



# Northumberland National Park & County Joint Local Access Forum

## 11th Annual Report

1 May 2013 – 30 April 2014



October 2013 Meeting

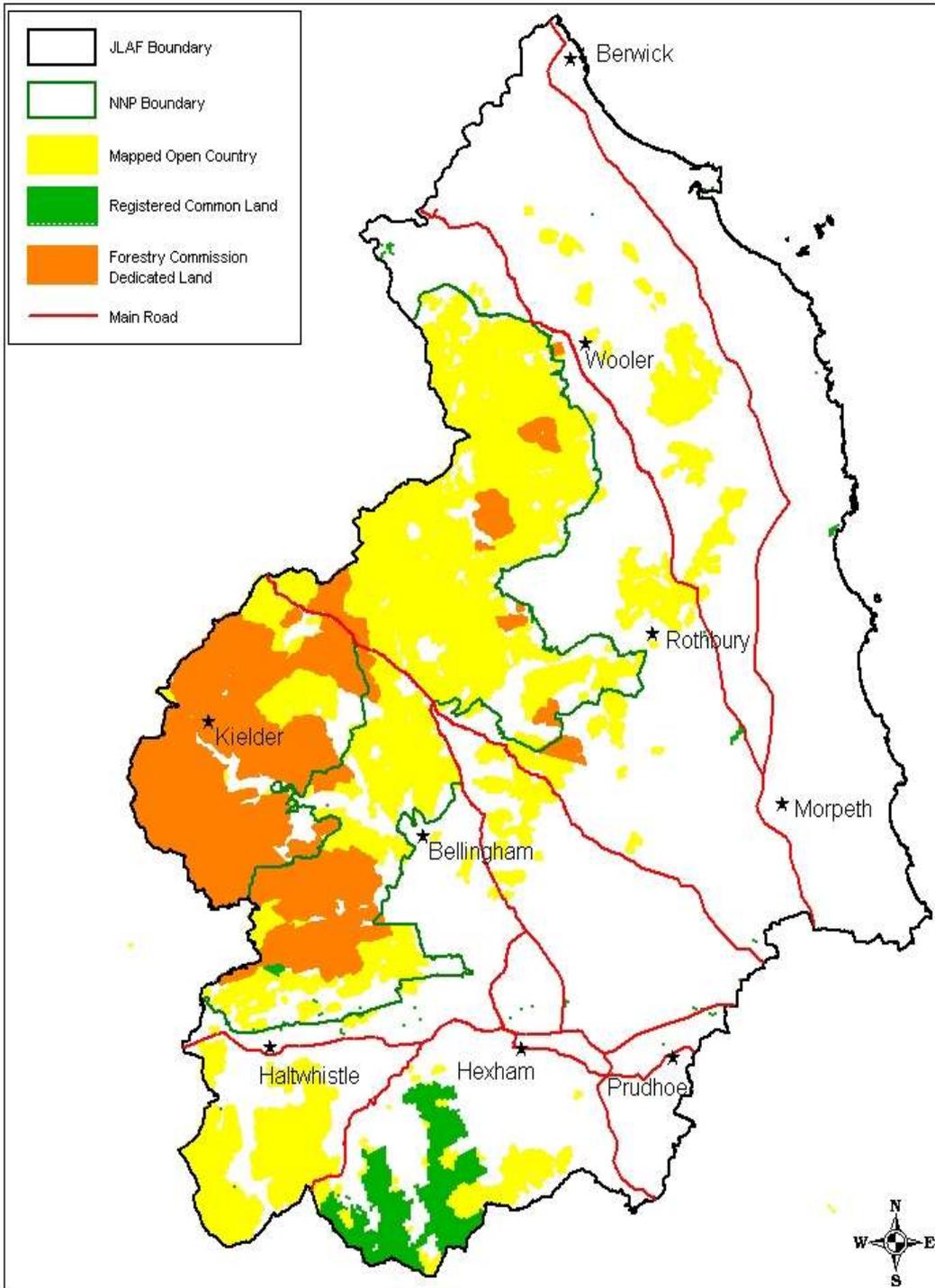
# Northumberland National Park & Countryside Joint Local Access Forum Areas of Open Country and Registered Common Land



Scale 1:501790

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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 2013 - 2014

This year has once again proved a challenge from the amount of work involved with the JLAF and the time and resources available. We are very grateful to Marion, our administrator, and appreciate the trouble she takes in trying to keep us all 'up to speed' with the latest information. Also, our thanks to the Northumberland National Park and Northumberland County Council Officers for their very efficient work in upgrading and improving, where possible, rights of way throughout the county and improving access for everyone, despite ever decreasing budgets.

From the details below you will see that we have had a varied year, and have advised a number of Section 94 bodies on topics relating to access. We are particularly interested in, and supportive of, The Sill project and wish the Northumberland National Park all our very best wishes for the future of this inspiring development.

One of our largest local landowners in Northumberland - Lord Joicey - was kind enough to show us how he maintains, and enhances, the link between the land (farmland, forestry, fishing and game) and the general public. By improving public access and encouraging small businesses the two together bring life and additional income to the local community. It proved to be an interesting and inspiring visit and a model for other large land owners.

We have problems in the more urban and remote areas of the county from illegal use of motor vehicles on public rights of way, and are in contact with Northumbria Police over ways that this can be addressed. Along with many other people who enjoy the freedom and remoteness of Northumberland, the proliferation of wind turbines has become a major talking point and a JLAF position statement can now be viewed on the NNP website.

A future concern is the prospect of a large increase in tree planting in the north region. Although we have absolutely no complaint about additional trees, or of the financial benefits, we anticipate that much of this additional forest land may well be on Open Access Land. This raises a number of issues, but specifically how it will affect public access to land around and through these sites, as woodland cannot be Open Access. We suspect that this has not been well thought out at a higher level, and needs addressing as soon as possible. Permissive access may be negotiated, but this is not a long term solution, as the trees will outlive most of us, and may well prevent the public from reaching the areas of Open Access land that they have been able to use in the past.

We currently have a very strong committee with a wide variety of interests in all aspects of access. There are several new ideas being suggested from members and these will be passed on to our working groups to investigate and take forward in the coming year.

Gill Featonby  
Chairman

## Joint Local Access Forum Meetings 1 May 2013 – 30 April 2014

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 and information is available on the website or via the Administrator. Although the JLAF try to hold meetings throughout the County, due to budget constraints, meetings were held twice at National Park offices. Members of the public are very welcome to attend meetings or send in relevant questions for JLAF members' consideration.

### July 2013: Liaison with National Park

Once Brewed, Walltown, Steel Rigg and National Park offices, Hexham: members received an update and presentation on the Sill Landscape Discovery Centre at Once Brewed, the site of the proposed new development. They also visited Walltown (a former quarry and National Park recreation site with a lake, easy-access paths, a pond and waymarked trails) and Steelrigg to look at easy access paths and consider multi-user routes. In the evening a presentation at National Park offices in Hexham, on the County Council's on-line definitive mapping service was provided with the Council receiving useful feedback from members to help with the enhancement of the site, plus updates including the Coastal AONB, North Pennines AONB and Paths 4 Communities.

### October 2013: Cycling Initiatives in South East Northumberland:

Blyth/Bedlington Park and Longhirst Village Hall: Members met the County Council's cycling officer who explained the recently completed 'Connect 2' cycling project and walked along the river on cycleway and bridleway as far as Atlee Park (part of Bedlington County Park) before travelling to Gallagher Park, part of an old pit reclamation site where they heard about the mountain bike routes which were being constructed with grant aid from the SITA Trust which was set up to support community and environmental improvement projects through the Landfill Communities Fund. In the evening members discussed topics which included Paths4Communities and the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

### January 2014: Liaison with Forestry Commission and other Updates:

National Park offices, Hexham: members had presentations from a representative from the Forestry Commission on Environmental Impact Assessments, the screening process, the public register and consultation process and the English Woodland Grant Scheme. Other presentations included the National Park Interactive Map; and their 'Environment Vision' which generated some advice for the National Park on both these areas. In the evening members discussed the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Simonburn and Wark byways, the Pennines way and the impact on routes from mechanically propelled vehicles.

### April 2014: Liaison with Ford & Etal Estate:

Ford & Etal Estate and Etal Village Hall, Cornhill on Tweed: one of the highlights of the year was when JLAF members met Lord Joicey and Elspeth Gilliland at Ford & Etal estates and had an extremely informative and useful afternoon learning about the estate, particularly with regard to managing a diverse property including its riverside bridleway path and continuing evolving engagement with tourism. Members were asked several questions by the Estate and were pleased to provide advice as requested. In the evening member discussions include the proposed JLAF Wind Farm position statement, consolidating the 'Working with Parishes' process, and pursuing a meeting with the County Council about the Definitive Map and Statement.

### 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 2013 – 30 April 2014

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 and input from appointing authorities and to aim for a more strategic consideration of issues.</li> <li>• Ensure follow-up activities are actioned.</li> <li>• Continue liaison with appointing authorities to plan meetings and ensure relevant follow-up activities from meetings are actioned.</li> </ul>	Ongoing; targeted; noting key/relevant issues
<b>Working Group North</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing 'Working with parishes' initiative</li> <li>• CROW closures and consultations</li> <li>• Horse riders and track usage</li> <li>• Policy statements as required</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
<b>Working Group South</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing 'Working with Parishes' initiative</li> <li>• CROW closures and consultations.</li> <li>• Policy statements as they arise – Wind Farm statement</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/liason 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 and members' use.</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 with training for members provided if required to assist them with their deliberations.	Ongoing as required
<b>Additional tasks</b>	Additional tasks will arise from meetings, members, Defra, Natural England, press releases, Regional Co-ordinator, Huddle; to be dealt with by working groups and/or ad hoc working groups as required.	Ongoing as required

## Members of the JLAF from 1 May 2013 to 30 April 2014

JLAF members can be contacted via the Administrator or at meetings. Member recruitment is held biannually with the next recruitment due in early 2015 for membership from 1 May 2015.

**George Astbury, Vice Chairman** *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.

**Vic Brown, Felton (other interests)** was an outdoor education teacher; now managing a Community Water sports centre on a voluntary basis; also a National Park voluntary ranger and a healthy walks leader. Interests include canoeing, water sports and cycling. Vic is the JLAF representative on the Northumberland Coast AONB

**Angus Collingwood – Cameron, Alnwick (land interests)** is a small landowner actively involved in rural policy and representation for 15 years. He currently heads up the Northern Farmers and Landowners Group, acts as a Trustee for four landed estates, operates as a rural business consultant and runs an internet business. He has a young family and still has time to fish and shoot.

**Gill Featonby, Chairman** *Morpeth (recreational interests)* has a background in agricultural zoology, owns a valuers and auctioneers business in Whitley Bay and is a 'very small farmer'. Gill's interests include Parish Councils, equestrian access, fell walking and taking her dog into 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, Vice Chairman** *Hexham (other interests)* is involved with the development of cycling in Northumberland. His interests include cycling, cycling tourism, rural business, tourism, conservation, rock climbing and orienteering. He is the JLAF representative on the North Pennines AONB Access & Recreation Group.

**Alan Mitcham, Ponteland (recreational user)** retired engineer; experienced cyclist, rambler, hill walker and has a keen interest in rock climbing, cross country ski-ing, orienteering and bird watching.

**Sue Rogers, Alnwick (recreational interests)** continues to work as an access volunteer with an emphasis on training other volunteers. As well as recreational 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.

**Amanda Earnshaw, Hexham (recreational user)** worked at Natural England, prior to retirement, on several projects to extend and improve access opportunities to the countryside, and was involved in local access forums nationally. Amanda's particular interest is in promoting better understanding of access rights and responsibilities.

**Donella Rozario, Greenhead (recreational user)** is semi-retired and was a volunteer walk leader for the County Council and National Park. She runs the small family farm, enjoys taking the dog into the local countryside each day, and is a regular fell walker. A particular interest is access to the countryside, with consideration for traditional farming and land use'.

**Ian Jackson Hexham (other)** is a Chartered Geologist and was Chief of Operations at British Geological Survey until 2011, working as a geologist in the UK, including Northumberland, and worldwide. He walks and bikes extensively and has leisure and professional interest in access matters, including ensuring information on access is available via digital spatial media.

**Jonathan Farries, Rothbury (land interests)** works for the Forestry Commission.

**Cllr Kirsten Francis, National Park Authority appointed member**

**Michael Macgregor, Tarsset (land interests)** is a solicitor, part time hill farmer and keen fell walker

**Mike Bell, National Park Authority appointed member**

**Moray Allan, Morpeth (recreational user)** is a retired Director of Nursing in the NHS. He is a keen hill walker and qualified Mountain Leader and is currently studying Sustainable Rural Development. He has a strong interest in promoting responsible access to the countryside.

**Paul Collins, Elsdon (land interests)**

**Cllr Trevor Thorne, Northumberland County Council member**

# Rights of Way Officers November 2013

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