



Annual Report 2007

**Cumbria
Local Access
Forum**

Chairman's Introduction

I am optimistic about the future despite signs of increasingly testing financial times ahead. Our partnership with the County Council is proving effective in raising issues, exploring solutions, and identifying priorities. Cumbria Countryside Access (CCA) is bringing together the County Council, the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales Park Authorities and the three Local Access Forums. While it is early days, the potential for presenting support of consistent quality to visitors and natives alike is considerable.

For the first time in five years, I have to report a decline in the rate of progress in access provision in Cumbria. The formation of a Countryside Access team including rangers and an emerging volunteer force have arrested the dark days of year-on-year decline and are a lasting achievement. However real cuts in the Access Budget will impact on the work of this excellent Team, and on their efforts to improve the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) which still shows need for significant improvement.

Much of our work has been devoted to pressing the County Council to commit to a sustained and expanding approach to improving access on the one hand, and lobbying Government to find resources for implementing an excellent Rights of Way Improvement

Plan on the other. As a nation, we are becoming increasingly aware of the threats to our health resulting from eating too much, exercising too little, and consequently an increasing incidence of obesity. These cost the NHS £28bn in treating heart attacks, strokes, and diabetes. An obvious answer lies in attracting more folk from a wider spectrum of society to walk, ride, cycle, and enjoy the countryside with new 'urban lungs' and easier access to footpaths and circular walks.

The Forum reflects the wide interests of landowners, users, and conservationists. It is a constant source of satisfaction to me that its emphasis on mutual respect and responsible access has led to its voice being respected and its views being heard, both locally and nationally. I am, as ever, deeply appreciative of colleagues who give unstintingly of their time and expertise, without financial reward. Equally I thank most warmly the members of the County's Access Team and in particular our Secretary Simon Boyd –literally our sine qua non! We now look forward to the day when our excellent Rangers are joined by a phalanx of countryside volunteers.



Duncan Graham, CBE - Chairman

What is the Cumbria Local Access Forum?

Now completing its fifth year the Cumbria Local Access Forum was set up by Cumbria County Council in 2003 under section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

The Forum is an advisory body and in this capacity can advise on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. It may also advise on other forms of lawful public access, which might include using land (or a right of way) to get to work, school, shops, or local amenities.

The Forum aims to provide strategic advice and, in doing so, strives to achieve a consensus voice, taking into account statutory guidance, the needs of both landowners and access users, as well as wider conservation, landscape, social, economic and educational factors.

The Forum covers the whole of Cumbria, excluding the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

Who is on the Local Access Forum?

The Forum, when all vacancies are filled, has 22 members, appointed by Cumbria County Council. The members of the Forum represent:

- owners and occupiers of access land or land crossed by local rights of way, or
- any other interests especially relevant to the authority's area
- users of the new right of access introduced by Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (principally walkers) and users of local rights of way (eg walkers, horse riders, cyclists and carriage drivers).

The membership is 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. The Chair, Vice Chair and members other than County Councillors (3) are independent of the County Council.



Name	Area of Interest	Interest Detail
John Bevan <i>Vice Chairman</i>	User	Walking, Youth Work, Adventure Activities
Douglas Chalmers	Land	Director of the Country Land & Business Assoc.
Charles Ecroyd	Land	Land Management and conservation
Elizabeth Fell	User	Conservation, equestrian recreation, walking
Duncan Graham <i>Chairman</i>	Other	Countryside, environment, recreation, rural transport and deprivation
Bryan Jeffrey	User; Land	Bird-watching, fell walking and land management
Nicholas Lloyd	User	Natural history, recreation (both walking and equestrian)
Jim Loxham	User; Land	Countryside, access and recreation
Jim McQueen	User	Countryside, access and recreation
Jonathan Morley	User; Land	Land management and conservation
Mike Mills	User	Recreation, education and conservation
Mike Murgatroyd	User	Conservation and recreation
Jean Rogers	User; Land	Conservation, equestrian recreation
Mark Tennant	User	Conservation and recreation
Chris Woodley-Stewart	Other	Conservation, recreation, walking and bird watching
David Young	User	Walking, mountain biking and driving

The Forum has 3 members appointed by Cumbria County Council; Elizabeth Barraclough, Duncan Fairbairn and Ian Stewart (Ian Stewart was replaced by Jack Richardson in November 2007). In April 2007 Mike Murgatroyd was re-appointed for a further three-year term. In June 2007 Charles Ecroyd was re-appointed for a further three-year term. In June 2007 Mike Mills and Nicholas Lloyd were appointed as new members of the Forum, each to serve three year terms.

What has the Cumbria LAF achieved during 2007

During 2007 the Cumbria LAF held four formal meetings and achieved much project work between those meetings:

- July 2007 saw the official launch of the Cumbria Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The 5-year plan, drawn up in partnership with the National Parks and the three Local Access Forums in Cumbria, sets out how access to the countryside could be improved, to make a network fit for the future. The Cumbria LAF continues to work hard to lobby both the County Council and government for funding to deliver several key projects.
- The Cumbria LAF has established a River Access Working Group which has brought together riparian landowners, anglers, river user groups such as canoeists and statutory bodies like the Environment Agency to look at how access to and along rivers can be improved. The group has held five positive meetings concentrating on the River Eamont and River Eden. It is hoped that lessons learnt and improvements identified can be applied to other rivers in the County.
- The Forum has been instrumental in developing the concept of a Countryside Volunteer Service. 20 volunteers have been recruited to work with the County Council's



Countryside Access Rangers. The volunteers will be undertaking maintenance tasks; surveying routes and identifying issues which need attention. Look out for them when out walking, cycling, or horse-riding in Cumbria and give them a warm welcome!

- The Cumbria LAF has played a key role in establishing a Cumbria Wildfire Group which is working to manage the risk of wildfires within Cumbria. Cumbria has extensive peatlands and other fire prone habitats which could be catastrophically damaged in dry weather. The group has reviewed current emergency plans; updated fire plans held with landowners and developed clear and concise public education information.



- The Forum has received the following presentations:

- **Carl Walters** on the work of The Federation of Cumbrian Commoners.
- **Duncan Taylor** on the work of the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service in relation to wildfire management.
- **Iain Wilson** on the work of the Countryside Management team with Capita Symonds Ltd.
- **Ian Henderson** on the work of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Unit.
- **Amanda Earnshaw** on Natural England's Discovering Lost Ways project.
- **David Perry** on the work of the North West Coastal Forum which is working on a North West Coastal Trail.

Cumbria LAF Consultations

Cumbria LAF has responded to a number of consultations including:

- **Natural England's Coastal Access**
The Forum and Cumbria County Council assessed the suitability of the four possible options outlined by Natural England to deliver Coastal Access. The Forum supported the creation of new Primary Legislation but did not discount utilising aspects of the other three options.
- **Cumbria County Council Footpath Modification and Diversion Orders**
Representatives of the Cumbria LAF have visited and submitted observations (if required) on modification and diversion orders.
- **CROW Act 2000 – Section 28 Indefinite Direction at RAF Spadeadam**
The Forum supported the Section 28 Indefinite Direction in particular areas of the RAF Spadeadam estate. The Forum lobbied to ensure that permissive footpath routes to, and an access corridor along Crammel Linn waterfalls were preserved. This was agreed by both the Ministry of Defence and the Secretary of State.
- **Natural England Activation of Fire Prevention Restrictions**
The Forum made a joint response with Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service. All the partners agreed that it was a shame that the consultation did not seek to alter the Fire Severity Index more profoundly. Partners advocated the development of a more sensitive 10 point scale system and the need for clear and concise information as to the status of conditions on the ground.
- **Natural England Members Handbook for Local Access Forums**
Cumbria LAF were consulted on, as were all 81 Forums nationally on the draft structure and contents for the Natural England handbook for Local Access Forum Members. The Forum stressed the need to include guidance on meeting procedures.
- **DEFRA Statutory Right to Apply for Orders**
The Forum stressed that meeting the new statutory requirement and timetable for dealing with right to apply orders will take up additional local authority time. Without a commensurate increase in resources to legal services departments there is likely to be a greater backlog of Public Right of Way modification order casework.
- **DEFRA power of National Park Authorities to make Traffic Regulation Orders**
The Forum were supportive of the powers to be given to National Park Authorities in order that they can make Traffic Regulation Orders.

Cumbria LAF Pending Issues

There are a number of issues which the Cumbria Local Access Forum is likely to deal with during 2008. These will include the roll out of Natural England's primary legislation to define a continuous access corridor around England's coastline through the Marine Bill. Work to review the National Trails which are managed by Natural England and will include the Pennine Bridleway northern extension. Sourcing funding and implementing ROWIP projects and continued partnership working with Cumbria County Council and other bodies within Cumbria.

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The Cumbria LAF is funded by
Cumbria County Council.

Cumbria LAF agendas, papers and minutes can be viewed at www.cumbrialaf.org.uk

The web site also includes the details of members, the Forums terms of reference and other information. Please contact the Secretary if you require any documents on paper.

Members of the public are welcome at Cumbria LAF meetings. These are advertised in advance.

Members of the public may ask questions; make Statements of present Petitions to the Forum, provided these reach the Secretary 7 days before a meeting. The Chairman, at his discretion may invite members of the public to comment or ask a question during a meeting.