



Cumbria Local Access Forum Annual Report 2010



Chairman's Introduction

After my election as the future Chairman of Cumbria LAF at our March meeting I formally took over the reins from Duncan Graham at the June meeting held in a village hall close to Hadrian's Wall and I am delighted to be writing my first introduction to a CLAF Annual Report. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Duncan, both personally and on behalf of my LAF colleagues, for his tireless efforts since the inception of Cumbria LAF – he truly deserves a well-earned rest but has kindly offered me his continuing support, for which I am very grateful.

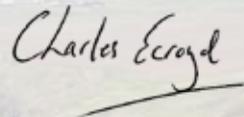
Needless to say we had another busy year with a number of national consultations for the LAF to consider, details of which are listed on page 4 of this report. We also had local matters to think about and arguably the most weighty was the proposal to 'merge' the Cumbria and Lake District National Park LAFs which fortunately, after consultation, was dropped. This issue will certainly not disappear now that Natural England has revised its proposals with regard to extensions of both the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks – indeed, the future of the Cumbria LAF may look somewhat uncertain in the next few years.

Another huge area of concern was the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn and how this would impact on Cumbria County Council's finances and its ability to fund properly the work of bodies such as the Local Access Forum. As we feared, the Countryside Access Team initially faced a swingeing cut to its budget only to earn a significant reprieve following the county-wide consultation during the early months of 2011. Nevertheless, draconian cuts are still planned and they will no doubt mean significant changes for the department as the current year progresses: in view of this, the Forum will continue to closely monitor the quality and effectiveness of the countryside access service. The LAF itself has, rightly, not been immune from the financial pressures and we have regrettably had to scale back our activities in a number of lower priority areas.

Despite these worries the Government has confirmed the commitment to roll out Coastal Access, albeit initially reduced in scale and extended over time. We have spent some considerable time working with Natural England staff in an attempt to ensure that it is managed effectively [in all senses of the phrase] as Cumbria strives to implement access to the first stretch of its coast over the coming months.

We bade farewell to three members during 2010 whose insight and contributions will be missed by their remaining colleagues – my thanks to them for their hard work on behalf of Cumbria LAF, some since inception. As a direct consequence of the proposed re-organisation of two of the three Access Forums in Cumbria [The Yorkshire Dales LAF being the exception] we held back on recruitment of new members. We are now very aware that our membership numbers have dwindled in the past twelve months or so and I am very keen to identify potential new recruits from all sectors of interest over the coming months; I hope to report next year on an enlarged and more diversified Access Forum.

Finally I would like to thank all members of the LAF for their continued, and continuing, support. Similarly I would like to thank all members of the Countryside Access Team for their support, dedication and the hard work that they continue to provide in support of the LAF and countryside access in general; sadly some of the staff will be leaving during the course of 2011 and I wish them well in their future endeavours.



Charles Ecroyd – Chairman
June 2011



Cumbria LAF Information

Cumbria LAF meeting dates, agendas and minutes can be found at www.cumbrialaf.org.uk.

The website also includes details of members, the Forum's terms of reference and other information. Please contact the Secretary if you require any documents on paper.

Cumbria LAF meetings are publicised in advance. Members of the public are welcome and may ask questions, make statements or 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.

Contact Cumbria LAF

The Cumbria LAF Secretary, Kathy Miles can be contacted at:

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Cumbria LAF is funded by Cumbria County Council



What is the Cumbria Local Access Forum?

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 independent statutory advisory body and advises on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the countryside. It must be consulted on specified access matters, and 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, or
- 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 (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 interest 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 Vice Chairman	User	Walking, youth work, adventure activities
Douglas Chalmers	Land	Director of the Country Land & Business Association
Oliver Coles	User	Walking; rural transport, green tourism, recreation and health
Charles Ecroyd Chairman*	Land	Land management and conservation
Elisabeth Fell	User	Conservation, equestrian recreation, walking
Kris Fentiman	User	Recreation, disability and access issues, journalism
Duncan Graham Chairman*	Other	Countryside, environment, recreation, rural transport and deprivation
Helen Kerry	User; Other	Education, land use, biodiversity, equestrian access
Nicholas Lloyd	User	Natural history, recreation (walking and equestrian), angling
Jim Loxham**	User; Land	Conservation, recreation, access, rock climbing and mountaineering
Jim McQueen	User	Countryside, access and recreation
Mike Mills**	User	Recreation, education and conservation
Mike Murgatroyd	User	Conservation and recreation
Hilary Wilson	Land	Traditional extensive farming, orchard conservation
Sylvia Woodhead	User; Other	Countryside management, landscapes, tourism, sustainable transport
Chris Woodley-Stewart**	Other	Conservation, recreation, walking and bird watching
David Young	User	Walking, mountain biking and driving

*Charles Ecroyd was elected Chair in March 2010 and took over from Duncan Graham in June.

**Thanks and farewell go to Jim, Mike and Chris for their valued contributions up to summer 2010.

The Forum has 3 members appointed by Cumbria County Council:
Elizabeth Barraclough, Graham Roberts and Joe Holliday.



What Cumbria LAF achieved during 2010

During 2010 Cumbria LAF held three formal meetings (the fourth postponed due to snow and ice), undertook informative site visits and received some very interesting presentations:

- Bridget Pickthall – Hincaster Trailway Project presentation and site visit
- Lucy Barron – Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Geoff Fewkes, Countryside Ranger – completed Rights of Way Improvement Plan project at Armathwaite



- Andrea Bonacker, Cumbria County Council – Parish Paths Initiative projects and site visit: Irthington 3-mile circular walk

- Ryan Dobson, Access and Development Officer, Watchtree Nature Reserve – Watchtree Wheelers all ability cycles, on a very wet morning



Forum members undertook much project work between meetings:

- Through the Coastal and Open Access Joint Working Group (COAWG) preparations for implementation of the coastal trail project in Cumbria continued, working closely with the County Council's Countryside Access Team, with the first stretch identified as Allonby to Whitehaven.
- Continued strong opposition to the Natural England (NE) application to the Secretary of State for fencing on Gaythorne Plain, to enable cattle grazing to benefit biodiversity, which helped result in the proposal being dropped.
- Together with Countryside Access Team members surveyed further 'Access for All' routes.

Cumbria LAF Consultations

Coastal Access - the Forum:

- responded in detail to the consultation on Natural England's Scheme for implementation of the coastal trail, making a number of headline points and raising some key concerns
- responded to the Defra consultation on procedures for making Representations and Objections to the coastal trail proposals
- responded to the New Nuclear Build consultation with concerns about the impact on public rights of way on the Cumbrian coast at the three sites in Cumbria (Braystones, Sellafield and Kirksanton), given the pending implementation of Coastal Access under the MCA Act 2009 – each draft proposal involving extensive lengths of coastline and identifying new build areas extending to mean high water at the coast
- responded to the Barrow Port AAP and Allerdale SHLAA, both having potential implications for the new coastal trail



Landscape - the Forum:

- responded on access aspects to the NE Lakes to Dales Landscape Designation consultation
- responded in detail to the Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit consultation

Forums - the Forum:

- responded to the Review of the England Access Forum, underlining its value particularly in relation to issues of national and not merely local concern
- opposed the proposals to merge the Cumbria and Lake District LAFs – a pan-Cumbria LAF would have to include the Yorkshire Dales parishes also (particularly when the YDNP may extend further into Cumbria in the future)

Tree Planting - the Forum:

- responded to NE proposals for woodland planting and gill fencing on Open Access land in various locations and also to an EWGS grant application to the Forestry Commission

Cumbria County Council Footpath Modification and Diversion Orders - Cumbria LAF representatives:

- on the Rights of Way Joint Working Group (ROWWG) visited and (where necessary) submitted observations on modification and diversion orders.