

## **Durham Local Access Forum Terms of Reference**

### **Title**

- i. The Forum shall be known as the County Durham Local Access Forum.

### **Role and Responsibilities**

- ii. The primary purpose of the County Durham Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the local authority and to the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests. The Forum will provide advice on and related issues where they are of local relevance.
- iii. The County Durham Local Access Forum will give advice on three main topics:
  - the development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people;
  - improving the rights of way network;
  - implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside.
- iv. The County Durham Local Access Forum will:
  - develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside;
  - provide advice on the preparation of Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Durham County;
  - provide advice to the Countryside Agency on long term restrictions and exclusions to open access land
  - respect local circumstances and different interests while operating within national guidance;
  - provide advice on issues of principle and good practice which is consistent with national guidance;
  - engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible;
  - clear the nature of differing views where consensus does not exist.

In carrying out these functions, the Forum shall have regard to:

- the needs of land management;
- the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area;
- guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State;
- proper liaison with neighbouring authorities and local access forums.

### **Membership**

v. The membership will:

- be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group or coalition of like interests; and
- include a cross-section of local interests in the countryside
- act in the best interests of people generally who may benefit from improvements to public access

vi. The membership will include:

- a chairman and vice chairman who will be elected by the forum members at their first formal meeting; and
- a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 22 members.

vii. - Members in total must bring a wide range of experience, including;

- recreational use, for example walking, riding, climbing, cycling;
- land management, for example tenants, landowners and occupiers of access land or land crossed by local rights of way; and
- nature conservation, heritage, tourism, health, business, trade unions and transport.
- representation in any category from at least one individual with experience of the needs of the disabled will be strongly encouraged.

- viii. Durham County Council will nominate one member of their authority as a member of the County Durham Local Access Forum.
- ix. The Forum shall contain a reasonable balance of members from each of the categories. Members who individually have experience each of the categories in paragraph 7 will be particularly useful.
- x. Members will be appointed by the authority, according to selection criteria, which assesses whether candidates have sufficient experience of access to the countryside to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving local access provision.
- xi. Before appointment, members will be asked to confirm:
  - their support of the positive purpose of the Forum as set out in paragraphs 2,3 & 4 above;
  - their commitment to working within the terms of reference and achieving the aims of the Forum through constructive working with other members; and
  - that they are able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings, attend training and to network with a wide range of interests outside meetings.

### **Administration**

- xii. Meetings will be held at least twice a year and more frequently when necessary.
- xiii. Meeting agendas will be agreed between the Chairman and the Secretary.
- xiv. Meetings will be advertised in advance and held in public.
- xv. Agendas, papers and minutes of the meeting will be available to the public.
- xvi. The Chairman will invite observers to the meeting when appropriate.
- xvii. Observers will be able to contribute at the meeting at the discretion of the Chairman.
- xviii. The public will be able to ask questions on the business of the meeting at the discretion of the Chairman.