

Northumberland National Park Authority



Northumberland
COUNTY COUNCIL

Northumberland National Park & County Joint Local Access Forum

7th Annual Report

1 May 2009 – 30 April 2010

For further information please contact:
Marion Hume, Joint Local Access Forum Administrator
Tel: 01434 611 550 Email: marion.hume@npa.org.uk or jlaf@npa.org.uk

Published by © Northumberland National Park Authority
Eastburn, South Park, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 1BS

Website: www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk

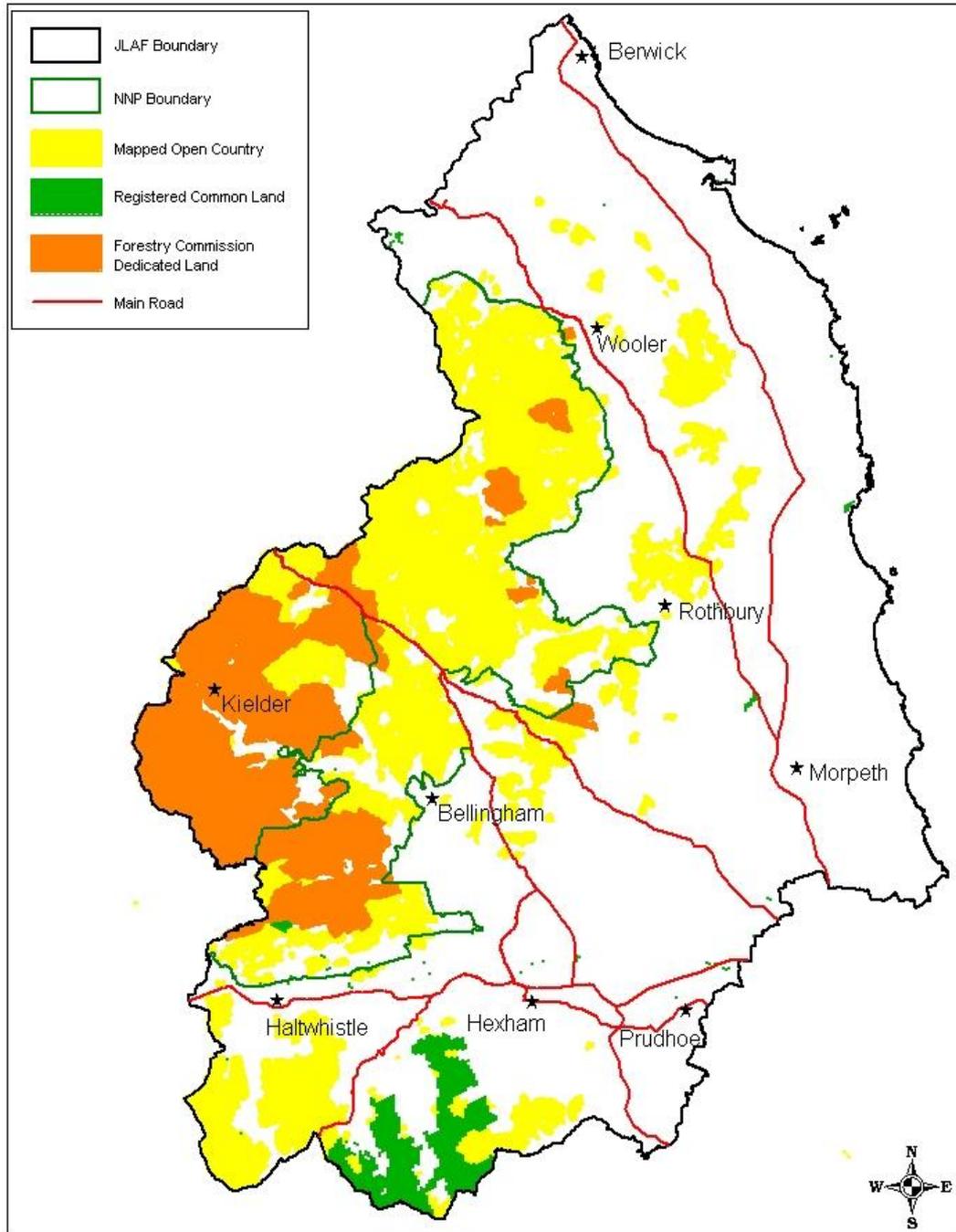
Northumberland National Park & Countryside Joint Local Access Forum Areas of Open Country and Registered Common Land



Scale 1:501790

Compiled by Northumberland National Park Authority on 24 September 2007

Northumberland National Park Authority



This product contains mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2007. Licence number 100022521

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 (previously Countryside) 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 and Northumberland County Council, the JLAF advises these authorities and other Section 94 (4) bodies including the Secretary of State; DEFRA; Ministry of Defence; Natural England; Forestry Commission; English Heritage; and town and parish councils in Northumberland.

The JLAF also has representation on the North Pennines AONB Partnership Access Working Group and 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, three 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 can examine issues in much more detail than might be possible at larger, more infrequent 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 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.

Chairs Remarks

This is my first Annual Report as Chair and I have very much enjoyed a year which has been very busy for the Joint Local Access Forum. My first and foremost remark must be as thanks to our members - it is often forgotten that JLAF members are volunteers who willingly give of their time and expertise to ensure that the JLAF is a vibrant and knowledgeable meeting of individuals with many diverse points of view. I am extremely appreciative of their input during the year both at our quarterly meetings and in dealing with other items within the three working groups.

The JLAF covers the whole of Northumberland which encompasses the Northumberland National Park, parts of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Northumberland Coastal AONB as well as the rest of Northumberland. We have members from all geographic extremities which helps give a balance to our group. As well as a wide geographical area we also have a wide remit of responsibilities which has seen us tackle, during the year, issues as diverse as surfacing of Rights of Way, Sustrans' development of routes, the MOSAIC project (Campaign for National Parks) to encourage different ethnic groups into the Countryside, the National Park Management Plan consultation and the impact of the large scale visitor attractions currently being developed by Kielder Partnership.

One of our more significant actions was a specific meeting to consider Northumberland County Council's proposals for dealing with vehicle access to the Byway network at Blanchland and Slaley. This issue was fully debated and resulted in an expansive considered response to the Council which we hope provided a balanced view on how best to tackle the issue.

We have a very close relationship with our two appointing authorities both as a JLAF and via the individual members. I believe that this working relationship is of significant benefit to both parties and is a very good example of the JLAF actively fulfilling its statutory duty to good effect. We remain concerned at the impact of previous budgetary cuts and others which may occur in the future on the ROW network within the County and its maintenance and congratulate both the National Park Authority and the Council on their record in this area during these very challenging times.

One area which has been less successful during the year is our ability to liaise with Central Government, a function carried out by the England Access Forum and the Regional Access Forum; changes within both of these groups have, disappointingly, affected our ability to pass and receive information to government and a long term solution to this is being sought by Natural England at local and national levels. Another area where slow progress has been made is Coastal Access where the number of consultations increases, yet the same questions keep being asked. We very much hope that government listens to the various comments made and that the introduction of this new form of access progresses smoothly. The JLAF will no doubt be heavily involved in the detail once our area is targeted.

There are many challenges which we will face during the coming year both in standing up for new access where appropriate and ensuring that existing rights are maintained in these austere times of budgetary constraint. I am grateful to the assistance provided by my vice chairs, David Baines and Nicola Thompson and also Marion Hume, our administrative support officer who tirelessly deals with items on a day to day basis.

James Brown, Chair of the JLAF 2009 - 2010

Joint Local Access Forum Meetings 1 May 2009 – 30 April 2010

The JLAF covers an extensive area and has adopted the principle of holding meetings at various locations in Northumberland to ensure equality of access to meetings. In an attempt at cutting its carbon footprint and reduce overall costs, the JLAF tries to travel to meetings by mini-bus. The JLAF met on four occasions with themed afternoon site visits held prior to each evening meeting. Some of the JLAF highlights included helping the National Park towards the completion of the project at Milecastle 38 on Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, input into the National Park Management Plan, publishing three position statements on: Access to Water, Mechanically Propelled Vehicles and Surfaces and their contribution to the County Council's consultation on Slaley Forest.

23 July 2009 – 'Developing Trails and Routes': the JLAF visited parts of the South Tyne Trail including Lambley Viaduct, and looking at various issues including surfaces and access which provided a background to their surfaces position paper and also learned about the Living North Pennines project with a visit to Alston, accompanied by an officer from the North Pennines AONB. The evening meeting in Brampton included a discussion on the dangers of walking dogs near livestock.

22 October 2009 - 'Slaley Forest and Blanchland Moor Boats': The JLAF visited Slaley and took part in an afternoon visit to facilitate their response to the County Council's consultation on Slaley Forest and Blanchland Moor Boats assessment and management options consultation which included looking at areas in the forest and adjoining moorland which had been damaged by illegal or unsympathetic use of motor vehicles. The evening meeting provided a chance for the JLAF to learn more about Sustrans and particularly, discuss issues relating to surfaces.

28 January 2010 - 'Audience Development in the National Park': The JLAF visited Stannington and heard presentations from National Park officers on the National Park Audience Development and Tourism Development strategies and provided input to the discussions. They also heard from representatives of MOSAIC which is trying to achieve an increase in ethnic minority visitors to the National Parks by building sustainable links between ethnic minority community leaders, nine of the National Parks and YHA. The evening meeting gave an opportunity to learn about LEADER and meet a beneficiary and for the JLAF to suggest ways in which project ideas relating to access improvement and facilitation could be initiated.

22 April 2010 - 'Kielder - commercial woodland or tourism resource.' The JLAF last visited Kielder Water and Forest Park in 2006 and received a further update at their meeting in Stannington in 2008. The aim of the visit was to see what further developments had taken place and to comment on future proposals including the impact of the Lakeside Way, off-road safaris through the forest, mountain bike trails with input from the Recreation, Community and Tourism Manager and the Kielder Arts Curator. A strategic overview of developments at Kielder was provided in the evening along with a presentation by the National Park Senior Ranger (South) on the Range Year in the South of the Park.

The Chair, Vice Chair and appointing authority officers attend meetings of the North East Regional LAFs which are currently organised, and attended, by Natural England with any relevant feedback provided to the JLAF members. The JLAF is also represented on the England Access Forum by Pamela Brooks (till April 2010).

There are three Working Groups, tasked with addressing individual issues such as writing position statements and reviewing consultations, whilst additional ad hoc working groups are set up as required to address specific issues at a more detailed level.

JLAF Work Plan and Priorities for 2009 – 2010

Area	Action required	Progress
Rights of Way Improvement Plan implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on annual work plan • Monitor implementation of RoWIP • Ensure RoWIP meshes with the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 	Ongoing with regular liaison with County Council
Quarterly meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select venues/themes for meetings • Organise targeted site visits relevant to current access and recreational issues including input from appointing authorities 	Ongoing; targeted; cognisance taken of relevant issues
Working Groups Working Group One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Statement on Access to Water • NNPA Management Plan consultation /actions/follow-up • Coastal Access Consultation • Dealing with Open Access Restriction consultations 	Completed Ongoing Completed Ongoing
Working Group Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Statement on Surfaces • Permissive access position statement • Parish Council liaison • Disconnects/Higher Level Stewardship/Permissive Access 	Completed Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Working Group Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Statement on MPV's • Healthy Walks / Education • Urban issues • Access promotion • Dogs and Livestock • Ethnic Group Issues 	Completed Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Continue to raise JLAF Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building contacts/liasion with neighbouring LAFs/relevant Section S94/4 bodies • Promote county-wide 'joined-up-thinking' on access and recreation 	Ongoing Ongoing inc. regional meetings, EAF
Continue training members of the JLAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in training events, workshops etc • Rights of way legislation • Issue targeted visits for JLAF members 	Ongoing
Oversight of regional routes; monitor CROW open access/ 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 	Ongoing As required As required
Monitor developments	Monitor proposed developments which can be detrimental to public access as required	As required
Closure consultations	Give timely responses based on JLAF expertise and local knowledge	Ongoing as required
Additional tasks	Dealt with in a timely way by working groups or an ad hoc working group as required.	Ongoing

Meeting dates for 2010 -2011 are Thursday 22 July, Thursday 21 October, Thursday 27 January and Thursday 14 April. Meeting details are available on the website www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk/lookingafter

Members of the JLAF from 1 May 2009 to 30 April 2010

For the period 2009 – 2010 there were 22 members with one member retiring half-way through the year. An annual recruitment drive is held place each spring. JLAF members can be contacted via the Administrator.

George Astbury, *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.

David Baines, *Vice Chair, West Woodburn (other interests)* has a wide range of interests including walking, conservation, agriculture, the environment and health. He is a member of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust.

Erica Bamford, *Berwick upon Tweed (recreational interests)* is a former social worker and lecturer in Social Work. Erica's areas of interest include walking, mobility access, conservation, 'Walking for Health' and local history.

Pamela Brooks, *Haltwhistle (other interests)* is a retired OFSTED Inspector whose areas of interest include long distance walking, cycling, horse riding, conservation, the Ramblers' Association, Long Distance Walkers' Association, BHS and Wildlife Trust.

James Brown, *Chair, 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 and is a National Park voluntary ranger. Interests include canoeing and water sports and she is also a healthy walks leader.

Michael Catlin, *Blyth (recreational interests)* has several outdoor interests including walking and access for less abled users; since joining the JLAF he has been working with the national park rangers in developing paths for use by less abled visitors.

Conrad Clayton, *Alnwick (recreational interests)* is semi-retired though still works in an agricultural setting. His interests include mountain biking, walking, camping and riding.

Edward Carrington, *Hexham (other interests)* is a retired head of an outdoor centre, has a wide range of interests including being co-ordinator of an informal walking group, climbing, conservation and health.

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, *Morpeth (recreational interests)* has a background is agricultural zoology, is a partner in a firm of auctioneers and valuers, as well as an IT manager and a 'very small farmer'. Gill's interests include horse riding and taking her dog into the countryside.

Graham Gill, *Bellingham (land interests)* is the Forest District Manager for Forest Enterprise (Kielder). He is interested in walking, cycling, mountain biking, tourism, rural business and conservation.

Lorraine Hershon, *Haltwhistle (recreational interests)* has a background in biological sciences; her interests are mobility access, environment and education (retired August)

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

Peter Nicholson, *(NPA appointee)* is a keen sailor and skier and has an extensive background in outdoor pursuits.

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.

Nick Rossiter, *Hexham (other interests)* has returned to the JLAF after a few years absence; his interests include bird watching and areas of expertise include his extensive ecological knowledge.

Richard Seaman, *Whitfield (land interests)* is a land manager

Alan Sharp *Haltwhistle (NPA Appointee)* is a land agent estate manager whose interests include land management, the National Trust, Haltwhistle Town Council and walking.

Nicola Thompson, Vice Chair, Hexham (land interests) is a research fellow with a background in rural development and countryside management. Interests include running, rural business, conservation and education

David Towns, Morpeth (NCC appointee) is a solicitor in the property department of a law firm and is interested in all legal matters relating to property and access.

Susan Vaughan, Newcastle (recreational interests) has a background in sports education, grant making and fund raising. She has a keen interest in rock climbing, urban issues, advocacy and working with diverse groups.

Map showing JLAF members 2009 – 2010

