NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AND COUNTY
JOINT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held on
Thursday 13 October 2016 at 1745 - 2045
National Park Offices, South Park, Eastburn, Hexham

Attendance:
Afternoon: A Mitcham, A Earnshaw (Chairman), D Rozario, G Astbury, I Jackson, M Bell, N Rossiter, S Rogers, T Liddle, V Brown
Evening: A Mitcham, A Earnshaw (Chairman), D Rozario, G Astbury, I Jackson, M Bell, N Rossiter, S Rogers, T Liddle, V Brown
Officers: M Hume, Northumberland National Park Authority; D Brookes, Northumberland County Council; J Milner, Natural England
Apologies: J Farries, M Macgregor, M Allan, T Thorne, L Lazzari, M Jeffrey

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES


The Chairman was disappointed to announce the resignation of Dave Rout, who had recently joined the JLAc as a co-opted member and thanked Dave for his valued contribution.

Apologies were noted and the Chairman reminded members they should attend as many meetings of the full JLAc, working groups and other meetings as arranged. The Chairman drew attention to the new style agenda, devised to correspond with the JLAc Action Plan headings.

2 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

a) Question from Northumbrian Mountaineering Club relating to the proposed forestry/new woodland plan development of Doddington North Moor, 7km north of Wooler, which is open access land and the location of ‘Granny Crag’ a popular climbing crag:

The JLAc will be consulted on this proposed development in due course and felt that if there were any opportunities for enhanced access then these should be considered such as a circular walk route to Wooler. The Chairman agreed to write to the mountaineering club advising them that the JLAc would be consulted on the application and asked the JLAc Forestry sub group to consider an appropriate reply.

b) Question from member of the public relating to ways of getting involved with the National Park and getting views and thoughts heard especially with regard to walking:

A question had been submitted to the September National Park Authority meeting and a relevant response sent from the Authority. The correspondent was informed of the JLAc’s role and purpose as a formally recognised forum which provides advice on how to make the countryside, urban routes, green spaces and the coast more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation; and of the biennial recruitment drive due to take place in Spring 2017.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: none received

4 MINUTES OF JOINT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM 23 July 2016:

The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.
5 CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE / AFTERNOON SESSION

The Chairman referred to the afternoon session (separate note from this item for JLAF members) and highlighted:

a. Action Plan: Focus change on some projects e.g. RoWIP – impact of climate change; look at Access Prioritisation document compiled by County Durham LAF; 2026 mapping review and involvement in this.

b. Communications: Members spoke about social media, use of Instagram, preparing a short Communications Strategy with Communications sub group involvement (A Earnshaw, T Liddle, N Rossiter) and in this regard, I Jackson offered to write a piece to help raise the JLAF’s profile.

6 JLAF ACTION PLAN Objective 1: JLAF involvement in the RoWIP, Open Access, Coastal Access, 2026 and other access projects

JLAF Involvement in RoWIP, Open Access, Coastal Access, 2026 and other access projects

a) Northumberland County Council update:

D Brookes tabled a short update report and pointed out the modification order and Stobswood Open Cast site updates. He advised members there was a Rights of Way committee meeting on 8 November to include maintenance responsibility for the route.

D Brookes drew attention to the Rights of Way Capital Programme 2016 – 2017 and pointed out the list of works due to be carried out as a result of additional funding secured from Defra of £30,000 for winter 2015 – 2016 flood damage repairs to rights of way. A member asked if the repairs would sustain through to the next floods and, with the effect of climate change, asked if it was right for public money to be used for such repairs for possible non-sustainable items e.g. repairing a bridge that could be washed away in the next floods. The member asked D Brookes to ask the County Council if any measures would be taken to ensure sustainability of the proposed repairs, sought re-assurance that the money would be spent wisely (i.e. taking cognisance of likely climate change effects and considering treating and adapting, rather than repairing) and to update JLAF members on this.

b) Northumberland National Park update:

In the absence of L Lazzari, members noted the update. Members asked about flood damaged paths in the National Park and other flood damage repairs and asked for an update in due course.

Members noted that the Sill JLAF Working group (D Rozario, M Allan, T Liddle, G Astbury and N Rossiter) were to meet with members of the Sill team approximately every two months on a specific topic relating to access and the Sill. D Rozario asked JLAF members to advise her of any matters they wished the group to raise. A member asked how less-abled people see access in the area e.g. Housesteads to the Fort and asked what connections could be made to allow less-abled people enjoy the area.

With regard to the Parish Initiative project, and referring to Working Group North’s notes, S Rogers and D Brookes updated on Glanton parish routes. The Chairman reminded members to keep in contact with parishes and to keep this useful initiative moving forward.
7 **JLAF ACTION PLAN: Objective 2:** Advocacy, Influence and Partnership working to advance access to the countryside.

   a. Communications Strategy: the Chairman advised she would meet with the Communications sub-group to take this forward with a view to finalising a strategy early in the new year.

   b. National Park Management Plan Action Plan: M Bell agreed to review the Management Plan to find links with the JLAF Action Plan in time for the Management Plan Action Plan review meeting on 4 November which the Chairman was attending. See also item 9 (d).

   c. North East Local Nature Partnership: T Liddle reported that this was moving ahead and that he was asked for input re access matters as and when required.

   d. Natural England: J Milner provided a brief update on developments at Natural England, including his role re Coastal Access, that Rob Leek (Huddle) had left and there was now only a general response contact for regional local access forum enquiries.

   e. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: members noted the North Pennines update including the new permissive routes through Deneholme Woods in Allendale, work to improve and promote Isaac’s Tea Trail, the ‘Dozen Dales’ progress and the production of guidance for organisers of outdoor recreation events.

   f. Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust: G Astbury confirmed he would attend the Affiliates Meeting on 10 November in place of the Chairman and would provide a brief update at the next meeting.

   g. Regional LAF Chairs – Rights of Way Improvement Plans discussion: the Chairman said she had reviewed the Northumberland County Council, Durham and Tyne & Wear Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) and would send members a short review of common themes for future reference and discussion.

8 **JLAF ACTION PLAN: Objective 3:** Communication through the provision of advice and information on issues relating to access to the countryside

   a. Northumberland County Council Walking & Cycling Strategy: T Liddle provided an update and said he was waiting to see a copy of the finalised strategy.

   b. Forestry Commission consultations: none

   c. Rural Tourism Enquiry consultation: the Chairman said the JLAF response had been submitted; in summary the JLAF said that a large amount could be done to obtain the economic benefits of rural tourism by ensuring visitors have information needed to confidently plan a visit to the countryside or coast using existing access provision and that funding was in place to ensure maintenance of key rights of way and access land with any necessary improvements made. However, as select committee rules state once a submission goes in the contents can’t be used publically without permission, members should refer to the JLAF submission for further information.
9 MEMBERS’ SECTION.

a. Border Uplands ‘Revitalising Redesdale’ Access study: T Liddle provided a brief update and alluded to cycling opportunities.

b. Walking & Cycling Board and cycling route development in Northumberland: T Liddle provided an update on the Cycling Board and cycling routes.

c. Access Land spreadsheet: A Mitcham advised members this was an on-going project and he would provide an update shortly with a further discussion at the January JLAF meeting.

d. Working Group North notes: noted. The Chairman said going forward, working groups would report under relevant action plan items rather than as a separate item. See also item 7 (f).

e. N Rossiter raised the issue of the health agenda and the countryside and spoke about the Health & Wellbeing Boards in particular. He said that Working Group South would look into this for their next topic and would contact a few Health & Wellbeing Boards to take this forward. M Bell agreed to link this stream of work to the National Park Management Plan 2016 – 2021 Aim 4 Objective 4.2.5 ‘to increase the levels of public health and wellbeing’. This matter was also relevant to the discussions the JLAF Sill Working Group were having with members of the Sill team [see item 6 (b)]

f. Members’ other items:
   • T Liddle said he kept in touch with Alex MacLennan (Forestry Commission) re relevant access matters.
   • S Rogers updated members on developments with the Melkridge Lonnen which remains closed; D Brookes provided further information and would further inform the JLAF once the Judicial Review decision had been made.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The JLAF Annual Report 2015 – 2016 was approved for publication.


JLAF Action Plan Objective 1: JLAF involvement in the RoWIP, Open Access, Coastal Access, 2026 and other access projects
JLAF Action Plan Objective 2: Advocacy, Influence and Partnership working to advance access to the countryside
JLAF Action Plan Objective 3: Communication through the provision of advice and information on issues relating to access to the countryside