

Cumbria Local Access Forum Annual Report 2015

Chairman's introduction

Welcome to the Cumbria Local Access Forum's Report for the calendar year of 2015. The CLAF held four meetings in 2015; in Kendal, Carlisle, Bowness-on-Solway and Barrow. Poor attendance by CCC Councillors continues to be a concern. 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. Attending regional LAF meetings continues to be useful. It is of value to hear how other LAFs are coping with access issues.

In October 2015, two years after the Inspector's decision, the approval was announced of the proposed extensions to both the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, which are planned to start in August 2016.

We were pleased that one of our members Douglas Chalmers was appointed as Chief Executive of the Friends of the Lake District. We look forward to working with him in this new role. In October we were delighted to welcome Kathy Miles as a new CLAF member who will take minutes and deal with administrative tasks in support of meetings. Interest from potential new members is always welcome.

A meeting planned for December, to meet with Natural England to discuss the planned route for Stretch 3 of the England Coast Path, had to be cancelled following the disastrous floods in Cumbria in December 2015. Much work in 2016 will be focussed on assessing damage to Cumbria's PROW, and efforts to replace washed out bridges and paths.

We are pleased that the Cumbria Countryside Access Team is continuing to operate, despite budget cuts, loss of staff and reorganisation. We were delighted to hear of the plaudits for the team's organisation of the cycling Tour of Britain, from its start in Cockermouth and its ascent of Hartside. This brought in much useful advertising of the beauty of Cumbria's countryside. Our thanks go to Eve Borrino who retired as CLAF Secretary in August.



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 17 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
Jo Cleary	Sustainable transport: Cycling
Oliver Coles	Walking; Rural Transport, Green Tourism, Recreation and Health
Alan Dougherty	Upland land use; Mountaineering, Fell-running, Mountain-Biking
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
David Young	Walking, Mountain-biking and Driving

The Forum also has 3 County Councillors appointed as members by Cumbria County Council:
Nick Cotton (Kirkby Lonsdale), Elizabeth Mallinson (Carlisle), John Murphy (Barrow).

CLAF Secretary until August 2015; Eve Borrino, we thank her for all her endeavours on the CLAF's behalf.

Cumbria Local Access Forum Meetings 2015

Four formal meetings were held, in the south, north, and south west of Cumbria. Most meetings begin with a morning session to view good practice in improved access to the countryside. Meetings were attended by the county cycling officer, representatives of Natural England, Cumbria Bridleways Society and prospective CLAF members.

January 2015	Kendal
April 2015	Carlisle
July 2015	Bowness on Solway
October 2015	Walney Island/ Barrow-Furness

Site visits & Presentations



January 2015 An indoor meeting at Natural England's offices in Kendal allowed a Rights of Way workshop. Councillor Nick Cotton, a CLAF member, gave an update on the successful river side path from Devil's Bridge into Kirkby Lonsdale which had been visited by CLAF members in 2012. CLAF member Bridget Pickthall identified those factors which could lead to successful access improvements with reference to her initiatives on the Hincaster Trail. Members also heard an account of cycling projects within the County.

April 2015 David Gibson of CCC's Countryside Access Team showed CLAF members some of the many PROW issues in Carlisle District, for which CCC now has responsibility. Many of these long standing issues are being resolved by new ways of working. Access issues need to deal with the complexities of working alongside the Ancient Monument rules of Hadrian's Wall, and the flood plain of the river Eden. Members saw the Environment Agency flood wall at Etterby Scaur installed after the 2009 floods. This area provides several pleasant and popular riverside walks, rich in natural and archaeological interest.

July 2015 At the RSPB Solway Wetland Centre, Campfield Marsh Nature Reserve, members heard about initiatives to increase visitor numbers and improve access for families, and the general public, in addition to birdwatchers.

October 2015 The CWT South Walney Nature Reserve was the meeting place for CLAF members, NE's Coastal Access Team and Art Gene, to discuss issues to be faced in deciding the exact location of Stretch 4 of the England Coast Path around Walney Island.



Role undertaken by CLAF members



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

- CCC Health and Wellbeing Board.
- North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group.
- Morecambe Bay Partnership.
- South Lakeland Estuary Crossings.
- Warcop MOD Access.

Forum members advised 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

- Expressed concern to the Planning Inspectorate about the omission of liaison with LAF on their application form for fencing on Open Access land, in this case on Farleton Fell.
- Wrote to Planning Inspectorate over concerns about access to information in the running of Public Inquiries.
- Expressed concern over overgrown bridleways.
- Received several discretionary dog exclusion restriction notifications, for access to grouse moorland.

Progress on England Coast Path in Cumbria

- Enhanced roll out to be completed by 2020. Six more staff appointed to Natural England Team.
- 'Roll-back' due to storm damage is already needed in two areas of Stretch 1, north of Maryport, where the Coast Path will now be on the landward side of the road.
- Stretch 3 will be from Gretna to Allonby (100kms) – will be challenging due to many conservation designations, and access issues on salt marshes.
- Stretch 4 around Walney Island.
- Stretch 5 from Silecroft to Silverdale in Lancashire.
- In October, Stretch 2 from Whitehaven south to Silecroft was approved.

Cumbria LAF Future Issues

The CLAF will

- Work closely with Natural England to define the best route for the England coast path through Cumbria.
- Consider whether to resume discussions about a Cumbria wide LAF.
- Advise and work closely with Cumbria County Council countryside access team on a range of strategic policy and programme issues in 2016.
- Press for continued funding and allocation of staff from CCC for countryside access, recognising the difficult competing interests facing the council.
- Monitor the policy of tree planting on Open Access areas.

