

Photograph by Jim Milner

LAF NEWS

2015/16

Issue 9

Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 9 of the LAF newsletter – the first after the two national conferences in Leeds and Bristol and, I'd like to say straight away, how great it was to see so many LAFs and LAF members at the two events. I hope you found the talks and workshops as interesting and stimulating as I did and the article on the conferences in this edition summarises what went on.

In this edition we also have articles on: the effects of last winter's severe weather on access networks and possible new approaches to a changing climate and how a Heritage Lottery Fund project is helping to revitalise The Teesdale Way - once again highlighting the breadth and depth of interest and knowledge that resides within our forums.

From our side there is an update on the Coastal Access programme and there's also a reminder from Rob about completing your Annual Review Forms which do provide us and Defra with much useful information and help us keep in touch with what's going on throughout the LAF community.

So I hope you enjoy this issue but I'd like to make an early appeal for articles, or suggestions for articles, for the next edition since the more material there is from the forums the more that must reflect what LAFs consider newsworthy and informative.

Andy Mackintosh, Natural England

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National LAF conferences

After consulting LAFs via an online survey, Natural England organised 2 national LAF conferences for 2015/16 in Bristol and Leeds. The Bristol 'South' conference was held on Tuesday 23rd February 2016 at Natural England's Bristol office and the Leeds 'North' conference was held on 1st March 2016 at the Oxford Place Centre. All LAFs were asked to nominate a representative to attend a conference (in addition to members doing talks or running workshops).

In the online consultation we invited LAF members to suggest the topics of most interest to them and this resulted in a programme with a range of speakers and workshop facilitators from the LAFs, Defra and from other organisations with an interest in public access.

Presentations



Jonathan Tweney - Defra presentation, Bristol

After an introduction by the conference Chairs (Matt Heard in Bristol and Liz Newton in Leeds), both conferences kicked off with a Defra presentation on the Deregulation Act, Rights of Way Reform Package. These presentations were delivered by

Jonathan Tweney in Bristol and Bryony Thorpe in Leeds. The talks included an overview of the progress of the Deregulation Act and information about the changes to the Definitive Map Modification Order process and regulations along with a lively Q&A session at the end.

Again at both conferences the second talk of the day to all delegates was by John Cuthbertson, Vice Chairman & Rambles Organiser for the Disabled Ramblers who spoke about the various barriers on the rights of way network which are encountered by the disabled. The presentation included many photographs and some videos of the use of 'Trampers' which some disabled ramblers are able to use to better get around in the countryside and John kindly brought a 'Tramper' along to both of the conferences for delegates to see in the flesh.

John writes:

"The Disabled Ramblers helps the less mobile regain access to

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the countryside. To do this they have had to campaign for the removal of man-made barriers. While they have had some success with this, the disabled now find themselves thwarted by replacements which are just as effective in limiting the paths they can use; often due to the perception that the disabled wouldn't be able to or wouldn't want to go there."



John Cuthbertson - Disabled Ramblers presentation, Bristol

After lunch, the first presentation in Bristol was by Nicola Greenwood, Access and Bridleways Officer, Wokingham who spoke about how stakeholders could try and influence their local authorities in order to try and improve their off-road networks, in this case, bridleways. Nicola gave a number of tips and steps to take to try and deliver new and improve existing rights of way.

The post-lunchtime presentation in Leeds was by Anthony Francis-Jones, British Horse Society Access Officer for Telford and Wrekin, and Telford and Wrekin Local Access Forum's Chairman who focused on what can be achieved in an urban/semi urban area.

Anthony writes:

"My talk was a brief overview of what came to be achieved in an urban area by working closely with the local (highway) authority. The presentation explained successful methods to create multiuser routes and bridleways as well as how to reduce the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders. A case study in Telford, Shropshire was used as an example."

In Leeds this was followed by a talk from Sue Taylor-Green from the British Horse Society and Ulnes Walton Bridleways Association on creating new peri-urban multi-user routes/bridleways. The presentation gave guidance and good practice on how the association managed to develop the bridleway network in their area.

Sue writes:

"The presentation was about the development of Ulnes Walton Bridleways Association (UWBA) and its work with the local council and various funding bodies, both to overcome an initial 'horse

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hostility' attitude and to gain alternative finance to create new routes."

At both conferences, the final main presentation of the day was delivered by John Dennis who gave examples to try and inspire LAFs to investigate potentially alternative sources of funding for their access projects including active living and other sports related examples.

Workshops

John Richardson and Alan Kind from LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association) delivered a workshop on the use of



John Richardson and Phil Wadey, Bristol

recreational vehicles on the rights of way network at both conferences. The workshop focussed on the rapidly evolving influence of social media, and its impact on communication and behaviours, with relation to recreational vehicle use.

Also at both conferences, Phil Wadey and Sarah Bucks from the Open Spaces Society ran a workshop regarding the need to get paths recorded accurately on the definitive map of rights of way by 2026.

Dementia Adventure delivered a workshop at both conferences (Rachel Niblock in Bristol and Kath Pyke in Leeds) looking at the benefits of dementia inclusive walks.

Kath writes:

"The workshops looked at the benefits and discussed how to take the fear out of supporting people living with dementia to go for a walk; drawing on the success of dementia inclusive walk programmes from around the country including a LAF project in Lincolnshire".

The final workshop held at both conferences was from Peter McKay from Herefordshire LAF which discussed the topic of registering white roads to help increase the awareness of the legislation.

[Dementia Adventure](#)

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At the Bristol conference, Bekki Redshaw and Keeley Rolfe from respectively Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks ran a workshop on Devon's Naturally Healthy Project.

Also just at the Bristol conference, Seamus Elliott and Martin Sullivan from Norfolk LAF ran a workshop on setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which have the potential to raise funding for Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects and other outdoor access.

The final Bristol only workshop was delivered by Richard Holmes from Gloucestershire LAF looking at the subject of disability access and the experiences of the Gloucestershire Disability Access sub-group.



Jane Beech and Richard Holmes, Bristol

Richard writes:

"The workshop aimed to build on the LAF Toolkit (Disability Access) and to share achievable and practical ideas to enable LAFs to improve access for people with disabilities."

For the workshops only held in Leeds, Audrey Christie, Durham County Council; Geoff Hughes, Durham LAF and Jim Philips from Ethos Enviro Planning ran one looking at access prioritisation, a strategic approach to managing local paths in County Durham.

Also just at the Leeds conference, Ted Liddle from Northumberland LAF lead a workshop on how the mountain biking route the Sandstone Way was created and developed

Another Leeds only workshop was ran by John Sugden from Redcar & Cleveland LAF on the subject of whether it's really trespass to ride or cycle on a footpath.

Mary Mills and Brian Cluff from Nottinghamshire LAF also ran a workshop in Leeds on Nottinghamshire Guided Walks Partnership and their programme of walks.

In addition to the talks and workshops there was a final session in the conference main rooms led by the conference Chairs: in Bristol this comprised of a workshop roundup where all the workshop leads gave a brief overview of what was covered at their

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[Naturally Healthy](#)

[Sandstone Way](#)

[Nottinghamshire Guided Walks](#)

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workshops; in Leeds there was a Q&A session where delegates were able to ask questions of the various speakers and Natural England.

Many thanks to all of the speakers and workshop leads who kindly gave their time and brought their expertise and enthusiasm to both of the LAF conferences.

Feedback

130 delegates in total attended the conferences with representatives from 72% of the LAFs.

Feedback forms were produced and circulated to the delegates of both conferences and from them 96% reported that the content did meet their expectations (4% reported neither yes or no).

Additionally 96% reported on the feedback forms that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the conference organisation with 4% saying they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

The lively discussions within the workshops and informally in the margins of the conferences, along with positive feedback from delegates, clearly demonstrated that the events were worthwhile and appreciated.

For more information about both of the conferences including all of the presentations used, notes collected, statistics, feedback and audio recordings, please follow the link to the right:

Time to follow another path?

By Ian Jackson, geologist and member of the Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum

The consequences of this winter's flooding for people of northern England have been devastating. Water and debris from overflowing rivers and streams have wrecked homes and businesses. Major road and rail transport links have been severed and will take months and millions to repair. But in this largely rural landscape there is another casualty.

For sure it's not one with such an awful personal cost, but as spring and summer follow winter, it is one that will affect many of us who take our time-out in the countryside. Across all the northern counties paths and bridges have been swept away by water and landslides.

In Northumberland the storms of December have caused

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[Article originally published on the Northumberland National Park website](#)

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significant damage; over 34 rights of way are at best interrupted and at worst impassable.



Allen banks bridge damaged in the flooding

The cost of repair of this winter's destruction is estimated to be almost half a million pounds, far exceeding budgets the Council and the National Park set aside for dealing with their existing (and long) list of paths needing maintenance. The loss of local amenity is bad enough but the economies of these northern rural counties depend on tourism, and access to the countryside is, fundamentally, why the tourists come.



Access interrupted due to a damaged bridge in the Northumberland National Park

As with the response to damage to buildings and transport in northern England, there has been no crying over spilt milk. A short-lived period of shock has quickly been followed by stoic, down to earth and practical action. Paths have been walked, damage has been surveyed, repairs are being costed and bids for emergency funding made to central government. In the months ahead Council and Park personnel, reinforced by volunteers, will start to prioritise and mend the damage. It will however take a long time and in some cases decisions may be taken that maintaining a particular

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route is no longer tenable.

This begs a more fundamental question, one which is taxing the minds of Rights of Way professionals and those who advise them in local and national bodies. That question is: if these extreme weather events are, as predicted, likely to become more common, then do we need to recognise that some of the paths we have come to know and love may no longer be sustainable?

It is obvious that the nation cannot afford to waste money on restoration schemes that may be washed away in the next storm. The bottom line is that our future strategies for access to the countryside must now also consider alternative routes as well as protection and repair. Our Rights of Way may be much less high profile than disappearing ice caps and glaciers but this winter shows that they are no less vulnerable to a climate which is changing.

River Tees Rediscovered

By Beryl Bird, Tees Valley Local Access Forum Development Officer



River Tees in Darlington Borough

The Teesdale Way is a 92 mile walking trail, rising in Cumbria to the west and from Cow Green Reservoir in Upper Teesdale through County Durham and Teesside to the North Sea coast at Warrenby in Redcar. For much of the trail it follows the River Tees.

The development and promotion of the Teesdale Way is a key component of River Tees Rediscovered; a £3.7m programme supported under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Programme. The programme is managed by Groundwork North East in conjunction with the Local Authorities of Darlington, Stockton on Tees, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland, and several other project partners. The Tees Valley Local Access Forum is also contributing to this work which began in earnest in 2014.

The Teesdale Way and Heritage Trails Project will deliver improved signage, surfacing and path furniture on the Teesdale Way and along a series of linked countryside and urban trails. The project will also help to interpret and celebrate the fascinating local industrial and natural heritage of the area, and promote the Teesdale Way to local residents and visitors.

The vision for the wider River Tees Rediscovered programme is impressive:



[Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum](#)

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Re-surfacing work in Darlington Borough on the Teesdale Way

to alter how the hundreds of thousands of people who live by the Tees from rural Piercebridge, near Darlington to the steelworks at Redcar, interact with the river.

The River Tees Rediscovered programme runs over 5 years. A diverse range of projects is being delivered, including schemes which will conserve and enhance natural environment and heritage features, improve public access to nature and heritage, celebrate and provide opportunities for

and interpret the area's heritage, people to get actively involved.

Graham Clingan, Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager at Stockton on Tees Borough Council brought the TVLAF AGM in March 2016 up-to-date with improvements along each section of the route as it passes through each Local Authority area; from the open scenic views through Darlington through to industrialised Middlesbrough and Redcar.



Permissive footpath near Middlesbrough FC training ground

In Darlington a new permissive footpath has been created at the Middlesbrough Football Club's training ground at Rockcliffe, linking the riverside path to the existing RoW network, in addition some 550 metres of footpath have been re-surfaced at Carlbury and Broken Scar. Future plans include new finger posts with the agreed livery of a Teesdale Way Dipper, 25 new gates or kissing gates and three sections of new boardwalk.



Princess Diana Bridge at Stockton on Tees

At Stockton on Tees new kissing gates, signage and boardwalks have been installed on sections of the Teesdale Way near Yarm and

Aislaby, and the route taken from the Princess Diana Bridge to the Tees Barrage now boasts LED lighting. Planned works include new boardwalks at Newsham Wood and Newsham Park.

Two major projects have been completed within Redcar and Cleveland Borough; the steel footbridge at the Wilton Steel Works (costing £100K) crossing the main east coast railway line safely, and could not have been achieved without considerable financial assistance from the Coastal Communities Fund and Tata Steel. This is an example



Wilton Steel Works – new Tata Steel Bridge on Teesdale Way in Redcar and Cleveland Borough

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of the joined up thinking that has that has led to the enormous improvements in public access to and beside the river.

The regular flooding that has taken place at Dabholm Beck in Redcar has also been addressed with the dredging of the beck at this point by the Environment Agency.



New stepped path down to the River Tees

In total more than 20 Heritage Trails are to be developed linking into the Teesdale Way. The route also links onto the England Coast Path at the Newport Bridge on the Stockton/Middlesbrough boundary. Plans are also being developed to extend the Coast Path northwards from Newport Bridge and the Transporter Bridge towards Hartlepool, again with support through the River Tees Rediscovered programme.

At Middlesbrough re-surfacing works have taken place between the riverside Teesaurus Park and the iconic Newport Bridge, and more than 20 new Teesdale Way Dipper signposts/waymarks will be installed, as the route passes through Middlesbrough, in the next few weeks.

Naturally the Forum members were delighted with progress, some having actively played a part in the initial bid, and others having help devise the most appropriate route for the walks already underway. But the project is a long way from completion and much good work will continue, to share the story of the River Tees with the people of Tees Valley.



Teesdale Way Dipper Sign

LAF Annual reporting for 2015-16

The new annual reporting process and Annual Review Form (ARF) to cover the financial year April 2015 to March 2016 was circulated to all of the LAF Secretaries on the 26th April and was also uploaded to the LAF Huddle workspace on the same day. This year's deadline for submitting either a completed ARF, annual report, or both to Natural England is 31st July.

Please encourage your LAF to submit an Annual Review Form as the more LAFs do this, the stronger the resulting national report will be that is submitted to Defra and the Minister in order to help demonstrate the value of LAFs and their work.

England Coast Path update

By Sue Shipston, Natural England

Natural England is currently establishing a 2,700 mile continuous path around the entire English coastline by 2020. Work is already under way on more than half the path.

In March some of Somerset's most spectacular coastline opened to the public for the first time – 58 miles of new and improved coast

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Huddle specific links

[Annual Review Form 2015 - 16](#)

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path from Brean Down to Minehead. The longest section to be added to the national route so far was opened by Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells, at a ceremony in Doniford.

A further 134 miles of new routes are due to open in Kent and North Yorkshire this summer.

Neil Constable ECP Programme Manager said:

"The 'Somerset' stretch of the England Coast Path has been challenging and satisfying in almost equal measure. As the first 'long' stretch to be taken on, it presented a host of interesting features: the 9 km of Brean Sands, the realignment at Steart to create more than 400 hectares of new wetland habitat, preparation and planning for Hinkley C, and even a steam railway to name but a few - all topped off with the second highest tidal range in the world.

The satisfaction comes from literally plotting a way through a remarkable and varied length of coast so that it does not impact on business, privacy or wildlife but does establish a genuine coastal footpath. Needless to say this takes time. We worked with nearly 300 owners and occupiers to draw up the proposals which come to fruition today and which will see a true coast path from Brean Down near Weston all the way to Minehead, including some five miles of new route where existing paths have historically turned inland."

In Doniford, as part of the new route, a 15-metre footbridge has been built over the river Swill. For the first time, this provides an easy-access walking route between the two sides of the village, allowing those staying at several nearby caravan sites to walk safely to Doniford Farm shop and café, the nearby halt for the West Somerset Railway or onwards down the coast. It is also the first time such a major piece of infrastructure has been built for the England Coast Path.



Burnham-on-Sea low lighthouse
© Sarah Littler

Walkers can enjoy several new sections of path between Watchet and East Quantoxhead, which opens up spectacular new views over the Bristol Channel. Somerset Wildlife Trust has also provided seven new interpretation boards along the stretch, to reveal more about the stunning wildlife and landscape features that walkers will be able to see and enjoy along 'Somerset's brilliant coast.'

This new access joins existing coastal footpaths to create a stretch of high-quality, well-signposted coastal National Trail. Natural England consulted local landowners, businesses and local people, working closely with Somerset County Council to plan and create the route.

Find out more about the England Coast Path

The eight Natural England delivery teams around the country work closely with local authorities, land owners and occupiers, communities, interest groups and others to ensure the best and most appropriate alignment for the new coast path.

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You can see what our teams are working on and check the latest progress in your area on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Or contact your local delivery hub:

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