

COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Annual Report 2007/8

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Chairman's Foreword

I am delighted to commend this annual report to you in what has been a significant "*milestone*" year in the life of the Durham County Local Access Forum (LAF)!

After a long gestation Durham County Council together with its key partner the LAF formally published the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) in November 2007, and launched it in February 2008.

The ROWIP will be a vital tool to shape the future of access to Durham's countryside and the LAF has already been instrumental in seeking to secure resources for its implementation and to foster the joined up approach that will be vital to its success. The Chairman and Vice Chair met with the Leader of the County Council to discuss resource allocation for countryside access and a meeting was held with members of the Senior Management Team of the authority to establish how a corporate approach to its implementation of the ROWIP can be best secured. These meetings followed our input to earlier drafts of the ROWIP and our role in shaping the final document which had been the result of extensive consultation with users.

As the owners of considerable areas of land with greater potential for access we have been actively pursuing the recommendation of the County Council's Scrutiny Panel

that consideration be given to the Dedication of Land for access – we are still hopeful of success!

We have been actively involved in a variety of regional and national issues having taken the view that we have “more clout” by working with other LAFs in the region. Cooperation with other LAFs and with Natural England is likely to remain a priority in 2008/09 as we move towards a more a focussed work programme. There is no doubt that access to the countryside will become increasingly important as it currently represents an untapped resource which has more potential to support the economy by encouraging visits from tourists and to encourage local people to use the outdoors to improve their health and well being.

I should like to record the thanks of the LAF to Barbara Crozier who was a great supporter of our activities and the source of considerable knowledge particularly about all things equestrian. Barbara sadly passed away in January 2008 and our condolences go to members of her family.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our activities. If you have any comments please do get in touch.

Geoff Hughes
Chairman Durham County Local Access Forum
March 2008

William Salvin (resigned March 2008)

Mr Salvin represents community interests as a Councillor of Teesdale District Council and is a land agent representing landowner / occupier interests including involvement with the Country Land and Business Association. He lives and works in Teesdale.

Roger Cornwell

Mr Cornwell represents walkers and is Footpaths Officer for the Durham Group of the Ramblers' Association and Chair of the City of Durham Trust.

Barbara Crozier (deceased January 2008)

Ms Crozier lives in the north of the County and is a keen equestrian, representing the British Horse Society amongst other equestrian groups.

Gael Dixon (resigned March 2008)

Ms Dixon lives in the east of the County and mainly represents carriage driving and equestrian interests.

Alan Dougherty

Originally from Somerset, Alan Dougherty has lived in Teesdale with his wife and daughter for the past seventeen years. He works as a part-time teacher at Barnard Castle School. A mountaineer for some thirty-seven years, he has climbed rock and ice in a variety of locations, ascended new routes and contributed to climbing guidebooks. Formally an active caver, and qualified caving instructor, he has descended several of the world's deepest systems. Other outdoors interests include fell-running, mountain-biking and ski-touring.

Bryan Harwood (resigned March 2008)

Mr Harwood has broad experience at a national level with the Youth Hostel Association and involvement with the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Brian Hodgson

Mr Hodgson lives in central Durham and is an experienced landowner and farmer, as well as having been involved in several landowner groups.

Robert Kirton-Darling

Mr Kirton-Darling is a Land Agent and farmer who lives in the north of the County. He is also a member of Country Land and Business Association and Tyne Tees Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

David Maughan

Mr Maughan is farmer in south west Durham and represents landowner/occupier interests through his involvement in the National Farmers Union.

County Councillor Bob Pendlebury

Councillor Pendlebury is a keen walker, and is County Council Cabinet Member for Transport and sustainability.

Fred Wright (resigned March 2008)

Mr Wright represents motor sport interests and has a keen interest in various countryside matters.

Marilyn Gibson (appointed March 2008)

Mrs Gibson is a former teacher and keen horserider who is now an active member of the British Horse Society in County Durham, and currently acting County Bridleways Officer.

Neil Gander (appointed March 2008)

Mr Gander is a freelance journalist with a particular interest in mountain-biking, having written a guide to the activity within County Durham, as well as being a keen walker and a former voluntary ranger.

Jim Welch (appointed March 2008)

Mr Welch is involved with a number of organisations representing blind and partially-sighted people, and other disability groups, including being the founder and chairman of Blind Life in Durham.

Dates of Meetings 2007/8

The Forum met on the following dates:

30th April 2007 at the Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgefield
20th August 2007 at the Green House, Annfield Plain
19th November 2007 at County Hall, Durham
31st March 2008 at Sedgefield Borough Council Offices, Spennymoor

Business of the Forum

- ROWIP
- Regional letter to CE of Natural England
- Scrutiny Project including dedication of County Council land
- Open Access updates
- Guidance on Local Access Forums (new regulations)
- Feedback from Site Visit (Bishop Middleham to Hardwick)
- Access to the Coast – updates and Defra consultation
- Tyne and Wear Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation
- Regional Co-ordination / Regional Training Event / Chairs & Vice Chairs meetings
- DEFRA Consultation - Implementation of the right to apply for orders to extinguish and divert public rights of way, and associated rights of appeal

- Consultation on activation and expiry of fire prevention restrictions under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Minutes of the Rights of Way Liaison Group
- Logo for Forum
- Alleygates – County Council presentation
- Budget Consultation
- LAF Handbook

Attendance 2007/8

Name	30.04.07	20.08.07	19.11.07	31.03.08
R Cornwell	√	√	√	√
B Crozier	√	√		
G Dixon	√	√	√	
A Dougherty		√	√	
B Harwood				√
B Hodgson			√	
G Hughes		√	√	√
R Kirton Darling				√
D Maughan				√
R Pendlebury	√			√
W Salvin	√			
S Scoffin	√	√		√
M Gibson				√
N Gander				√
J Welch				√

Contacts

Secretary

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Forum Website (Contains Minutes of all meetings and Annual Reports)
www.durham.gov.uk/laf

The Forum would like to thank the Officers for their continued support.