



NORTH PENNINES AONB PARTNERSHIP

ACCESS and RECREATION WORKING GROUP

&

PENNINE NATIONAL TRAILS NORTHERN WORKING GROUP

MINUTES

9th August 2023.
Talkin Tarn

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Attendees	Apologies
Mike Ogden - Durham County Council (Chair)	Jo McAllister - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Simon Wilson - North Pennines AONB Partnership	Jane Hayes - North Pennines AONB Partnership
Duncan Lovatt – Northumberland County Council	Shane Harris - North Pennines AONB Partnership
Molly Jones - North Pennines AONB Partnership	Sarah Tooze - North Pennines AONB Partnership
Sara Schultz – Natural England	Sarah Hudspeth - North Pennines AONB Partnership
David Gibson – Cumberland Council	Mike Murden – Durham County Council
Jim Welch - Durham Local Access Forum	Geoff Wilson – Cumbria and Lakes Joint Local Access Forum
Heather Procter – Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	Aimee Lee - North Pennines AONB Partnership
Jack Ravenscroft – North Pennines AONB Partnership	
Lorna Lazzari – Northumberland National Park Authority	
Fiona Knox - North Pennines AONB Partnership	
Ron Lyon – Disabled Ramblers	
Hazel Wainwright – Westmorland and Furness Council	
David Benson – Westmorland and Furness Council	

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising

The group discussed attendance by other NE staff. Sara and others to update later re Coast to coast.

4. National Trails update – Heather Proctor

HP updated the group on the split of responsibilities with Jo.

Update from JoM. Spine Race – Over the past 2 years participants of the virtual Spine Race have donated towards the repair work needed on a section of the Pennine Way on Dun Fell and this project is now underway (confirmed completed at the meeting). We are hoping to do some joint promotion of the work with the Spine Race in due course. We're conscious that due to the appearance of the groundworks immediately after completion and the importance given to the 'look' of work on social media, it may be beneficial to wait to photograph the site once it has bedded-in slightly, hence not rushing to put something out too soon.

Countryfile Magazine – The August edition of BBC Countryfile Magazine features a 14 page article on the Pennine Way which we have contributed to. The trail is given the title of 'England's Finest Trail' on the front cover banner and includes some great photography along the length of the trail.

Social Media – currently aiming for a minimum of 1 post a week. It doesn't sound much but ensures we maintain a presence without it dominating our work. Social media can be time consuming to manage and ensuring content is useful and relevant is important. Our audience seem to respond well to updates on maintenance projects (for example the recent work on the approach to Bellingham) and the work of volunteers on the trail, so if there are any stories that we can cover then please get in touch.

Outdooractive – We have bought in to an agreement with Outdooractive to upload walks/rides on the Pennine Trails on to their platform. The aim is to update some of our circular walks and rides and provide GPS mapping. Work so far has focused on the 'Try a Trail' routes which were created around 15 years ago as these rely on the downloading of PDF documents from the website and the information on the PDFs, whilst useable, is not up to date. Each walk or ride is being checked before it's published, new photos taken and new descriptions written. A link is provided from the National Trails website to the relevant Outdooractive page. The intention is to have walks on offer along the whole length of the Pennine Way.

Circular and linear walks – We have uploaded some more of the North Pennines AONB walks to the website so there are now 10 shown in total. These will not be put on Outdooractive as they're produced by North Pennines AONB Partnership but if they appear on an app or

any GPS platform in the future and there's any ability for us to link to or promote this then it would be great to add this to the website. We'd particularly like to be able to offer more accessible walks and this is something we're keen to look in to further. Ron mentioned that there will be a good number of routes already on Outdooractive submitted by members of the Disabled Ramblers.

Online survey - Hope that the online survey will be back on the website in the autumn and enable us to capture important data on how the trails are being used. It's likely to be available for a 3-4 month period of time and will be relevant to anyone who has walked any length of the Pennine Way over the previous 9-12 months. Questions are similar to those asked in previous surveys (to enable some comparison of data) but there will also be questions around the use of public transport and more questions around trail condition.

60th anniversary – Will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the official opening of the Pennine Way in 2025 and have been looking at numerous options for activities. A short list is being created and we hope to present this at the next partnership meeting in October. If anyone would like to make a suggestion for events or activities to be considered then please get in touch as the more ideas we have at this stage the better. Anything/everything is up for consideration at the moment!

Action. All to consider ideas for 60th anniversary activities, please contact Jo or Heather.

HP advised on details of the Pennine National Trails budget. All the NE grant and most of the other money has been allocated to date. Hope to be fully spent. Have additional accessibility money coming next financial year. Have done some work to identify walks to improve using the accessibility funding. 10 locations have been identified along the Pennine Way with potential due to infrastructure present. Discussed Bowlees options, MO advised that the emerging Durham ROWIP has a target of 10 new accessible routes. Jim advised on issues of least restrictive option and reasonable adjustments, mentioned the audio interpretation that was installed at Derwent Reservoir, it would be good to monitor how well they are used. Question about need for match funding on sections off Pennine Way where routes are circular. Molly asked about how the routes would be marked to the right audience. Not yet fully considered but definitely something to consider and work with partners to address. Ron mentioned the need to be careful that routes are realistic for audiences. Heather advised that there is an ambition to develop a photo trail for the Pennine Bridleway with the Experience Community. Sara mentioned the grading options already available including By All Reasonable Means. Ron offered his support.

HP advised that the fulfilment of the Northern section of the Pennine Bridleway is a priority, now rolled into 'completing the Pennine Bridleway' covering all the strategic issues on the route, with a completion target of 2031. First task is a letter to NE and others to raise awareness and establish a plan.

Action. Heather to draft a letter and circulate to Highway Authorities.

A69 crossing of the Pennine Way was discussed. The Champion who covers that section has raised the issue on a number of occasions. There is no formalised crossing. It is an intimidating point. Whilst there is no evidence of accidents, it is not a pleasant crossing. The group agreed that it would be worth looking at the Pennine Journey route that uses a nearby underpass.

Action. Section to be checked on next survey.

Combined signposting raised by volunteer where the Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall Paths coincide, and signage is not clear. The group discussed the option of adding both waymark discs as appropriate and identify particularly problematic location. Jim mentioned that at times he is asked about the condition of rights of way around the area, highlights the need to consider people visiting from other areas.

5. Roof of England Walk

SW advised that the preferred route is all but finalised. Delivery of routes is now being built into funding bids (or will be improved by association). The next major step other than obtaining funding is the main direction text for the guide that Shane will be leading on. Jim mentioned BBC 4 walks programme Open Country and wondered if they had ever been to the North Pennines.

Action. Simon will circulate details to Hazel and Dave B. Simon to check with Sarah H about Open Country programme.

6. Access for All update – Simon Wilson

SW updated the group on the range of things that have been delivered using the Access for All funding. All has generally gone well though a greater lead in time and funding for staff would have been a bonus. Fiona and Simon updated on recent work with the Experience Community on photo-trails and films. MJ updated members on the progress and success of the Outdoor Mobility Network (Trampers). We feel it has been a great success with excellent feedback. The network has opened-up opportunities for people who faced significant barriers. Jim mentioned text to audio apps that are now available as is photograph description software. Ron mentioned the list of available Trampers on the Disabled Ramblers website and asked that the Disabled Ramblers are marketed at Trammer venues. Simon asked members for capital only activity ideas for the fund for next financial year when it becomes available again.

Action. All to consider options for works. Molly to send details of the Trampers to Ron, contact ron@disabledramblers.co.uk.

7. Update on 'North Pennines National Landscape' branding

SW advised that the new National Landscapes rename/rebrand of AONBs is likely to take place November. We will have a new logo (one of a national set). The change will be a significant piece of work for us.

8. Project and scheme updates

FK advised that within the Fellfoot Forward LPS, we have been developing what we term slow trails, which are shorter walks developed from older East Cumbria Countryside Project trails and with community consultation. There are 6 routes that have been developed. Individual trail guides will be available in due course as print, on the new hybrid app and available as GPX files. Have had support from access authority colleagues and Ron. Opportunities for accessibility will be maximised. We hope that by Autumn they will be ready. We have a draft film for Talkin Tarn that has been produced by the Experience Community. Also looked at Long Meg stone circle and Castle Carrock (that will be included in a phototrail). We have also looked at accessible infrastructure. One spin off is likely to be some form of accessibility project around Geltsdale. David B and Jack are likely to lead on improving routes in the south. Fellfoot 40 route is being worked on, a 40 mile bike route that

runs as a figure of 8 through the Fellfoot Forward Scheme area. A tender is out for the product work. The Scheme will end in March. We were gifted the Cumbria high level walks and we will make them available again and we will look at doing communication work in due course. MO asked about the changes at Long Meg. FK advised that it is going well and a new sign has gone in at Long Meg car park discouraging overnight stays and interpretation/orientation is planned.

MJ advised that the road crossing improvements at Bowlees are planned for next week. Other TeesSwale access works are continuing as reported before.

JR advised that the Middleton parish works are coming to an end. Has been doing some work on the Weardale Way and Pennine Way People Project is going well with works planned through the year.

9. Updates from members

SS advised that the King Charles III England Coast Path is going well with more stretches open. Has been working between Cleveleys and Pierhead with colleagues at Sefton. Has been working closely with colleagues in Northumberland to finalise the whole of the Coast Path in the County and a launch event is planned at the end of August. Busy working with others to establish partnerships. Sara does not have any information about the comprehensive spending review. Static budget impacts and the difficulties of rising prices were discussed.

David G advised that there are a lot of orders being prepared for the Coast Path at the moment. Also doing work with the Eden Rivers Trust, working up an application to NLHF for funding. Move to unitary is still ongoing.

David B advised that for the emerging Coast to Coast development there are 3 sets of meetings. On the stakeholder group there are a range of organisations represented. Wider benefits are a key concern (nature, community, business). Hartley to Yorkshire is the section of concern for the North Pennines. It is likely to be a dedication and commons consent. Might be up to 2km of mill flagging to go in. There will also be a clapper bridge to go in. There will be an access audit to advise on accessibility opportunities. At Peeping Hill on the Pennine Way, the new gate and people counter has gone in. On Dun Fell, there is more work that could be done following the recently completed works. Still some works to complete outside Alston on the Pennine Way. The waymarking activity at Alston with volunteers went well. Attended the MOD Warcop Access group and has passed contact details to MO.

LL reported that maintenance work is going well. All works are now done in Wark Forest

RL has a calendar of activity planned for the year and is minded to put something together for the Eden and North Pennines. Any ideas would be welcomed (accessible but adventurous routes up to 8 miles, preferably circular). Parking is a key matter to consider (20 vehicles including motorhomes).

Action. All to consider routes and contact Ron.

MO advised that the new Durham ROWIP has gone through statutory consultation and will be going to cabinet. Northumberland are also looking at a review. Mike mentioned his role on the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme Panel, including access.

10. AOB

SW mentioned the new research reported today that walking under 5000 steps per day can have health benefits at any age.

11. Date, time and venue of next meeting

Weds 6th December on Teams