

Cumbria Local Access Forum Annual Report 2016

Chairman's introduction

Welcome to the calendar year report for Cumbria Local Access Forum for 2016. Following the disastrous December 2015 Cumbrian floods, much of the year has been occupied with assessing the very considerable flood damage to PROW and prioritising the Flood Recovery Programme. Unfortunately many bridges, over both roads and paths still remain closed, awaiting reconstruction work. Many bridges had their foundations and internal materials washed out by fierce flood waters. Areas of landslips and river erosion are also a great safety concern: damage to Rights of Way has been considerable.

The CLAF held four meetings in 2016; in Carlisle, Newbiggin, Birdoswald and Ambleside. We were delighted to welcome Councillor Helen Wall from Barrow to our July meeting. The CLAF has continued to work closely with and to advise Natural England on the progress of the England Coast Path as it extends through Cumbria. Details are given inside this report. Despite a very constructive meeting with senior CCC staff, on how to deliver countryside access with fewer staff, it was sad to learn that two further Countryside Officers have lost their jobs with CCC. We were also sorry to hear that Lancashire County Council has lost its Countryside Access Service. We were disappointed to note that the Inspector had not confirmed the Marble Quarry, Beetham path orders applied for on behalf of the Parish Council. He considered the evidence of walkers to be inconclusive.

2016 has been a momentous year for access to Cumbria's countryside. On 1 August new extensions to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks came into force. Long awaited and supported, the extensions have led to debate about the future path of the CLAF. This Report shows that members have given long and careful thought to the future, and have decided that the way forward is to merge the Cumbria and Lake District LAFs. The first joint meeting took place in October. The next report will be for the **Cumbria and Lakes LAF**.

Thanks as always go to members for their contributions, and especially to Kathy Miles, who takes the minutes at meetings and to CCC Countryside Access Team for their continuing endeavours to find funding to make improvements to access to Cumbria's countryside. We thank our Councillor representatives who manage to attend meetings, despite the many other claims on their time.



Charles Ecroyd



Aims of the Cumbria Local Access Forum

- To improve opportunities for outdoor recreation
- To consider the needs of all sectors of the population with regard to their access to the countryside
- To help steer countryside access improvements

Who is on the Local Access Forum?

The Forum currently has 14 members representing the interests of farmers, landowners, conservation and access.

Name	Areas of Interest
Elizabeth Barraclough	Walking, Volunteer Ranger, Flora
Douglas Chalmers	Friends of the Lake District: Chief Executive
Oliver Coles	Walking; Rural Transport, Green Tourism, Recreation and Health
Charles Ecroyd <i>Chairman</i>	Land Management and Conservation
Terry Jolley	Walking, Footpath projects, Environment
Ron and Chris Lyon	Access for all: Disabled Rambling
Jim McQueen <i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Countryside Access and Recreation
Kathy Miles <i>Secretary</i>	Countryside Access
Mike Murgatroyd	Conservation and Recreation; Health; All-ability paths
Bridget Pickthall	Farming; Walking, Horse-Riding; Heritage; Link-path development
Sylvia Woodhead	Landscape, Geology, Tourism, Sustainable Transport

The Forum also has 3 County Councillors appointed as members by Cumbria County Council:

Nick Cotton (Kirkby Lonsdale), Elizabeth Mallinson (Carlisle), Helen Wall (Barrow).

Three members, Jo Cleary, Alan Dougherty, David Young, retired in 2016. We thank them for their contributions to the CLAF



Cumbria Local Access Forum Meetings 2016

Four formal meetings were held, in the north, east and centre of Cumbria. Two meetings were held indoors to hear important presentations, while two began with a morning field meeting to view good practice in flood recovery and drainage works and improved access to the countryside.

February 2016	Carlisle
April 2016	Newbiggin Village Hall
July 2016	Birdoswald, Hadrian's Wall
October 2016	Ambleside, joint meeting with Lake District LAF

Site visits & Presentations

February 2016 At an indoor meeting in The Courts, Carlisle members discussed the Rights of Way Improvement Programme (ROWIP), which continues to deliver improvements in access to the countryside, aiming to identify the factors leading to success or failure of a project. At this first meeting postponed following the disastrous floods of December 2015 members were given an update on the start of the flood recovery programme.

April 2016 Members heard a very useful presentation at Newbiggin Village Hall by North West Coast Connections about plans for very large pylons north and south of the planned new nuclear power stations at Moorside in West Cumbria. David Gibson of CCC's Countryside Access Team outlined how the considerable disruption to PROW, including the Coast to Coast path and cycleway and Hadrian's Wall Path, caused by the project will be managed.

July 2016 Members met in a torrential rain to look at a stretch of the Hadrian's Wall Path suffering from a complex series of drainage problems. Issues are not easy to solve due to severe restrictions on working on top of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The afternoon meeting at Birdoswald welcomed Councillor Helen Wall from Barrow. The major item for discussion was the planned merger with the Lake District LAF. Members were strongly in favour of such a merger.

October 2016 The first joint meeting of the Cumbria and the Lake District LAFs took place in Ambleside to visit two path improvement projects. Members posed on the restored packhorse bridge while the respective Chairs Charles Ecroyd and Carole Barr shook hands. Before the afternoon meeting in the Parish Rooms members heard brief backgrounds of the Lake District and Cumbria LAFs. Members discussed, and reached agreement on, the issues and working practices of the new joint LAF. The new forum is to be called **Cumbria and Lakes Local Access Forum**, and will meet next in January 2017.

Roles undertaken by CLAF members

CLAF members continue to contributing fully to CLAF working arrangements. Forum members attend and represent the CLAF at a variety of meetings:

- Yorkshire Dales National Park LAF
- CCC Health and Wellbeing Board
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- South Lakeland Estuary Crossings
- Warcop MOD Access

Forum members continue to advise on applications for creation, extinguishment and diversions of footpaths or bridleways in Cumbria. Each case is surveyed and judged on its merits, and recommendations made to CCC on behalf of the CLAF.



CLAF activities

- Working to endeavour to achieve some ROWIP work through the Thirlmere Pipeline works disruption to ROW. Advised United Utilities that PROW should be closed for a minimum time
- Supported proposals for fences in Mallerstang, on condition of their removal after 15 years
- Responded to Department of Transport *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy*
- Campaigning for increased visibility, e.g. on the CCC web site, for the large economic contribution made by horse riders to the Cumbrian economy
- Responded to consultations on Public Parks and Rural Tourism

Progress on England Coast Path in Cumbria

- Stretch 1- Allonby to Whitehaven, 36kms is open. Rollback has been required in a few locations
- Stretch 2, Whitehaven to Silecroft, 55kms is open, with work scheduled to be completed by the end of 2016, delayed by storms to 2017/8. Discussions at Moorside are on-going
- At a meeting in Kendal in March CLAF members were consulted in detail about fresh proposals for Stretch 3, from Gretna to Allonby, 100kms, following the December 2015 floods, and for Stretch 4, around Walney Island 35kms, of the England Coast Path. The CLAF has responded to support the Reports on each of these stretches
- Work has started on Stretch 5 Silecroft to Silverdale in Lancashire, which will see the England Coast Path planned for the whole of the Cumbrian Coast
- Six more staff have been appointed to the NE Coastal Access Team

Cumbria & Lakes LAF Future Issues

The CLLAF will

- Advise and work closely with Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority countryside access teams on a range of strategic policy and programme issues in 2017
- Continue to work closely with NE to define the best route for the England Coast Path through Cumbria
- Monitor the policy of tree planting and fencing on Open Access areas, including any new upland 'Slow the Flow' anti-flooding projects

Press for continued funding and allocation of staff from CCC for countryside access, recognising the difficult competing interests facing the council

