



LOCAL ACCESS FORUM County Durham

County Durham Local Access Forum

Date **Monday 27 January 2025**
Time **5.00 pm**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall**

Business

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies
2. Election of Chair
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2024 (Pages 3 - 8)
5. Opening the Way: The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition – 2024 (Pages 9 - 24)
Presentation by Mike Knipe
6. National/Regional Issues
 - a) A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project
 - b) North East Travel Plan
 - c) Environmental Land Management Schemes
7. Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)
8. Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes
9. Northern Saints Trails
10. Durham City Green Corridor
11. Public Access to Council-owned Land
12. North Pennines National Landscape (Pages 25 - 28)
To receive the notes of the meeting of the Access and Recreation and Pennine National Trails Northern Working Groups held on 1 October 2024.
13. Health
To receive update from Healthy Weight Alliance Group meetings held on 4th November and 14 January 2025
14. Membership Update

15. Member Training
16. Work Programme (Pages 29 - 32)
To consider and update Work Programme
17. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting
18. Any other business of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration
(subject to the Chair's approval).

Lucy Gladders
Secretary
County Durham Local Access Forum
22 January 2025

To: The Members of County Durham Local Access Forum

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 21 October 2024 at 5.00 pm**

Present:

Angela Johnson (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Members of the Forum:

A Johnson, M Knipe, A Marshall, N Sharpe, J Stephenson and Councillor E Scott.

1 Election of Chair

Agreed: that the item be deferred until the next meeting.

2 Appointment of Vice Chair

Agreed: that Angela Johnson be appointed as Vice-Chair.

3 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from T Bolton, P Holding, G Hughes, J Welch, P Westgarth, E Wilton and Councillor J Shuttleworth.

Site Visit: Crookhall Gardens

Prior to the meeting, Members of the Forum had attended a site visit and short walk at Crookhall Gardens. M Knipe and N Sharpe along with representatives from the Wolsingham Wayfarer's were in attendance. Members of the Forum had found the visit very interesting. Thanks was given to M Ogden and the National Trust for facilitating the visit.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 April 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

6 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7 National/Regional Issues

a A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project

The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader referred to a letter which had been circulated prior to the meeting to Forum members which referred to the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project legal challenge to the Secretary of State's Development Consent Order decision.

Further updates would be reported once received.

8 Agriculture Bill - Environmental Land Management Schemes

There was no update to provide under this item.

9 Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)

The Local Access Forum received an update from the Senior Rights of Way Officer which provided details around current workload, staffing and progress in relation to the processing of Lost Ways and Definitive Map Modification Orders.

She advised that Lost Ways applications were still being received, however work around this was now made somewhat easier following the relocation and reopening of the Records Office. The process of reviewing the applications and evidence still however continued to be time consuming.

The team had recently welcomed Alan Farrimond to the team as Rights of Way Officer and this provided further resilience within the team in order to progress applications.

In response to a question the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader advised that approximately 12 DMMOs had been through the Highways Committee, noting that some of those were now sitting with the Planning Inspectorate for review.

A Johnson asked whether there had been any recent government updates in relation to the cut-off date. The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader advised that he was aware of fresh lobbying to remove the cut-of date completely however the fact would still remain that there was still a significant amount of work to be undertaken in order to process over 350 applications.

10 Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes

The Local Access Forum received an update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader which provided details relating to sections of work which were underway on existing PROW, a further 2 new sections had now been dedicated PROW and a number of sites were still subject to discussions with landowners via land agents. It was reported that the Bi-Centenary was in 2025 and therefore there was around 1 year left to complete the works. Following a question from M Knipe regarding the Definitive Map, The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader advised that those sections of the route which were newly dedicated were included on the

Definitive Map but Ordnance Survey maps would not yet be updated to reflect the changes.

11 Public Access to Council-owned Land

The Local Access Forum were provided with an update which had been provided to the Chair in April from the Head of Corporate Property and Land via email.

The response had been provided further to correspondence sent on behalf of the Local Access Forum seeking an update on additional sites which had been identified as being suitable for public access.

The email advised that some of the sites which were identified highlighted further issues that need to be considered and unfortunately, due to other priority work load the Corporate Property and Land team were not able to progress with any further sites at this time.

Discussion then ensued regarding the initial sites which had been agreed by DCC and whether there was any known progress in this regard. Councillor Scott commented that it would be appropriate for the Secretary to contact the Head of Corporate Property and Land to seek an update and clarification in this regard.

Agreed: that the Secretary contact the Head of Property and Land in order to provide clarification to the Local Access Forum around progress on those already approved sites.

12 Northern Saints Trails

The Local Access Forum received an update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader on recent development and progress in respect of the trails. He noted work being undertaken by a Steering Group which had been established to look at the 'Way of Hope' on the Weardale Way, which included involvement with the Weardale Churches.

Cllr Scott mentioned a potential County Walking Festival based around the Northern Saints Trails. The County Council had also hosted a delegation from Spain looking at the Camino Ingles which follows some of the Northern Saints Trails, and the scope for tourism.

13 Bright Water Landscape Project

The Local Access Forum received a brief update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader following the celebration event which had taken place on 9 October 2024 at Hardwick Hall Hotel followed by a site visit to Bishop's Fen.

Unfortunately, G Hughes who had been in attendance at the event was unable to attend the meeting this evening and provide his feedback, however the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader noted points relating to the rising water table, the impact upon bridleway and the replacement bridge, which, with Active Travel

Money would be completed to link up bridleway at Bishop Middleham. A further update would be provided once the bridleway was completed.

Members also thanked T Bolton for his input and time in attending Board meetings of Brightwater and providing regular updates to the Forum.

14 North Pennines National Landscape

The Forum received an update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader following the last meeting of the North Pennines National Landscape Access and Recreation Working Group & Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group held on 1 October 2024. He further went on to provide the Forum with details around planned celebrations for the 60th Anniversary of the Pennine Way. The 'Trail of Inspiration' exhibition which would showcase artwork, music, poetry and film inspired by the Pennine Way would be taking place next year. Forum members who had information, stories or photos which they would like to share were encouraged to do so via the National Trails website.

15 Health

There was no update to provide at this time.

16 Membership Update

The Local Access Forum noted the resignation of Mr David Pott and that thanks on behalf of the Forum and its members had been sent to him.

17 Member Training

The Local Access Forum were asked to consider any training requirements or to suggest any areas of work or interests which may be useful to the Forum and its members in order to fulfil their role.

M Knipe asked whether the Forum would consider a presentation from the Crook and Weardale Ramblers Association on the new strategy which they had recently developed. Members of the Forum agreed that this would be interesting topic and it was suggested that this be scheduled for the next meeting of the Forum in January 2025.

It was further suggested that a presentation from the Wolsingham Wayfarers could also potentially be arranged for the summer meeting next year.

Further discussion took place around membership and whether there was any scope to welcome further interested individuals to the Forum. Members agreed that it would be beneficial to have representatives from groups such as cyclists, runners and landowners and the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader agreed to look into this further.

18 Work Programme

The Local Access Forum considered the work programme as attached to the papers circulated.

Agreed: That the work programme be amended to reflect work now completed and include new areas of work along with Forum members allocated to represent or lead on tasks.

19 Dates of Meetings for 2025

AGREED: that following meetings be approved for 2025.

Monday 27 January 2025

Monday 14 April 2025

Monday 21 July 2025

Monday 20 October 2025

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Opening the Way

The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition
2024 and beyond



From our Chair and Chief Executive

We are delighted to share the Ramblers' ambitions for the future, where everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of walking in nature.

Rebecca Dawson

Chair of Trustees
2021 to 2024

Lucy Robinson

Chair of Trustees
2024 onwards

Ross Maloney

Chief Executive

As we launch Opening the Way: The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition 2024 and beyond, the nation is facing a range of social and economic challenges that are impacting our health and wellbeing. With pressure continuing to build on the NHS and other public services, fault lines in our society are being accentuated and some people are becoming even more marginalised.

This plan recognises the important role walking can play in improving this picture for all.

We know walking in nature enriches our lives and can have a transformative effect on health and wellbeing. In England alone, our research has shown that use of the path network adds more than 3,000 healthy years of life to the population. But currently, not everyone is able to enjoy these benefits. Many communities – often those who would benefit most from better access to the outdoors – are missing out.

It's become clear that significant inequities exist when it comes to the opportunity to get outside in nature, and this is a pressing concern for the outdoors sector. As we look forward, we can see the clear role the Ramblers has to play in helping to address these inequities.

This strategy sets out our ambition to address the imbalance by prioritising the needs of communities who have the least access and face the most barriers to walking in nature.

At our core is the drive to improve provision and quality of access, paths and rights of way, and the information that helps people find their way. This is a critical foundation of our work, and we'll continue to make sure people have access to green space and good quality walking routes both close to home and further afield.

We also want to improve people's confidence and knowledge to walk outdoors, so they're not held back from making the most of everything walking in nature can offer. The lack of confidence and knowledge might be a less visible barrier, but it's just as real and just as important to overcome.

In England alone, our research has shown that use of the path network adds more than 3,000 healthy years of life to the population.

To grow support and achieve our ambitions of reaching more people, we'll also work hard to raise awareness of the Ramblers' unique public benefit as a charity.

Our recognition of the challenges posed by the climate emergency, and the collective need to act to protect the natural environment, will be a key element to all our work. As a charity committed to helping everyone enjoy walking in nature, all our ambitions will be underpinned by the role the Ramblers needs to play in protecting the natural environment in the course of our work.

Opening the Way: The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition 2024 and beyond has been developed over a period of nearly two years. Over that time, we have conducted extensive research with a wide range of people. We would like to thank everyone who has been involved – every individual, partner, supporter, member and volunteer who has taken the time to share their thoughts and ideas. With your support, we have a clear route mapped out for the future, which will enrich the lives of communities across Britain.

The coming years will be an exciting time for the Ramblers. Together, we look forward to playing our part in creating a healthier, more equitable and more inclusive society.

Strong foundations, bold ambitions

Since 1935, the Ramblers has been doing everything it can to make sure everyone, everywhere can enjoy walking in nature. Our history and heritage give us the perfect springboard to realise the bold ambitions set out in the strategy.

Throughout our almost 90-year history, we have fought to make sure everyone can enjoy the joys of walking in nature.

We've helped open up vast swathes of countryside that were previously out of bounds and made sure laws were amended and introduced to keep it that way. We fought to establish National Parks and National Trails. And we successfully campaigned for everyone to enjoy Britain's coastline.

Today, we continue the fight to protect and improve access across England, Scotland and Wales. We work to save lost rights of way and maintain and improve paths so they can be enjoyed by all. We lead more than 50,000 walks every year, from short strolls to scrambles in the hills.

With the introduction of our new strategy, we'll build on this experience, and expand activities that specifically focus on reaching communities who have the least access and face the most barriers to the outdoors. Our past, present and future is rooted in local communities, so we are ideally placed to listen, learn and work alongside them to introduce programmes and activities that address their specific needs.

We look forward to building on the success of programmes that have a big impact in local communities such as those we deliver in partnership with others. In particular, Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, our short walks that help people take the first step to a healthier happier lifestyle, and the Out There Award, which gives young adults, aged 18–26 the opportunity to kickstart their journey into the outdoors, while giving them the opportunity to meet other young walkers and learn skills.

The support, knowledge and experience of the Ramblers' supporters, members and volunteers has been vital throughout our history and will be fundamental to achieving our ambitions as we look forward to the future.



Our new strategy

The Ramblers exists to help everyone, everywhere enjoy walking. We know how much it contributes to improvements in individual and community wellbeing, so our new strategy sets out to tackle the barriers that prevent more people enjoying those benefits.

Alongside our supporters, members and volunteers, we will continue our work to protect access, improve paths and lead walks. And we will prioritise the needs of communities who have the least access and face the most barriers to the outdoors. We will especially focus on working with the most deprived communities in England, Scotland and Wales.



Foundations

Our strategy is built on our foundations for impact, which are:

Vision

A future where anyone can enjoy walking outdoors.

Purpose

Campaigning for access to the outdoors and creating walking opportunities for all.

Impact

Equitable access for all communities in England, Scotland and Wales to walk outdoors.

Outcomes

Over the coming years, we'll strive to achieve the following outcomes and impact measures:



Outcome one

Improved provision, quality and information on access, paths and rights of way.

- 2,000 more miles of paths opened or improved.
- 75% of people who walk with us agree that the Ramblers has increased their access and connection to nature and green spaces.



Outcome two

Improved confidence and knowledge to walk outdoors.

- 5 million people accessed our advice, information and training.
- 90% of people report increased confidence to walk outdoors in nature.
- 50,000 more walk leaders.



Outcome three

Improved participation of communities that have the least access and most barriers to the outdoors.

- 1,000 more programmes engaging priority communities.
- 10,000 more volunteers from priority communities.



Outcome four

Improved support for the Ramblers' charitable cause.

- 500,000 members, volunteers, supporters, donors or benefactors.
- 65% of people who are aware of the Ramblers agree that it's a charity that meets a relevant need.

Enablers

Our use of resources and our activities will be guided by:

Sustainable income and investment

Targeted advocacy, policy and public affairs

Streamlined partnerships, programmes and networks

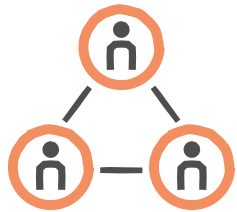
Data, insight and digital innovation

A diverse body of staff, trustees, members, supporters and volunteers

Fit for purpose governance and operating models

Our values

We'll be guided in our decision making and daily work by our values:



Inclusive

We make everyone feel welcome and part of the Ramblers' community.

We make sure we all feel respected, accepted, and know our contributions make a difference in achieving our mission.



Inspiring

We strive to inspire people through the way we act and the things we say.

We channel our passions and ambition, so others are motivated to help us achieve our mission.



Empowering

We empower and encourage each other to make a positive contribution to our teams and the Ramblers.

We do all we can to make sure everyone has the ability and confidence to take action.



Responsible

We take responsibility for ourselves and those around us seriously, by always acting in a safe and positive way.

We care about the environment and make sure we do what we say we will do.



Outcome one

Improved provision, quality and information on access, paths and rights of way.

We'll remove barriers to the outdoors by improving the quality and provision of access, paths and rights of way to enable more people to enjoy walking in nature. We will do this through both our programmes on the ground and our campaigning work.

In addition, we'll place a growing emphasis on place-based programmes that bring together our resources and expertise with the needs and input of local communities in priority locations – for example, working with communities in deprived areas to improve local paths. Integral to this approach is a commitment to working with partners and communities to understand and mitigate the environmental impacts of our work.



Our successes to date



Discovering hidden paths in Stoke-on-Trent

Across England and Wales, there are miles of historic rights of way not currently recorded on maps and at risk of being lost. Since 2015, Ramblers' volunteers in Stoke-on-Trent have been working with the local council to uncover the hidden public rights of way across their city.

This work is part of the thousands of hours a year that our volunteers put into protecting paths – from researching and reclaiming lost historical paths to scrutinising potential changes to the network and replacing stiles with gates to make them more accessible. As a result of the work in Stoke-on-Trent, a total of 104-miles of previously unrecorded public rights of way were added to the definitive map, increasing the city's recorded network by an amazing 350%.

Creating green walking routes in Glasgow

In the south-side of Glasgow, Gary Linstead realised the city was not making the most of its green spaces and set out to make sure they were connected to give residents and visitors the opportunity to walk safely between them.

Gary and other volunteers started small, improving individual paths before they secured a grant that allowed them to properly waymark and connect them up. The completed route is an 11-mile circular walk, which links seven wonderful greenspace habitats,

including Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

“It's difficult to make walking part of everyday life unless there are opportunities to get out in nature close to home”, says Gary, “so, I set out to walk that route and try to connect them. That was the birth of the Magnificent 11.”





Outcome two

Improved confidence and knowledge to walk outdoors.

We'll explore new ways to support priority communities, through engagement and collaboration. We'll extend impactful programmes like Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, which supports people with health conditions, and the Out There Award, which helps young adults in urban areas.

We'll also make our walk leader advice and training more relevant and easily accessible to communities across England, Scotland and Wales, giving more people the skills and confidence to go walking.

Our successes to date



Building skills and confidence with the Out There Award

We'll build on the success of projects like the Out There Award, which is helping 18-26-year-olds in Scotland build the skills and confidence needed to fully enjoy the outdoors. Accessibility and inclusivity are at the heart of the award – from making sure the location is easy to get to and the right equipment is provided, to using diverse methods to build skills and knowledge.

“For me, the Out There Award was an amazing step towards learning how to tackle my key anxieties for hiking,” says Iqra, an Out There Award participant. “Those anxieties were tackled by learning which equipment to use, becoming part of the young walking group after the award, and learning how to keep myself safe and on track. Altogether, I feel less scared and I’m now excited to be part of a walking group and to pick up a new, fun hobby.”

How leading walks helped Dee rebuild her confidence

Before she started walking, Dee was 17 stone and housebound. Through educating herself about healthy eating, and getting into walking, she has become much happier and healthier. She is now using her experience to inspire others as a walk leader for a Ramblers Wellbeing Walk in Wisbech, run in partnership with Active Fenland.

“Walking will always hold a special place in my heart,” says Dee. “It’s very underestimated but when I look at my journey, if I didn’t walk, I wouldn’t have been able to run. Leading walks has given me the confidence that I had before I gained so much weight – for me, my passion is to get people active.”





Outcome three

Improved participation of communities that have the least access and most barriers to the outdoors.

We'll prioritise improving the participation of communities facing the greatest barriers to walking in nature when developing campaigns and programmes. We will actively engage, listen, and learn from priority communities, and work with them to develop new approaches to supporting people walking outdoors.

We'll also double down on our efforts to become a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive charity.



Our successes to date



Transforming lives and landscapes with Paths to Wellbeing

In Wales, Paths to Wellbeing set out to bring the joy of walking to communities that historically have had the least access and the most barriers to the great outdoors. By providing tools, training and support, the project has helped local people devise new walking routes, improve existing ones and, importantly, maintain and sustain them for the future.

The project's delivery officers worked alongside local people in 18 communities to shape plans and make them a reality. In the Rhondda Valley, Lee Williams from Welcome to the Woods, one of the project partners, told us, "Paths to Wellbeing is going to make the area so much more accessible for people who haven't really been out to walk in the area before. They might have lived locally all their lives, and not realised what they've got on their doorstep."

Leading walks for people seeking asylum

Mole Valley Ramblers were approached by the local police about organising walks for people waiting for their asylum claims to be processed. With no certainty as to what the future would hold, these men found themselves living in small, confined spaces, cut off from the wider world. Exercise was largely impossible, so too was spending any time outdoors.

Mole Valley Ramblers plotted routes, and soon, they held their first walk. The benefit was immediate. The men started chatting amongst themselves, with many wanting to practise their English.

As the walks continued, the connections between the walkers grew stronger. Despite not sharing a language and coming from different cultures and countries, they now had the chance to get out and connect with each other and the natural world that surrounded them. "It is the most beautiful feeling in the world every time you walk and explore the beautiful countryside and its nature" says Jai, one of the walkers who took part.





Outcome four

Improved support for the Ramblers' charitable cause.

We'll sharpen our focus on our unique public benefit as a charity. We will demonstrate the impact of our work through the strength of our actions, while changing and revitalising perceptions of the Ramblers through our communications. This will help us inspire new partners, communities, and generations of walkers to support us in our ambition to create a future where anyone can enjoy walking in nature. Increased support for our cause will help our financial resilience as a charity, ensuring our valuable impact can thrive for years to come.

Our successes to date



How volunteering is helping to build Conor's CV

Conor, 21, became interested in volunteering for the Ramblers when he heard about the research a friend was doing for Don't Lose Your Way, our campaign to save lost paths. He decided to become a path protection volunteer. I thought the role would help protect the path network. I monitor up to 40 planning submissions across West Sussex ... keeping an eye on a priority list where I think building and development could possibly compromise access and rights of way."

As a second-year law student, Conor knows the experience will be a great addition to his CV once he's graduated from university and is looking for a job. "It feels great to be part of a community of volunteers who are all working towards making sure paths remain accessible for all."

Discovering the joy of walking with the Ramblers

Dawn joined the Ramblers after a friend gave her Ramblers gift membership as a present. She has always loved walking but initially, she had some preconceptions about the Ramblers and wasn't sure if it was her. This changed as soon as she began going along to some group walks. "I've always felt really welcome ... and my social world has grown in my time of being a member of the Ramblers", she says.

Dawn is happy to go along to any walk – she doesn't just limit herself to the ones organised by her group or to particular distances.

It doesn't matter how long or short the walk is, she likes to try out different walks and meet lots of different people. "I've walked with other local groups and even further afield in Wales. When you join any Ramblers group, you'll always have something to talk about."

Dawn has also volunteered for Ramblers Wellbeing Walks. As a carer, she's particularly passionate about these walks. "These walks are so important because you get outside in the sunshine; it's about walking and talking to people and being mindful."



Enablers

We have six enablers that will help us realise our strategy:

Sustainable income and investment

We will:

- Prioritise investment of our resources in activities of greatest impact.
- Evolve our membership model to a broader supporter model, enabling us to become a charity more open to anyone who would like to support our work.
- Diversify and grow our sources of income by demonstrating our charitable impact and public benefit to ensure financial sustainability.

A diverse body of staff, trustees, members, supporters and volunteers

We will:

- Create an inclusive culture where everyone is empowered to contribute to the success of the Ramblers.
- Stand up for what we believe in, including becoming an anti-racist charity and challenging injustice where we see it.

Streamlined partnerships, programmes and networks

We will:

- Enable and support a thriving network of local groups and areas.
- Act as a convenor of organisations and individuals working to enable more people to experience the benefits of walking outdoors in nature.
- Listen and learn from others, particularly communities facing the most barriers to walking outdoors in nature.
- Collaborate with organisations that work towards protecting and enhancing the natural environment in response to the climate emergency.

Targeted advocacy, policy and public affairs

We will:

- Review our advocacy priorities to make sure we're focused on breaking down the barriers to walking outdoors in nature.
- Optimise our public affairs activity to grow our influence with government and other key stakeholders.

Data, insight and digital innovation

We will:

- Provide digital tools that make it easier for people to experience the benefits of walking outdoors.
- Harness the power of our data to drive decision-making and optimise the impact of our activities.

Fit for purpose governance and operating models

We will:

- Review and optimise our governance and operating models, ensuring we're making the most of our people and financial resources.

Ramblers

020 3961 3300
ramblers@ramblers.org.uk

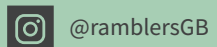
Ramblers Cymru

020 3961 3310
ramblerscymru@ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers Scotland

0131 357 5850
scotland@ramblers.org.uk

ramblers.org.uk



NORTH PENNINES NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

ACCESS and RECREATION WORKING GROUP

&

PENNINE NATIONAL TRAILS NORTHERN WORKING GROUP

MINUTES

1 October 2024.
Rookhope Village Hall

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies.

Attendees	Apologies
Mike Ogden - Durham County Council (Chair)	David Benson – Westmorland and Furness Council
Simon Wilson - North Pennines National Landscape	Susan Gray – Scottish Borders Council
Ted Liddle – Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum	Sarah Hudspeth – North Pennines National Landscape
Shane Harris – North Pennines National Landscape	Molly Jones – North Pennines National Landscape
Judith Mashiter – North Pennines National Landscape Partnership	Jack Ravenscroft – North Pennines National Landscape
Duncan Lovatt – Northumberland County Council	Ron Lyon – Disabled Ramblers
David Gibson – Cumberland Council	Sara Schultz – Natural England
Mike Murden – Durham County Council	Jim Welch – County Durham Local Access Forum
Hannah Kay – Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	Jo McAllister - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Reuben Horsley – North Pennines National Landscape	Charlie Shepherd - Ramblers
	Hazel Wainwright - Westmorland and Furness Council

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising

Discussed open access sign replacement. Simon mentioned the 2 PIPs to be replaced in Weardale. Consider survey of PIPs and a prioritised plan.

Action SW to consider survey.

Access for All Funding - Simon advised the group that there is still money in the pot. Discussed the Derwent Reservoir Way and lack of cycle access to Pow Hill. There was a general discussion about ideas for spend.

Action ideas to SW.

Fellfoot Forward LPS. In advance of the meeting Charlie mentioned an issue with the condition of a slow trail.

Action SW to check.

Mike reported that the accessible car parking space at Long Meg has an issue. While on a recent visit, the cows in the field damaged his car.

Action Mike to contact Highways Hotline. SW to discuss with Andy Lees.

4. Roof of England Walk – Shane Harris

SRH updated the group on progress.

We've been developing this new multi-day walking route since 2021. It's 303km (188 miles) long – split down into 14 legs. It will, eventually, touch on all corners of the North Pennines National Landscape & UNESCO Global Geopark.

A funding application (bringing together work under 4 headings: route infrastructure, waymarking, marketing and communications; and route investigations) was submitted to the North Pennines Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme. It was considered at the 29 May Panel. It was deferred, pending submission of a project communication plan.

We expanded and submitted a communication plan following the May Panel and after some toing and froing/clarification the project was approved at the July Panel – with a project value of £55K.

The route:

The route we took to the FiPL Panel is essentially the 'Preferred Route' minus the Cumberland. We're not able to progress the preferred route through Cumberland without addressing some challenging drainage/surfacing works and carrying out six road safety audits. So the short-term solution is to go ahead with a short cut from Slaggyford – following the Pennine Way, along the South Tyne Valley, to join up with the onward route to Haltwhistle. This means that the route is 303km long – with 74.5km of this not on existing promoted routes and hence needing waymarking. The project spend is split down into 4 sections:

Route infrastructure:

- Two sections of steps/revetment on the route in Westmorland & Furness

Waymarking:

- Design and manufacture a Roof of England Waymark.
- Contract to gain consent and waymark the 74.5km of route which is not on an existing promoted route.

Marketing and communications:

- New photography, drone footage and videography.
- Production of short video.
- Design of map asset and illustrations.
- New web presence as part of www.northpennines.org.uk
- Business development toolkit.

Route investigations

- Six road safety audits on road section on the Cumberland Loop.

Pending successful completion of the work this will enable us to make the new route available from Spring/early Summer 2025 – probably initially as a soft launch.

Ted was thanked for waymark ideas. SW noted that the route will be in continual development for some time. MO asked what happens with the sections of route where permission for waymarking has not been given? SH to review the responses to date and consider an approach where those issues have arisen.

Ted stated that there has been good progress and mentioned an agreement with a landowner on the Sandstone Way creating a permissive alternative to follow. Also users do not really draw conclusions and just want something clear to follow.

Hannah mentioned the accessibility audit on the Wainwrights Coast to Coast that circular writing can be problematic and less easy to read, DG also mentioned the shape of arrows on signs considered in the same audit.

The group discussed waymark options.

5. National Trails update – Hannah Kay

Hannah updated the group on the Pennine National Trails Partnership. Had £60k for the Northern section of the Pennine Way this year including Pennine Way People Programme. Had survey reports for the Dryburn Bridge. Shitlington Footbridge in Northumberland done, lanes in Westmorland and other maintenance. Survey Pennine Way next year (Pennine Bridleway this year). Looking at best options for people counters and user monitoring. There is a suggestion that Natural England are ending their counter contract after 2025/26.

The 60th anniversary preparations are going well. Hannah's main role is to develop the events and celebration. Main strands are the exhibition 'A Trail of Inspiration' concentrating on people who have been inspired by the trail. Starts in Hawes where the main launch will be in April. Still to arrange a more southerly venue, then to Bowlees for 2 months, then to the Sill in September and October. It will be a flexible exhibition. There will be a centrepiece collage of images. Encouraging partners to run events and activities that can be listed on a calendar on the website. Ted mentioned that it will also be the 10th anniversary of the Sandstone Way and there will be a ride. SH noted the launch of Roof of England Walk in the same year. DG mentioned it is worth contacting David Pitt.

Action SW to send David Pitt contact details to Hannah. Partners to consider events and activities to add to the calendar.

6. Access for All update – Simon Wilson

SW updated the group on progress to date with the list of works to be included (path surfacing, seating, accessible web content, children activity resources). DG suggested that the Cumberland Comms team might be able to promote the Talkin Trammer next year. South Tyne Trail was discussed as an option. DG working on a Trammer user gate catch with partners and suppliers.

Action. All to consider options for works. Liaise with SW.

7. Governance Review

SW updated members on the progress of Partnership Governance Review. Also mentioned the target outcomes framework requirement in the new Management Plan. DG mentioned QGIS being a useful tool in monitoring. Ted mentioned the need to consider climate issues, SW advise that there is a requirement to produce a Climate Adaptation Plan as part of the Management Plan renewal process. The group discussed the process of monitoring and planning.

8. Project and scheme updates

North Pennines National Landscape Team

SW updated the group on TeesSwale Programme and progress on Weardale Way improvements. Ted mentioned success of a new access post in Northumberland. MO mentioned the Land of Lead and Silver associated work that will be happening soon.

Cumberland

More numbers now on the LAF (still based on the old Cumbria boundaries). Things moving on at pace and very busy.

Northumberland

Duncan reported that the Baybridge/Slaley restrictions have been extended. Has been working with Hexham Ramblers in Allendale that has been very successful. Ted updated the group on continuing MPV illegal use and problems in Slaley Forest.

Durham County Council

Maintenance budget has been suspended for the final part of the financial year. Molly has been in and updated CAMS record with TeesSwale funded changes.

Other

Judith M advised that there is continued work on maintaining rights of way around Mid Teesdale. Also discussing permissive paths with Raby Estate around Snaisgill. The constant issues of parking are problematic in Middleton-in-Teesdale. Ted mentioned the success of the Corbridge carparking scheme.

Ted mentioned the progress to use disused railway tracks as greenways in Northumberland, including a new 2km section at Alnwick and conversation about Hexham to Kielder line. The JLAF remains a strong advocate for strategic access issues. Also mentioned the Reiver Trails network in Kielder Forest, which is a gravel bike network of 10 routes based on a feasibility study that Ted carried out. It has now been implemented with funding for phase 1 from Northumberland County Council. The Reiver brand has a wider application to the geographic area. The new Hamsterley Forest potential development was discussed.

9. AOB

Ted raised the issue of the Tindale Bridge on the Lord Carlisle Railway route, which is next to but not on the right of way. It was funded by Sustrans. The boarding has collapsed because there has been no maintenance due to lack of clarity on responsibility (not the local authority's job). Ted has costed a bridge at approximately £15k and suggests an approach to get the replacement done. It does need addressing, though there is a question over the landowner's role. Mentioned for information.

MO is reviewing his workload and asked the group members to consider volunteering to take over as Chair if he needs to step down.

10. Date, time, and venue of next meeting

Next meeting on Teams probably Tuesday 4th February.

County Durham Local Access Forum
Work Programme January 2025

Topic	Role	Member (Lead) and Group	Task	Target Date
Co-ordinate LAF Activity	Prepare agendas, chair meetings, coordinate links with other bodies	(Chair)/ Vice-Chair	Prepare agendas for quarterly meetings. Liaise with secretariat. Chair meetings, prepare minutes with secretariat	1-2 weeks prior to mtgs.
DCC Consultations	To respond to consultation documents	Chair/all		
Bright Water Landscape Project	Member of Board of Partnership	T Bolton	Ensure successful delivery of access elements	Complete
Coast Path Partnership	Represent the LAF at meetings and respond to consultations	(E Wilton)		
Public Access to Council owned land	To consider sites for permissive access	P Holding T Bolton G Hughes A Johnson Head of Corporate Property and Land		
Regional LAF Liaison	Represent the LAF at regional meetings with other LAFs and Natural England	Chair/Vice-Chair	Attend meetings as and when required	
DCC Liaison	To meet with a Senior Officer twice yearly to discuss current LAF business	All		
ROWIP 4	Support Officers to deliver ROWIP	(G Hughes) Pat Holding Angela Johnson Tom Bolton		
County Durham's Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan	Coordinate LAF involvement			
North Pennines AONB Access and Recreation Working Group	Represent the LAF	Jim Welch Mike Knipe	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report back on issues as and when necessary	

Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group	Represent the LAF	Jim Welch Mike Knipe	Represent the LAF at meetings 4 times a year and report back on issues as and when necessary	
Government Consultations	Respond on behalf of the LAF	(Chair)/all	As required	
Annual Report	Completion of Draft LAF Annual Report	A Johnson	Co-ordinate updates from members on individual work streams	
Working with Public Health	Represent the LAF at local meetings and lead on any consultation	J Welch A Marshall	Attend quarterly meetings of the Healthy Weight Alliance Group	
Common Land	Liaise with DCC on issues around the protection of Common Land and respond to consultation on applications for deregistration	(T Bolton)/J Welch		
2026 – Lost Ways	To explore 'lost ways'	Sub-Group:- (A Johnson) P Holding G Hughes J Stephenson M Knipe		No meeting yet convened
A66 North Trans-Pennine Route Project	To represent LAF at meetings of the non-motorised user workshop and stakeholder reference group	Angela Johnson		
Tees-Swale Project	Point of Contact			
Heritage 100 Walks	Point of contact	Jim Welch		
Durham City Green Corridor	Coordinate LAF involvement		Respond to consultation	
Slow Ways	Await	Geoff Hughes		To confirm with

	developments			GH whether required on WP
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