



Northumberland National Park & County Joint Local Access Forum

12th Annual Report

1 May 2014 – 30 April 2015



"Lost ways" – or "how many signs can you get on a small piece of gate post"

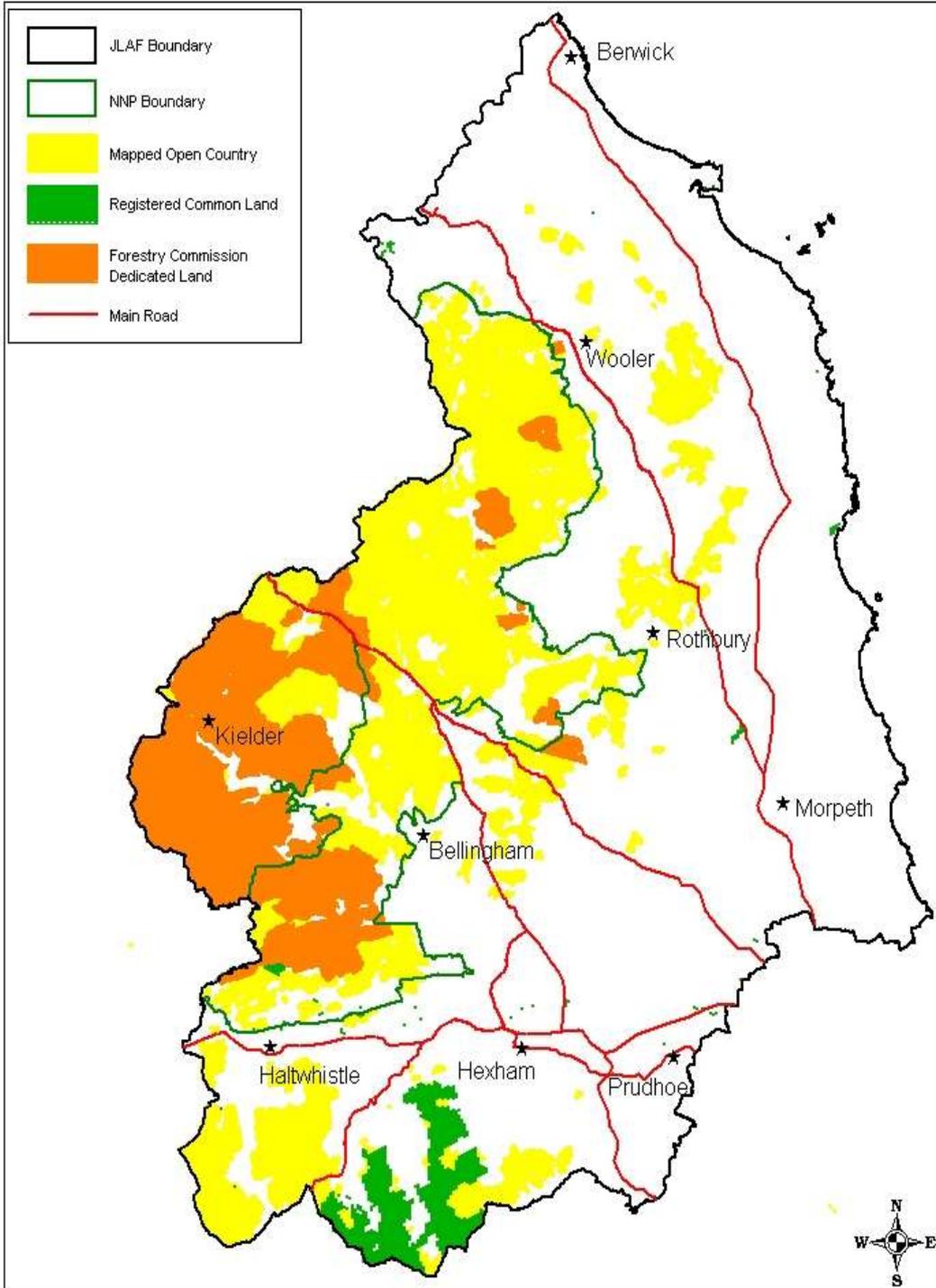
Northumberland National Park & Countryside Joint Local Access Forum Areas of Open Country and Registered Common Land



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 1 May 2014 – 30 April 2015

This has been my final year as JLAF Chairman and it is always interesting to look back through my notes to see what has been achieved during the last 12 months.

With the increasing national interest in cycling - pride of place must go to Ted Liddle's Sandstone Way Project. From an idea of Vic Brown's, Ted has worked extremely hard to devise, publish and promote this new route for cyclists, both nationally and locally. It certainly seems to be going to join the other promoted walking routes as a well-recognised attraction for Northumberland, both for visitors and locals alike. It may also become a useful route for walkers and horse-riders in the future.

The problem with maintenance, particularly of little used routes, continues and will continue throughout the County and National Park as a result of financial constraints on local government. The JLAF is trying to offer advice by re-engaging with Parish Councils, something which has been done in the past. We hope to encourage Parish Councils and Local Groups to look after their own rights of way and to contact their local Rights of Way Officer for advice, and to assist with maintenance where this is practical.

Financial cuts have also had a significant effect on the national organisation of LAFs and we were all very sorry to lose Beryl Bird our regional administrator. She has done an excellent job in keeping us informed and up to date with local and national news. 'Huddle' will not really be an adequate replacement!

We have offered help and user advice in the development of Northumberland County Council's online Definitive Map. The new version is a considerable improvement on the old and has received praise from users.

Northumberland National Park Sill Project has been backed by the JLAF and we are pleased to see that funding has been achieved. We will watch this new development with interest and see if we can offer advice on promoting access throughout both the County and the National Park.

Windfarms have been on the agenda of a number of Parish Councils, and the ever increasing number of planning applications has concerned many inhabitants in Northumberland. The JLAF has given help and advice where this was appropriate. It would appear that the demand for wind farms has now slowed, and our concerns about the continuing invasion of our precious landscapes may be decreasing. The latest JLAF position statement on the *Proliferation of Wind Turbines in Northumberland* was issued in August 2014.

We all give our best wishes to Amanda Earnshaw, our new Chairman elected in April. Of all of us she is undoubtedly very well qualified to take on this role, and we look forward to her thoughts and ideas for the future.

Gill Featonby
Chairman

Joint Local Access Forum Meetings 1 May 2014 – 30 April 2015

The JLAF holds four meetings a year throughout Northumberland to ensure equality of access, with themed afternoon site visits prior to evening meetings. The JLAF continued its aim of, as far as possible the JLAF, meeting in village halls and using local suppliers for refreshments. Information on JLAF meeting is available on the website or via the Administrator. Although the JLAF try to hold meetings throughout the County, due to budget constraints, meetings may sometimes have to be held at Northumberland National Park offices. Members of the public are very welcome to attend meetings or send in relevant questions for JLAF members' consideration.

17 July 2014: Theme: Liaison with the Northumberland Coast AONB: Members had an interesting visit to the Coast led Ian Robson from the Coastal AONB, to look primarily at Quiet Lanes at Bamburgh. The aim of Quiet Lanes is not to restrict choice but to widen it so that a variety of travellers and travel modes are possible and enjoyable. The JLAF were posed several questions such as speed limit imposition, suitability of route surfaces and promotion of the routes. In the evening members met at Bamburgh Pavilion and discussed various issues including Quiet Lanes, re-instating the JLAF Work Plan, the RoWIP and the Local Transport Plan. The JLAF also approved their latest position statement on the *Proliferation of Wind Turbines in Northumberland* issued in August 2014.

23 October 2014: Theme: Liaison with Northumberland National Park: Climate Change Adaptation Breamish Valley: held in conjunction with the National Park members spent an informative afternoon in the Breamish Valley considering issues including *What does climate change mean for access? How do we spread the message of wildfire risk to the general public? Would JLAF members benefit from a basic level of training from the wildfire experts at Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service? What impact can riverbank erosion have on access, archaeology etc and what can we do about it?* The evening meeting was held at Ingram Village Hall and considered the spate of Forestry Commission applications, new Strategy Development Working Group, MENE Data 'Visits to the Natural Environment' Quarterly statistics and update on the Sill.

22 January 2015: Theme: Rights of Way Training and the new JLAF Action Plan. Members met at Eastburn for Rights of Way legislation update training provided by S Rickitt and attended by JLAF members and guests from other LAFS and J Milner from Natural England. Members also took part in a workshop to start formulating the new JLAF Action Plan led by I Jackson and M Allan which will be an on-going piece of work.

16 April 2015: Theme: JLAF Action Plan and member training: Members spent some time progressing the draft Action Plan then had sessions on 'Introduction to Highways Issues' from NCC and NPA and a presentation on 'Needs of different user groups and development of multi-user routes' from JLAF member Sue Rogers. The evening meeting discussed issues including progressing the JLAF Action Plan, the Pennine Way, Local Nature Partnerships, closures and the Ordnance Survey Pilot project 'Detailed Path network'. Elections take place at this meeting which saw a new Chairman, Amanda Earnshaw appointed from 1 May 2015.

Representation during 2014-2015 on:

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

JLAF Recruitment 2015

Following a decision made by Northumberland National Park Authority, it was agreed that JLAF recruitment would now be on a biennial basis. Consequently there was a recruitment drive in March 2015 which resulted in two new members from 1 May 2015. JLAF membership from that date would be

only 17 members including two appointing authority members. This is amongst the lowest membership the JLAF has had since its inception. The next recruitment will take place early in 2017.

JLAF Work Plan and Priorities 1 May 2014 – 31 December 2014*

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

*New JLAF Action Plan will be available for 2015.

Members of the JLAF from 1 May 2014 to 30 April 2015

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, Tasset (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)(resigned)

Cllr Trevor Thorne, Northumberland County Council appointed member

Rights of Way Officers November 2013

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Northumberland National Park

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