

Welcome

...to a bumper fifth issue of the Countryside Access team's newsletter looking at a range of work we have been tackling over the spring months to improve access to Cumbria's spectacular countryside.

Leading on coastal access

The County Council's Countryside Access team along with its statutory adviser - the Cumbria Local Access Forum - has been exclusively invited by Natural England to take part in a national pilot study to test their methodology for how the development of a coastal access trail might be rolled out around the coast line of England. The section being trialed is the northern section of the Cumbrian coast; from the county boundary at Gretna down to Whitehaven, and contains many typical features such as estuaries, saltmarsh, industry and transport which will be mirrored around the country. The pilot study has so far involved a series of stakeholder workshops with relevant interests. A "walk through" reconnaissance on the ground is proposed later in the year to explore the practicalities of developing the coastal trail. The outcome of the study will help shape the process which, subject to the passage of the marine bill through parliament, will be used nationally to roll out the early development of coastal access in 2010.



Orton obstructions removed

A bridleway is now fully open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists after long-standing obstructions were removed. The bridleway, which forms a 1,000 metre route out of the valley at Orton near Tebay and up over the fell to Great Asby Scar, was blocked by stone walls, which made the route impassable. But now five new openings in the walls have been created, stock proof gates installed and signs put in place to re-establish the route following negotiations between the county council's countryside access team, the landowners involved and the National Farmers Union.

Colin Palmer from Cycle Touring Club (CTC) – the National Cyclists Organisation, said: "Cumbria has many brilliant bridleways but this is a real gem and the ability to cycle it without obstructions is giving a lot of pleasure to our members."



Before



After

Quarry route open



After six years of consultation between Environmental Planning, the Countryside Access Team, Ramblers Association, Marshalls and the National Trust, a spectacular new route for a section of the Coast to Coast Trail has been created.

A Town and Country Planning application was received in 2003 to divert the right of way at Sandwith to allow for the extension of Birkhams Quarry. Permission was granted and the new route was set along the cliff edge. New owners of the quarry subsequently wished to move the route further inland but this was objected to as it detracted from the enjoyment of the path. Following a reassessment with interests, work commenced on an impressive cliff edge route in October 2008 and was completed in spring 2009.

Managing wildfire

The Cumbria Wildfire Group has now been in operation for one year, bringing together a network of organisations, resources and skills from across Cumbria to provide better protection from the threat posed by rural wildfires. At a practical level, the fire group have established fire plans, communication systems, and provided relevant training in order to create an efficient and effective group of individuals capable of controlling wildfires.

For further information please contact Ethan Bigelow on 01670 513 292.



Appleby riverside route improved



Residents and visitors to Appleby can now enjoy an enhanced circular walk along a beautiful riverside path which runs through the town, thanks to a grant from the Council's "Parish Paths Initiative" (PPI) run by the Countryside Access Team.

A large tree along the path edge fell down several years ago and took part of the path and some fencing with it, resulting in unsightly metal barriers being installed and a constrained section of path to squeeze through. The section of path has now been rebuilt and resurfaced, the wooden fencing repaired and missing fence rails replaced along the route.

Residents and visitors can now enjoy an attractive and safe riverside route through the town.

Missing signposts

Steps have been taken across the County to tackle the number of missing signs which mark rights of way — a key feature for helping people find the start of footpaths and bridleways. Results from a random survey show great improvement: in 2006 only 86% of figure posts were present, now some 93% are in place.

The problem has been tackled through two measures; a bi-annual programme of installing new and replacement signs, and a much tougher approach to dealing with the illegal removal of newly erected posts. The latter has involved local publicity and enforcement action with the help of the countryside access team, contractors and the Police to combat the removal of nearly £1,500 worth of posts.



New footpath at St Bees



Volunteers from the Countryside Access Team have helped open a footpath at Rottington Common, near St Bees. Brambles and fallen branches were cleared with a new local map board and way markers post being installed.

The new route leads to Fleswick Bay below St Bees Head and is part of a wider biodiversity, conservation and public access initiative being lead by Natural England in partnership with the National Trust, RSPB County Council and local landowners.

Funding has been secured through Defra's Higher Level Stewardship scheme and an Access Management grant.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Countryside Access Team has drafted a three year ROWIP project programme which will seek to deliver a range of the highest scoring projects suggested by members of the public to benefit a number of distinct user groups.

Regular updates will be provided on the progress of these Projects. Two illustrative examples are; the installation a footbridge to link a dead end footpath with Open Access land in the Millom area (attached picture); and a cross boundary project with the Lake District National Park Authority at Penruddock to link an isolated housing development with the local school and services.



Shows and events

The Countryside Access Team attended its first event of the 2009-10 year when it went along to the "Packs and Tracks" event at Dalemain Estate on 17th May.

The event was organised by the Cumbria Bridleway's Society which invited around 30 countryside access organisations to provide marquees and information to visitors on the day. There were displays and demonstrations on a variety of equine disciplines and breeds including fell ponies, shire horses, dressage, side-saddle, snigging (timber removal), horse massage and pack ponies. Approximately 500 people attended the day long event.



Future events listing

The Countryside Access team is intending to have a presence at the following events:

Skelton Show	Saturday 4 July
Dalston Show	Saturday 8 August
Westmorland County Show	Thursday 10 September
Acorn Bank Apple Day	Date tbc
Barrow Walking Festival – guided walk	Sunday 19 th July
Asian Women's Group – various events	April – August
Cumbria Local Access Forum Meetings	
Colby Village Hall	Tuesday 23 June
Broughton in Furness Victory Hall	Thursday 24 September
Carlisle/Penrith area – venue tbc	Thursday 10 December

Contact the team

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If you see a problem on the public rights of way network then please report it to the Highways hotline:

Tel: 0845 609 6609

E-mail: contact@cumbriahighways.co.uk