

Northumberland National Park Authority



Northumberland
COUNTY COUNCIL

Northumberland National Park & County Joint Local Access Forum

6th Annual Report

1 May 2008 – 30 April 2009

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

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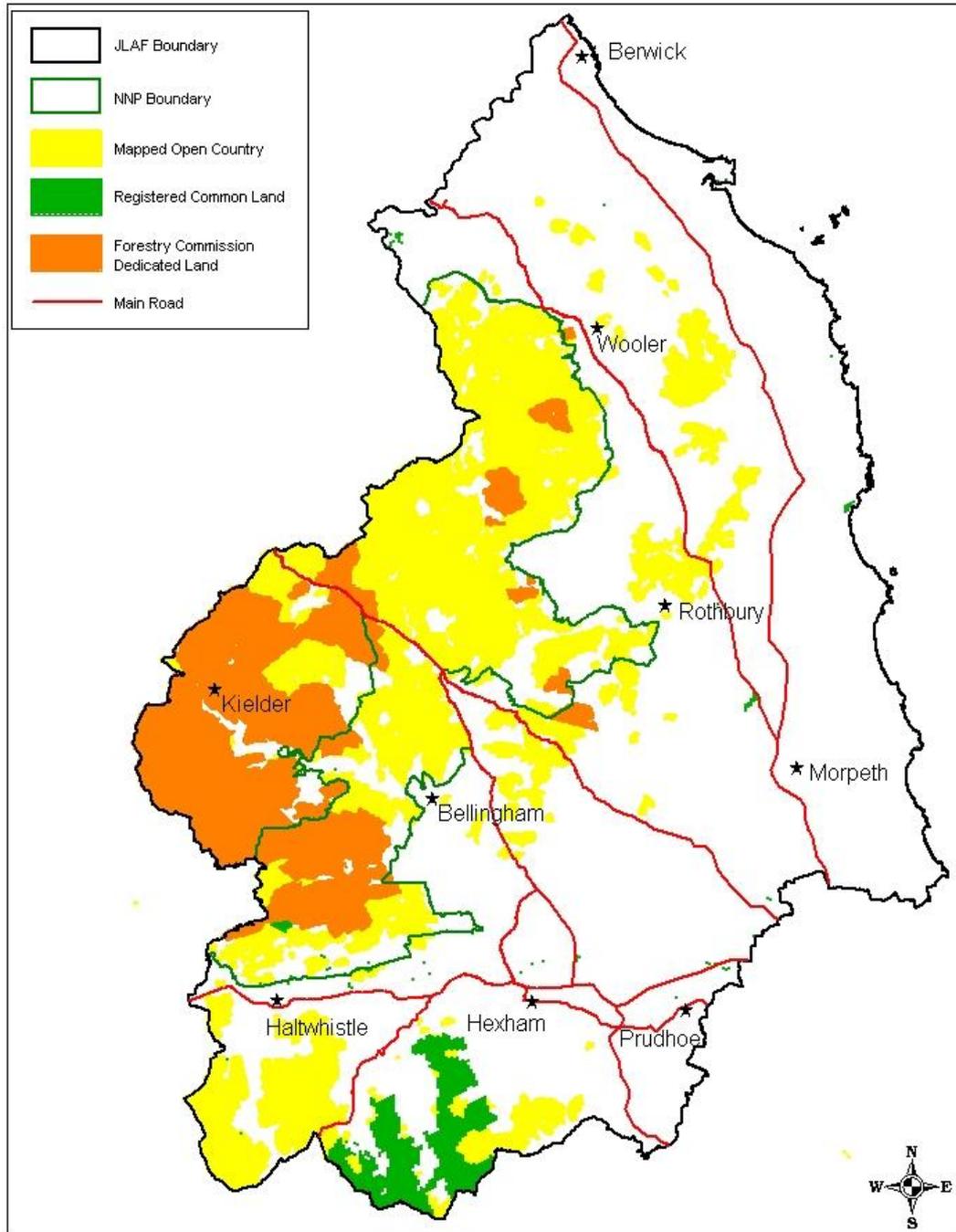
Northumberland National Park & Countryside Joint Local Access Forum Areas of Open Country and Registered Common Land



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 (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 Secretary of State; DEFRA; Ministry of Defence; Natural England; Forestry Commission; English Heritage; Sport England; 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:
 - a) that all 'access land' is accessible from a public highway (road or PRow);
 - b) that all routes promoted with public funding are maintained, open and accessible to legitimate users;
 - c) 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 Annual Report marks the end of the second full year during which the Joint Local Access Forum has assumed statutory responsibility for the county of Northumberland. This is an extensive remit for a body of volunteers encompassing, as it does, our National Park, the Coastal AONB, the part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northumberland, 3140 miles of Public Rights of Way and 115,270 hectares of open access land, as well as Country Parks and urban green spaces.

This has increased the extent of our responsibilities but has also brought a real chance of achieving a coherent overview of issues which, in their different forms, affect us on a county-wide basis. During the past year, as examples of this diversity, we have produced a position statement on mechanically propelled vehicles both in urban and rural settings; we have offered advice on improved access for those with disabilities; and we have considered the implications for major landowners of improving recreational access to our countryside.

Support for our Countryside Access and Recreation Teams at the National Park and the County Council is at the heart of what we do. This year we have once again worked alongside our officers, deciding on priorities for extending and improving the Rights of Way network in ways which will benefit both our residents and our visitors. Despite major flooding which ravaged much-loved routes, destroyed bridges and diverted limited funding into repairs, I know that a great deal has been achieved.

An important development this year has been the creation of the England Access Forum which gives local access forums the opportunity to influence the policy of Natural England at a national level. One immediate outcome has been to achieve the increased funding which has provided Regional Co-ordinators. This should enable more effective communication to take place within and between the eight regions, important both for disseminating information and for identifying issues which need to be debated. (Details of agendas and minutes can be found at www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk/lookingafter)

As we look forward to the coming year the first steps in implementation of Coastal Access lie ahead of us. Local Access Forums have been given a critical role in this aspect of the Marine Bill and their advice will be required at many stages along the way. Whilst we are fortunate in Northumberland to have almost all our glorious coastline accessible on foot, this ambitious legislation allows for higher rights, for cyclists and horse riders, wherever feasible, and contains a vision of "spreading room" across headlands.

So, as I stand down as Chair and hand office over to an excellent new team, I would like to take this opportunity to wish James Brown a successful and productive year ahead. I have no doubt that he will be assisted, as I was, by the enthusiasm and expertise of our JLAF members, the professional support of the Access Teams of Northumberland National Park and Northumberland County Council and, especially, through the daily assistance of Marion Hume, our much-valued Administrator.

Pamela Brooks, Chair of the JLAF 2008 - 2009

Joint Local Access Forum Meetings 1 May 2008 – 30 April 2009

As the JLAF covers such an extensive area it has adopted the principle of holding meetings at various locations throughout Northumberland, to ensure equality of access to meetings. In an attempt at cutting its carbon footprint, the JLAF tries to travel to site visits and meetings by mini-bus. The Forum met on four occasions with themed afternoon site visits held prior to each main evening meeting.

24 July 2008: This meeting was held in the Breamish Valley and Ingram Village Hall with the theme of '*Land Manager Perspective of wider public access: can sporting interests and access be reconciled?*' The site visit included a talk by the National Park Northern area manager, a visit to a tenanted farm, a visit to Linhope Estate to look at a grouse moor and a talk on the Northumberland Fire Group. The evening meeting topics included access and recreation on the Otterburn ranges, the Marine Bill, the England Access Forum, Discovering Lost Ways and approval of our new Terms of Reference which included a change of name to Northumberland National Park and County JLAF.

30 October 2008: With the theme of '*Coastal Access and the Marine Bill*' an interesting meeting was held at Bell View Centre, Belford. The site visit involved a presentation by the Coastal AONB, a talk by the Environment Agency on the Northumberland 4Shores Project, a walk to Longbridge End and a presentation on Druridge Bay. Topics in the evening included a presentation on the National Park Management Plan, the Natural England Stakeholder Working Group and Rights of Way network improvements.

29 January 2009: The stately venue of Wallington was the venue for this meeting which had the theme of '*Promoting and managing access – National Trust policies*'. The site visit included a walk to look at the multi-user paths in the grounds and presentations on the local interpretation of the Trust's access policies and their approach to access and opportunities for enjoyment by different user groups. The evening meeting moved to Cambo Village Hall and focussed primarily on the RoWIP Annual Progress Report and various key issues arising from this.

23 April 2009: The theme of this meeting was '*A debate between the various users of inland waterways*' including the Tyne Rivers Trust, the impact of access on fishing and consideration of how canoeists, fishermen and walkers can all enjoy their own pursuits in the countryside cohesively. The site visit incorporated a visit to various locations in the Tyne Rivers area. In the evening the JLAF met at the National Park offices. The new chair for the forthcoming year was elected and it was decided to have two vice chairs rather than one. Members also considered topics including the creation of multi-user routes between communities and a report on the RoW Performance Indicators.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Administrator attend regular meetings of the North East Regional LAFs, also attended by representatives from the region's LAFs including Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Redcar & Cleveland. These regional meetings are currently organised, and attended, by Natural England. Any relevant feedback from these meetings is provided to the JLAF members. The Chair also attends meetings of the England Access Forum.

JLAF members meet in three Working Groups, tasked with addressing individual issues such as consultation documents, closures, JLAF initiatives such as 'Parish Pride' etc and to recommend courses of action for the JLAF. Additional ad hoc working groups are set up as required to address specific issues at a more detailed level.

Meeting dates for 2009 -2010 are Thursday 23 July, Thursday 22 October, Thursday 28 January and Thursday 22 April. Meeting details are available on the website www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk/lookingafter

JLAF Work Plan and Priorities for 2008 – 2009

	Area	Action required	Priority
1	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 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) 	1
2	Quarterly meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select venues and themes for quarterly meetings • Organise targeted visits relevant to current access and recreational issues 	1
3 3a	Working Groups Working Group One	Develop position papers for JLAF endorsement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Water • Marine Bill/Coastal Access • Horse riding • Access for cyclists including cycle hubs • Access for those with mobility difficulties 	1/2
3b	Working Group Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify disconnects to Rights of Way network and advise the relevant authorities • Follow on from Parish Pride • Following up Wagon Ways • Green Exercise 	1/2
3c	Working Group Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policy on mechanically propelled vehicles • Review wind farm proposals • Propose a revision of the JLAF Action Plan 2009 – 2010 • Examine Local Area Agreements 	1/2
4	Continue to raise JLAF Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep building contacts/liaison with neighbouring LAFs/relevant Section S94/4 bodies • Promote county-wide 'joined-up-thinking' on access and recreation 	1/2
5	Continue training members of the JLAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in training events, workshops etc • Rights of way legislation • Issue targeted visits for JLAF members 	3
6	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 	4
7	Monitor developments	Monitor proposed developments which can be detrimental to public access as required	
8	Closure consultations	Consider when required; give timely responses based on JLAF expertise and local knowledge	
9	Additional tasks	To be dealt with in a timely way by working groups or an ad hoc working group as required.	

Members of the JLAF from 1 May 2008 to 30 April 2009

For the period 2008 – 2009 there were 21 members. An annual recruitment drive is held each spring. JLAF members can be contacted via the Administrator.

George Astbury, Stocksfield (*other interests*)

George is a retired farmer and lists his interests as walking, shooting, off-road motorised vehicle use including 4-wheel drive, and renewable energy.

David Baines, West Woodburn (*other interests*)

David 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*)

Erica 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 – *Chair* (*other interests*)

Pamela is a retired teacher and OFSTED Inspector. Pamela's areas of interest include long distance walking, cycling, horse riding and conservation. She is a member of the Ramblers' Association, Long Distance Walkers' Association, BHS and Wildlife Trust.

James Brown, Hexham – *Vice Chair* (*land interests*)

James 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*)

Vic, who was an outdoor education teacher, is a National Park voluntary ranger. She is also involved with the British Canoe Union as a regional committee member and access advisor for Wansbeck and Blyth, as well as being a healthy walks leader.

Eddie Carrington, Hexham (*other interests*)

Eddie 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*)

Angus 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.

Richard Cross, West Woodburn (*land interests*)

Richard is a retired Army Officer. Richard's areas of interest include walking, horse-riding, conservation and environmental issues, hunting and fishing.

Gill Featonby, Morpeth (*recreational interests*)

Gill, whose 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. .

Susan Finch, Harbottle (*land interests*)

Sue's background is in tourism and general agriculture and her interests lie in the areas of tourism and rural business, as well as education.

Graham Gill, Bellingham (*land interests*)

Graham 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*)

Lorraine's background is biological sciences; amongst her interests are mobility access, the environment and education and she is a trustee of ADAPT and the Cumbrian Disability Network.

Ted Liddle, Hexham (*other interests*)

Ted is involved with the development of cycling in Northumberland. His areas of interest include cycling, tourism, rural business, conservation, rock climbing and orienteering.

Anthony Murray, Wooler (NCC appointee)

Anthony owns a garden centre. He is interested in promoting the benefits of exercise, health and wellbeing and in making the best of the environment responsibly.

Peter Nicholson, (NPA appointee)

Peter is a keen sailor and skier and has a background in outdoor pursuits.

Sue Rogers, Alnwick (recreational interests)

Though retired, Sue continues to work as a part-time equestrian consultant. As well as riding, her areas of interest include walking, orienteering, tourism and endurance riding.

Alan Sharp (Haltwhistle) (NPA Appointee)

Alan is a land agent estate manager whose interests include land management, the National Trust, Haltwhistle Town Council and walking.

Nicola Thompson, Hexham (land interests)

Nicola is a research fellow with a background in rural development and countryside management. She is interested in walking, running, tourism, rural business, conservation and education

Susan Vaughan, Newcastle (recreational interests)

Susan 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.

Kevin Vigars, Hexham (other interests)

Kevin is Access Development Officer at Gateshead Council and lists as his interests walking, tourism, rural business, open access and conservation.

Some of the JLAF members, including some new members, and appointing authority officers at the JLAF meeting held on 23 April 2009.



Back l to r: David Baines, Ed Carrington, Richard Cross, Mike Catlin, James Brown (Chair), Mike Jeffrey, Erica Bamford. Middle: Sue Rogers, David Brookes, Conrad Clayton, Nick Rossiter, Richard Seaman. Front: Vic Brown, Alan Sharp, Sue Vaughan, Pam Brooks, Nicola Bell, Marion Hume, Gill Featonby (standing).