

Flood recovery work

The flooding which hit Cumbria in late Nov 09 not surprisingly affected many public rights of way around the county, causing significant damage and disruption to parts of the network. In a number of areas footbridges, path surfaces, stiles, gates and other structures were either damaged or washed away. The immediate concern was to protect the public's safety, assess the scale of the problem and provide information about which footpaths and bridleways were damaged.

The area most affected was the central Lake District where record breaking rainfall caused acute localised damage across a number of river catchments. What followed was knock on impact as the outflows from the rivers Derwent and Cocker hit West Cumbria, and the river systems in SW Cumbria and the Furness peninsula flooded adjacent land.

The initial task of the countryside access team and our partners in the Lake District was to assess the impact across the most at risk areas, make safe or temporarily close routes where necessary and provide information out on the ground.

Our records to date indicate some 240 large and small bridle and foot bridges have been damaged or lost, and some of these bridges will remain closed until further inspection, remedial repair / full reinstatement is undertaken. Work now continues to assess the full scale of the recovery work required and seek funding from Government. Whilst the impact has been locally severe, it should be stressed that many parts of the county have been relatively unaffected by the floods and most of the PROW network remains open and available to use. Information about the impacts have been placed on the CCC web site, noting that Cumbria is still very much open for business as we move into the new year.



Memorial Bridge, Cockermouth



Sockbridge, near Penrith

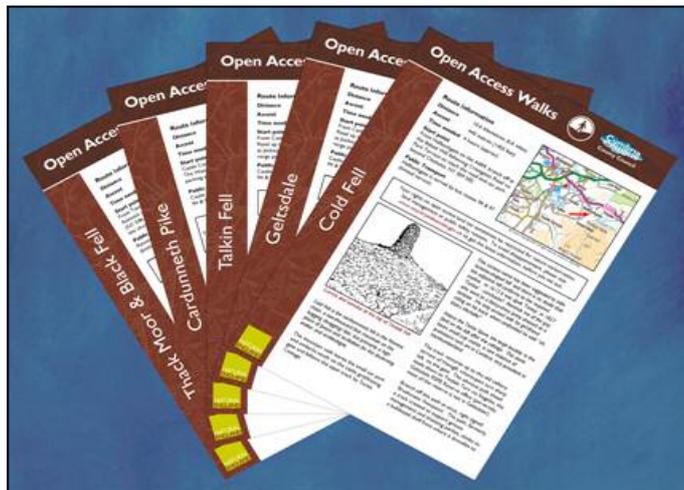


Backbarrow, South Lakeland

Enjoy Open Access in the New Year

A series of online walking guides illustrating parts of the North Pennines are now available to download on the County Council's web site (countryside access pages) thanks to a successful partnership with Mark Richards a renowned guidebook author. Mark has been producing guides for over 35 years and takes inspiration from the legendary Alfred Wainwright.

Funding to create the download leaflets has been secured from Natural England who are promoting the wealth of recreational and natural health benefits that can be gained by people putting on their walking boots and making good use of open access land on their doorstep.



Cumbria first to develop coastal access



Following Royal Assent on 12 November 2009 the Marine and Coastal Access Act has been heralded as a landmark moment in the history of countryside Access and marine management. Natural England announced that Cumbria will be one of six areas across the country where work on coastal access will start first, once the Secretary of State has approved the detailed approach. There will be close local consultation including 'walking the course' with existing occupiers. Cumbria County Council's Countryside Access team, together with its statutory advisor the Cumbria Local Access Forum will work closely with Natural England and all those with an interest across Cumbria to develop and implement the project in the county.

Councillor Tim Knowles, Cumbria County Council's cabinet member for countryside access, said: "I welcome royal assent for the Marine and Coastal Access Bill and the fact that Cumbria will be among the first phase where coastal access will be delivered. The Cumbrian coast is a wonderful place for both tourists and local people to get out and about, and a linear coastal trail will bring significant economic benefits through investment in establishing the route and an increased number of residents and visitors using the trail."

Access Forum in Armathwaite

The latest meeting of the Cumbria Local Access Forum was held on 10th December in Armathwaite Village Hall.

The morning training session consisted of a presentation on environmental planning from Richard Newman and an area update from Countryside Ranger Geoff Fewkes.

Members were then shown a potential Cumbria Rights of Way Improvement Plan project along a footpath on the banks of the River Eden which is popular with both local residents and visitors.

