



LOCAL ACCESS FORUM County Durham

County Durham Local Access Forum

Date **Monday 14 April 2025**
Time **5.00 pm**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

Business

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 January 2025 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. National/Regional Issues
 - a) A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project (Pages 11 - 12)
To note the attached.
 - b) Environmental Land Management Schemes
To receive an update, if any from B Hodgson.
5. Update from Rights of Way Team (including Lost Ways)
6. Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes
To receive update from M Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Team Leader
7. Durham City Green Corridor
To receive an update from M Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Team Leader
8. Public Access to Council-owned Land
To receive update
9. Active Travel Update (Pages 13 - 14)
To note the attached update from A Puddick, Senior Active Travel Officer
10. Northern Saints Trails
To receive an update from M Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Team Leader
11. Bright Water Landscape Project

To receive an update from M Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Team Leader and T Bolton.

12. North Pennines National Landscape Partnership (Pages 15 - 18)
To note the attached minutes of the North Pennines National Landscape Access and Recreation Working Group & Pennine National Trails Northern Working Group.
13. Health
To receive an update if available from H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer.
14. Membership Update
15. Member Training
16. Work Programme (Pages 19 - 20)
To consider and update the Work Programme
17. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting
Monday 21 July 2025, 5.00 p.m. – Site visit and meeting venue to be confirmed
18. Any other business of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration (subject to the Chair's approval).

Lucy Gladders
Secretary
County Durham Local Access Forum
8 April 2025

To: The Members of County Durham Local Access Forum

COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

At a Meeting of **County Durham Local Access Forum** held in Committee Room 2 on **Monday 27 January 2025 at 5.00 pm**

Present:

P Holding (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

T Bolton, B Hodgson, A Marshall, A Johnson, M Knipe, J Stephenson, E.Wilton, P Westgarth and N Sharpe

Officers:

M Ogden, Access and Rights of Way Team Leader

H Barber, Senior Rights of Way Officer

L Gladders, Senior Committee Services Officer and LAF Secretary

1 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from G Hughes, J Welch and Councillors E Scott and J Shuttleworth.

2 Election of Chair

Agreed: that P Holding be elected as Chair for the ensuing year.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

Update on Minute number 13: Bright Water Landscape Project

T Bolton provided an update to the Forum noting that a final Board meeting including final accounts was expected to be held on 6 March, however full details were not yet known. He further referenced recent correspondence

received from G Hughes which queried whether it was known how Bright Water proposed to deal with flooding issues as result of the rising water table which he stated severely impeded access in a number of areas. T Bolton explained that his was recollection that P Black had addressed this. A further query was raised around the provision of interpretation boards.

In response the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader advised that some interpretation boards were already in place, and these were being monitored across a period. With regard to the concerns raised by G Hughes, relating to the rising water table, it was expected that this would be raised with P Black if the current infrastructure was not coping.

T Bolton concluded by advising that it was expected that the final accounts would be considered at the final Board meeting, and when made available would provide the LAF Secretary with a copy for circulation to the Forum.

Agricultural Property Relief

B Hodgson in referencing the government reform noted that concern raising amongst farmers that their farms and family inheritance was at risk because of the proposed new tax. He therefore asked for the Forums support in lobbying the government to review their proposals.

5 Opening the Way: The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition - 2024

The Chair welcomed forum member Mike Knipe to provide a short presentation on Opening the Way: The Ramblers' Strategic Ambition 2024 and Beyond.

M Knipe explained that the strategy set out the ambition to address the inequities and imbalance identified by prioritising the needs of communities who had the least access and faced the most barriers to walking in nature. The strategy was focused around three key foundations including its vision, purpose and impact and sought to achieve the following outcomes:

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

Outcome two: Improved confidence and knowledge to walk outdoors.

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

Outcome four: Improved support for the Ramblers' charitable cause.

The presentation provided further details on successes to date and provided case studies against each of the four outcomes.

M Knipe went on to explain that the Ramblers had six enablers which would assist in realising the strategy which included:

- Sustainable income and investment
- A diverse body of staff, trustees, members, and volunteers
- Streamlined partnerships, programmes and networks
- Targeted advocacy, policy, and public affairs
- Data, insight, and digital innovation
- Fit for purpose governance and operating models.

A Johnson asked what the advantages were of becoming a member of the Ramblers. In response M Knipe advised that for £43 per year, you received access, discounts on kit and walkers' insurance, along with the added benefits of the social and navigational aspect, map reading training and optional first aid courses.

Further discussion took place regarding local Ramblers' groups their calendar of events and trips and how the groups were promoted on social media, including Facebook.

T Bolton asked whether there was any liaison between DCC and the Ramblers Association in terms of promotion of walking. He referenced historical discussions between AAP and parish councils regarding walking groups and wondered whether there was any joined up work being done in this regard of whether the strategy was held in isolation. M Knipe advised that there were some connections already in place with County Councillors and further referenced partnership work with Durham County Council in celebrating the 50th year and funding which had been provided to support associated incentives.

The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader asked whether there was a timescale on the strategy or whether it was open ended. M Knipe advised that the new strategy overlapped with a 5-year strategy which had been published under the previous management team. M Ogden further noted that the aims and objectives of the plan were laudable, however he did note that local authorities were not mentioned within the plan, and he thought it would have been evident within the strategy that a case was being put forward for budget support given that local authorities would be able to help deliver on some of the objectives set out.

6 National/Regional Issues

a A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project

The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader referred to a letter previously circulated which referred to the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project legal challenge to the Secretary of State's Development Consent Order decision. He advised that a new appeal had been lodged, and the outcome of that appeal was awaited. In the meantime, however, some investigatory works were now able to take place on the land and further updates would be provided when available.

b North East Travel Plan

The Forum noted that the North East Travel Plan, which was a North East Combined Authority project, sought to make travel across the North East greener, safer, and more reliable. Consultation on the plan was due to end on the 2 January 2025. A Johnson noted that she had been made aware of the plan and was disappointed that there was no reference to equestrian users, however, accepted that the plan was urban focused on travel to work.

c Environmental Land Management Schemes

The Forum received an update from B Hodgson regarding the scheme, noting that work was ongoing in this area to try and secure more funding from government. He noted that there was a significant amount of paperwork to be completed in order to access the funding to increase hedgerow, wildflower and tree planting however, there were wildlife benefits to this.

The Access and Rights of Way Team Leader commented that under the old countryside stewardship there was permissive access whereby landowners could get paid for access, and this was being reintroduced however there were various restrictions around this and noted information around temporary permissive access for mobility access, however there were a lot of unanswered questions around what would happen when the access was removed. However, it was hoped that further information and consultation was forthcoming.

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

The Forum received an update from the Senior Rights of Way Team Officer which provide details around current workload, staffing, and progress in

relation to the processing of Lost Ways and Definitive Map Modification Orders.

H Barber advised that there had been little change to the previous update, with over 350 applications still to be processed. She further referenced Trimdon Station walkway Definitive Map Modification Application, which had recently been considered and endorsed by the Highways Committee that a Modification Order be made under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to add to the Definitive Map and Statement a public footpath along the applied for route from Station Road to Footpath 4.

The Senior Rights of Way Team Leader further provided details regarding staffing, however noted whilst staffing levels were stable, the team were being called on more frequently to comment on planning applications which was taking up a significant amount of Officer time.

8 Stockton and Darlington Railway - Walking and Cycling Routes

The Forum received an update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader which provided details regarding the ongoing work and negotiation taking place with land agents ahead of the official start of the Stockton and Darlington Railway 200 S&DR200 taking place from March to September 2025.

M Ogden further advised that the Project Officer's contract was due to expire at the end of March this year and anything carried forward from this role would potentially need to be picked up by the Access and Rights of Way Team.

A link to the website which provided all details of the S&DR200 could be accessed at <https://www.sdr200.co.uk/>

9 Northern Saints Trails

The Forum received an update from the Access and Rights of Way Team Leader which provided details around 'The Way of Hope' which would broadly follow the existing Weardale Way and complement existing Northern Saints Trail routes. M Ogden explained that meetings were expected to take place in the coming weeks with landowners and he was also due to meet with D Potts, former Northern Saints Trail Coordinator and retired LAF member to discuss his ideas for the Trails.

Further updates would be provided when available.

10 Durham City Green Corridor

The Forum received an update from E Wilton, National Trust on the partnership project between the Trust and Durham County Council with a jointly funded project manager, hosted by the National Trust.

It was explained that the Durham City Green Corridor covered the northeastern fringe of Durham City, along approximately a 6.5-mile corridor of the River Wear. The aim being to work with people and nature to enhance the natural environment whilst providing a valuable accessible resource for both visitors and the local community. The National Trust's property, Crook Hall Gardens, was intended to serve as a hub or gateway between the urban and natural settings.

Further details were reported in respect of public consultation and engagement with key stakeholders and community members including foundation setting with key focus groups.

Further discussion took place around land slipping and issues around mine water and responsibilities of the Coal Authority.

AGREED: That N Sharpe and G Hughes be nominated to represent the Forum where possible at focus group meetings.

11 Public Access to Council-owned Land

The Forum noted that the current Head of Corporate Property and Land was retiring at the end of March and once her replacement was in position, the Forum would seek to discuss outstanding access requests. An update, if possible, would be provided at next the meeting in April.

12 North Pennines National Landscape

The Forum noted the minutes of the Access and Recreation Working Group held on 1 October 2024.

13 Health

It was noted that there were no minutes yet available from the last Healthy Weight Alliance Group.

14 Membership Update

There were no membership updates to report.

15 Member Training

Forum members agreed that the following topics could be picked up for discussion at a future meeting:

- Wolsingham Wayfarers – July meeting with site visit
- National Trust Strategy – E Wilton to facilitate.

16 Work Programme

AGREED: that the work programme be updated to reflect recent additions and removal of projects which have completed.

17 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 14 April 2025 at 5.00 p.m.

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From: A66 NTP <A66NTP@nationalhighways.co.uk>

Sent: 03 February 2025 09:35

Subject: [EXTERNAL]:National Highways Response - A66 Northern Trans-Pennine - Scheme Update

Dear Stakeholder,

A66 Northern Trans-Pennine scheme update

The A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project has reached a significant milestone, the Court of Appeal has dismissed the request to appeal the decision of the High Court on the legal challenge brought about by Transport Action Network (TAN).

This decision enables us to continue with plans to upgrade this nationally significant route, connecting the M6 at Penrith to the A1(M) at Scotch Corner. We are carrying out utility diversions, archaeological excavations, and surveys across the route. These activities can be done with minimal route interruptions, and we will keep you informed of any important changes.

The project remains part of the government's ongoing spending review, and we await the outcome later in the year.

We remain confident that this scheme will improve road safety, reduce congestion, and boost the economy across the North, and we thank you for your continued support.

David Hudson

Senior Communications Manager: A66

A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project team

National Highways | Major Projects

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Active Travel Team – Update to the County Durham Local Access Forum

A key area of current focus for the Active Travel Team relates to access controls on the County's active travel network.

Under the Equality Act (2010) public authorities responsible for a space are required to anticipate and make reasonable adjustments to enable Disabled people access with no substantial disadvantage compared to non-Disabled people. This explicitly includes altering and removing physical features which would otherwise exclude Disabled people. It is not permitted to require a Disabled person to go a longer way around, ask for assistance or traverse a space much more slowly than a non-Disabled person would have to due to a physical barrier that could be removed.

A key aspect of the act is that public authorities should advance equality of opportunity for all people with protected characteristics, including Disabled people. This goes beyond removing and minimising disadvantages, and additionally includes taking steps to promote equality by actively enabling Disabled people to participate in public life and activities, especially where Disabled participation is disproportionately low. The wish for the removal of barriers also aligns with national guidance (e.g. Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20, Inclusive Mobility) which encourages that access control measures should not be used as they reduce the usability of an active travel route for everyone and, may exclude people riding nonstandard cycles and cargo bikes. They unfortunately reduce the capacity of a route as well as the directness and comfort.

For Durham County Council, this involves identifying instances where existing access controls are not in accordance with legislation, best practice and guidance and through working with local partners, such as Sustrans, to remove these and deliver inclusive and high-quality access controls.

In some instances, access controls are unable to be completely removed from the active travel network to suit local circumstances such as, but not exhaustively, Anti-Social Behaviour and safety. However, new access controls delivered at these locations provide betterment against the previous and support our agenda to open up access for all users.

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**North
Pennines
National
Landscape**



**NORTH PENNINES NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
ACCESS and RECREATION WORKING GROUP
&
PENNINE NATIONAL TRAILS NORTHERN WORKING GROUP
MINUTES**

17 February 2025.

Teams

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies.

Attendees	Apologies
Mike Ogden - Durham County Council (Chair)	Susan Gray – Scottish Borders Council
Simon Wilson - North Pennines National Landscape	Sarah Hudspeth – North Pennines National Landscape
Sara Schultz – Natural England	Molly Jones – North Pennines National Landscape
Adam Crolla – North Pennines National Landscape	Ted Liddle – Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum
David Benson – Westmorland and Furness Council	Ron Lyon – Disabled Ramblers
Duncan Lovatt – Northumberland County Council	Jane Hayes – North Pennines National Landscape
Mike Knipe – Durham LAF	Jim Welch – County Durham Local Access Forum
Mike Murden – Durham County Council	Jo McAllister - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Denise Brydon – Scottish Borders Council	Lorna Lazzari -Northumberland National Park Authority
Charlie Shepherd - Ramblers	Hazel Wainwright - Westmorland and Furness Council
	Hannah Kay – Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
	David Gibson – Cumberland Council
	Shane Harris – North Pennines National Landscape

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising

The group discussed ideas on replacement of PIP and other Open Access infrastructure. SW agreed to consider a survey of the PIPs.

Action. SW to look at options for PIP survey.

AC reported on review of the Kirkoswald slow trail. He will be detailing works to be done and sharing with the access authority.

Long Meg, SW will talk to Andy again to see if any discussion has taken place about cows in the field.

4. Roof of England Walk progress

SW presented the summary from Shane Harris.

- The Roof of England Walk is a 14-day walking route – a journey around the North Pennines National Landscape. It is 303km (189 miles) long and touches on the highlights of the North Pennines.
- Web presence - website build is almost complete. The task of adding content and building the services directory will begin March onwards.
- New designed digital map is nearing completion.
- Waymarks are now in production - based on the new lapwing logo for the National Landscape (will be used on sections not already part of a main promoted route - c75km). In process of gaining consents now. Waymarking planned to be completed by end of March.
- Imagery and videography contract is almost complete.
- The recent work has been funded through the North Pennines Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (not including Shane's time).
- The route will launch later in 2025

CS passed on his thanks to Shane for pulling everything together so well.

5. National Trails update including 60th anniversary – Hannah Kay briefing note

- Update on funding / grants – Partnership meeting in March where these will be discussed.
- PW 60th – 'Trail of Inspiration' opened at the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes – being very well received - quote from YDNPA chair who went to see it 'It's an excellently curated presentation of access, social action, natural environment, cultural history, health and well-being, and a wide range of creative arts.'
- Have invited Jane Hayes and North Pennines National Landscape team down to Hawes to have a look and to work out how the exhibition can be adapted for Bowlees Visitor Centre.
- Media interest seems to be growing – hoping for a peak around anniversary time (24 April).

- PW 60th - Guardian visit – Hannah is happy to be involved.
- PW 60th event 24th April – official invites have gone out and speakers being arranged. Baroness Hayman invited – will depend on parliament commitment.
- Other PW 60th activities – website live – reminder to let Hannah know of any activities. All links here
For more information on the Pennine Way 60th
www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way-at-60
Follow us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/PennineWayNT/ Instagram - www.instagram.com/penninewaynationaltrail/

The group discussed the good progress on 60th celebrations.

SW advised that he is about to submit an application for Pennine Way People Programme 2025-26.

DBe advised on progress within the North Pennines on the Coast to Coast National Trail, including the extensive flagging from Nine Standards.

Action. ALL, to let Hannah know of any relevant activities.

6. Access for All update – Simon Wilson

SW updated on progress made to improve accessibility using the Access for All funding, including path surfacing and structures, boardwalk completion at Bowlees, new Trampers, work being undertaken by Malcolm Judge on Access to Eden programme, new benches, family activities.

7. Governance Review and North Pennines National Landscape Management Plan – Simon Wilson

MO updated the group on the new partnership structure/changes to include an executive group, partners' forum and annual conference.

SW advised that the team would be looking at the structure of working groups following the review.

8. Project and scheme updates

AC advised that he has now been out on most of the Pennine Way in the North Pennines since starting in post and has a good understanding of issues for future works and investment. SS asked about the role of Spine Race funding and whether there was any evidence of Spine race specific impact. The group welcomed continuing funding support if available and felt that there were no major specific impacts.

SW updated members on progress on the Weardale Way, including contribution to resolve the problem bridges, National Landscape team - Tees Swale Programme funded access works now substantially complete and starting work on new walk leaflets.

9. Updates from members

MO mentioned the 3 BHS DMMO applications that have just been published using Enclosure Award evidence (Westgate, St Johns Chapel etc). Also updated the group on the 'Way of Hope' Weardale Way based pilgrimage route.

DL mentioned the joint work to replace 4 stiles with kissing gates on the Pennine Way and resolve the closed section of the National Trail at Lintley.

SS advised that there is trail manager recruitment happening and gave a general update on budgets.

DB advise that works will be happening on Great Dunn Fell ridge to limit erosion. Also mentioned that the Dryburn Bridge replacement tender will go live on 10th March. Discussing funding support with National Trails UK (likely £250,000). DB also mentioned the planned Westmorland Way that will start in Alston and head south.

10. AOB

11. Date, time and venue of next meeting

Late June, in person, in Westmorland or Northumberland.

County Durham Local Access Forum
Work Programme April 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		
A66 North Trans-Pennine Route Project	To represent LAF at meetings of the non-motorised user workshop and stakeholder reference group	Angela Johnson		
Heritage 100 Walks	Point of contact	Jim Welch		
Durham City Green Corridor	Coordinate LAF involvement	Geoff Hughes Noel Sharpe		
Slow Ways	Await developments	Geoff Hughes		To confirm with GH whether required on WP