be detrimental to public access as required.	As required
<b>Closure consultations</b> Open Access Centre/Forestry Commission	Give timely responses based on JLAF expertise and local knowledge.	Ongoing as required
<b>Additional tasks</b>	Dealt with in a timely way by working groups or an ad hoc working group as required.	Ongoing as required

## Members of the JLAF from 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2013

JLAF members can be contacted via the Administrator or you can meet them at the quarterly meetings. The JLAF has a Chairman and two vice chairmen.

**George Astbury, Vice Chair** *Stocksfield (other interests)* is a retired farmer and lists his interests as shooting, off-road motorised vehicle use including 4-wheel drive, and renewable energy.

**Steve Beverley, Prudhoe** (*recreational interests*) works for Capital Shopping Centres as Sustainable Travel Manager. Steve is an active cyclist and walker and, being a non-car owner, is interested in access issues to allow people into the countryside.

**James Brown, Chair (till September 2012)** *Hexham (land interests)* is a chartered surveyor and amongst his interests he lists water sports, field sports, rural business, conservation, environmental issues and land management.

**Vic Brown, Morpeth** (*other interests*) was an outdoor education teacher; also a National Park voluntary ranger. Interests include canoeing, water sports and being a healthy walks leader.

**Angus Collingwood-Cameron, Alnwick** (*land interests*) is a Chartered Surveyor and Chartered Forester whose work areas focus on forestry and environmental land management. Apart from his young family, his main areas of interest include shooting, fishing and regional rural policy issues.

**Gill Featonby, Chair (from October 2012)** *Morpeth (recreational interests)* has a background in agricultural zoology, is a partner in the family firm of chattels auctioneers and valuers and is a 'very small farmer'. Gill's interests include Parish Councils, equestrian access, fell walking and taking her dog into the countryside.

**Graham Gill, Bellingham** (*land interests*) is the Forest Management Director for the Forestry Commission's forests in North East England. He is interested in walking, cycling, mountain biking, tourism, rural business and conservation (till Mar 2012)

**Graeme Ferguson, Slaley** (*recreational interests*) a keen mountain biker, walker, fell runner, and (in the right conditions) skier and climber; he joined the JLAF to get a better understanding of access and recreational issues that affect Northumberland's diverse landscapes and to help with resolving these.

**Cllr Edward Heslop, Northumberland County Council appointee (from November 2010)** is a third generation tenant farmer who, apart from being sports mad, has a keen interest in encouraging responsible access for all to the countryside.

**Anne Lowrie, Longframlington** (*recreational user*), retired from paid work in rural community development now works as a parish councillor and member of the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group allocating EU funding. Interests include sailing, walking, swimming, cycling and forestry.

**Ted Liddle, Hexham** (*other interests*) is involved with the development of cycling in Northumberland. His interests include cycling, tourism, rural business, conservation, rock climbing and orienteering.

**Alan Mitcham, Ponteland** (*recreational user*) retired engineer; experienced cyclist, rambler and hillwaker and also with a keen interest in orienteering and bird watching.

**Peter Nicholson, (Northumberland National Park appointee)** a keen sailor and skier; has an extensive background in a variety of outdoor pursuits both as a participant, mentor and tutor (died September 2012).

**Sue Rogers, Alnwick** (*recreational interests*) continues to work as a part-time equestrian consultant. As well as riding, her areas of interest include walking, orienteering, tourism and endurance riding. Sue is the Working Group North Chairman.

**Nick Rossiter, Hexham** (*other interests*) returned to the JLAF after a few years absence; interests include bird watching and his areas of expertise include extensive knowledge of ecological and conservation issues. Nick is the Working Group South Chairman.

**Annie Sanders Allenheads** (*other*) was a vet and now a social enterprise manager; interests include mobility access, 'access for all', riding, rural business and conservation.

**Cllr Alan Sharp Haltwhistle** (*Northumberland National Park appointee*) is a land agent and estate manager with interests in land management, the National Trust and walking.

**Lindsay Wilson Alnwick** (*recreational user*) has a degree in human geography and her interests include equality of access for the less-abled, the environment and tourism.

