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Footpath

NATURAL
ENGLAND

LAF NEWS

Quarter 3 - 2014/15

Issue 5

Welcome

You never know what to expect from a LAF newsletter, and that's down to the interesting mix of articles we receive from the LAF family. So thank you to all who have contributed. In this our 5th edition you can read how local LAF knowledge has helped to shape stretches of the England Coast Path in Cumbria, developed a Canoe trail in the Broads and created a 26km bridleway in Milton Keynes. There's also advice on how to engage with Health & Wellbeing Boards, and getting involved in Open Access Restriction Reviews. We all know that having the evidence to support the case for access is important. In this edition we look at making use of MENE data and the opportunities that the new National Character Areas offer. There's also an interesting article on the challenges and opportunities for Urban LAFs.

It's important to share experiences of how LAFs have found ways and means to move their local access agenda forward, and this newsletter provides one vehicle to do that, so if there's anything you would like to see or good practice you'd like to share, please let us know.

Martin Shaw
Senior Advisor, Natural England

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LAF Advice to England Coast Path in Cumbria

By Eve Borrino - Countryside Ranger/LAF Secretary and Charles Ecroyd - Cumbria LAF Chair



The Chairman (Charles Ecroyd) and Vice Chairman (Jim McQueen) of the Cumbria LAF with Natural England staff at the opening of the path.

New coastal access rights enabling people to enjoy 36km of coastline between Allonby and Whitehaven have come into force. This is the first stretch of the [England Coast Path National Trail](#) in Cumbria. The new trail, funded by Natural England, will eventually take in the whole coast of England and create a route around the country.

It was officially opened at a ceremony in Maryport on 11 April attended by Cumbria County Council's Chairman, Councillor Alan Barry, with representatives and dignitaries from Natural England, Cumbria Local Access Forum, and Allerdale and Copeland Councils.

LAF members provided personal views and feedback from their own experiences of walking along that section of coast at the start of the process, which helped Natural England identify specific issues and opportunities. During the planning process LAF members helped to identify landowners when more information was needed and continued to advise on progress in advance of the report to the Secretary of State.



CLAF members take a blustery walk along the England Coast Path at Maryport.

The Council's Countryside Access team have implemented the new access, working with local contractors to install new signage, bridges and gates to open up this section of the route to the public. The Allonby to Whitehaven is one of 3 stretches of the England Coast Path now open.

Work on additional sections in Cumbria is already underway including a 70km stretch from Whitehaven to Silecroft and a 100km stretch from Gretna to Allonby.

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Urban LAFs

By Kevin Haugh - Lead Adviser, Natural England

LAFs that cover predominantly urban areas often face different challenges to their rural counterparts. Urban authorities are unlikely to have access and public rights of way (PROW) high on their agenda and they are much more likely to be focused on issues such as reducing road congestion, improving health and wellbeing, anti-social behaviour and social inclusion. By showing how PROW and access to green space can help resolve some of these problems, LAFs are much more likely to receive interest and support from the authority.

Natural England's national survey on visits to the natural environment ([Monitoring of Engagement with the natural Environment - MENE](#)) is a good way of providing evidence based advice on why people value access and recreation - and where they go. The survey tells us that around 66% of all visits to the natural environment are within 2 miles of home and many of these are to urban greenspace.

Recruiting the right number and type of members is a common issue for all LAFs. However, with urban LAFs landowner representation can be particularly difficult, especially when much non-developed land is owned by the local authority. Urban LAFs also need to work with a range of communities and will benefit from attracting younger people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Identifying and contacting suitable candidates may not succeed through traditional routes such as adverts in the local press and some creative thinking might be required to attract new members.

Dwindling support and resources from appointing authorities is experienced by most LAFs but this can be even more of an issue in urban areas. This is because rights of way sections are typically very small, often subsumed within other departments, and given low priority. Many urban LAFs cover areas that were initially excluded from the requirement to prepare a definitive map and statement of PROW and therefore have limited or no recorded rights of way.

If all else fails, the 'better together' maxim can apply. It can seem lonely as an urban LAF with few resources available to do a challenging job; and joining with another LAF can be a solution. The 2007 LAF regulations allow LAFs to reform if they wish and joining up with one or more neighbouring urban LAFs, or a rural LAF, can often bring mutual benefits – including combined and more effective support.

Links

[Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: survey purpose and results](#)

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Many urban LAFs have risen to these challenges and there are good examples of this on the LAF Huddle workspace.

Open Access Restriction Reviews How can LAFs be effective and make a difference?

By Kevin Vigers - Lead Adviser on Statutory Access, Coastal Access, Open Access and National Trails, Natural England

Open Access Land, designated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW), can be subject to closure or restricted access for a variety of reasons. Natural England, the National Parks and the Forestry Commission, as 'relevant authorities' under CROW, have a statutory responsibility to manage requests from land owners to restrict access to their land. Some of these are long-term restrictions and need to be reviewed every five years. A timetable of when reviews will be undertaken by Natural England can be found on huddle.

LAFs are statutory consultees on these reviews and can play a key role in helping to ensure the least restrictive option is considered whilst having regard to the interests of land managers, nature conservation and the public.

In undertaking this role LAFs can make a difference by:

- Providing a balanced view representing all perspectives including the public using the access, land management and nature conservation interests;
- Providing evidence about levels and patterns of use of the land in particular any relevant new research or other information that has become available since the relevant authority issued the last direction;
- Providing information and knowledge about any changes to the land or its management.

Reviews focus on whether there are changes in circumstances which may affect previous decisions and it is important that LAFs provide the relevant authority with as much information as possible in any responses.



Links

Huddle specific links

[Timetable of the Natural England Open Access Statutory Reviews](#)

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Broads Canoe Trails

By Adrian Clarke - Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer and Lottie Carlton - Administrative Officer (Strategy and Projects), Broads Authority

The Broads LAF has been instrumental in the development and publication of eight canoe trails by the Broads Authority. The trails are aimed at everyone from children to pensioners and were designed to capture the beauty and tranquillity of the Broads.

The trails have been carefully worked out by the Broads Authority in consultation with the Broads LAF. Colourful maps, complete with estimated timings for completing the trails, and bright illustrations of wildlife you might meet along the way are downloadable from the [Broads Authority's visitor website](#).

Adrian Clarke, Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer at the Broads Authority, said: "LAF advice on access to water is very welcome and this is particularly important to the Broads where paddling the rivers and shallow lakes by canoe is one of the best ways to experience this part of the National Parks family."

The trails cover the more tranquil reaches of the river system



Canoeing on the Broads - Tom Mackie

including the upper reaches of the River Ant, the scenic North Walsham and Dilham canal; a quiet loop around Bungay and the stretch of the River Waveney from Geldeston to Beccles. The project was funded by a sustainable tourism grant of nearly £6,000 from the EU.

Adrian said: "The popularity of canoeing is increasing in the Broads

Links

[Broads Authority Website](#)

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and the Broads LAF, recognising that canoeing contributes greatly to the area's £400m-plus tourism economy, is keen to promote the Broads as a family friendly canoeing destination."

The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Proposal

By Dana Green - Milton Keynes Local Access Forum

Milton Keynes LAF and Bedford and Luton JLAF are working together to make sure that a bridleway is created along-side Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway. The opportunity to achieve this was nearly lost but thanks to one LAF member, the local horse-riding community will benefit from a new bridleway running next to the foot and cycle paths.

The proposed new 26km Waterway link between the River Great Ouse at Kempston in Bedford and the Grand Union Canal at Newlands in Milton Keynes will create Britain's first major waterway in a century. It is expected to be used by a wide variety of the community and bring huge benefits across the region.

The Waterway had originally been considered primarily for water based users. However, following an informative presentation to the LAFs by the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust it was widely recognised that the majority of users would be walkers, cyclists and horse-riders on the adjacent path and that their needs had to be taken into consideration.

The focus is now on a park with water - as the land sections are likely to be delivered before the water sections. In the long term the project will provide attractive waterside locations for new homes and businesses, as well as new wildlife habitats.

Much foresight has gone into the project including the provision of passage under the M1 and the A421 - two very busy roads in this built up area of the country. The M1 issue was resolved by accessing the former cattle 'underpass' on the Woburn estate, which is large enough to accommodate a waterway with a multiuse route. The A421, built in 2011 incorporated an underpass for both the Sustrans Cycle Route 51 and the waterway.

The project was first launched over 200 years ago at the height of canal construction; however, opposition from local landowners halted the scheme and the original route was used to create the Bletchley to Bedford Railway Line. The scheme was resurrected in 1995 and supported by British Waterways until their government grant was cut. Since then the project has been led by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterways Trust.

Dana said "In our modern age of usually short-term gains, how fortunate that Bedford and Milton Keynes communities stand to benefit from such far-sighted proposals resulting from communications between LAFs and other groups - whose time is so freely given.

For once it would seem that we really have had an input".

[The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust presentation](#)

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Health and Wellbeing Boards - Getting Involved

By Ruth Killen - Wigan Local Access Forum

The Wigan LAF is working with its Adult Social Care & Health department and the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that the role of green open space and outdoor recreation is incorporated into the development of health strategies.

Public health is now a key responsibility for local authorities. Health and Wellbeing Boards are tasked with protecting and improving the health of local populations; however, areas of poor health have tended to lose out more through local authority budget cuts. Life expectancy is adversely affected by poor diet, alcohol and lack of exercise and reliance on public transport to access health care makes these problems worse. The ROW network can provide a healthy alternative for all non-motorised users and save money at the same time.

Careful budget management can help the co-ordinated care strategy achieve its key aim of keeping people healthy and avoiding expensive hospital visits. Mental health, for example, is known to be improved by physical activity.

The aim of the Wigan H&WB board is to improve health outcomes for local people, improve people's experience of health and social care across the borough, and reduce the demands on local services through prevention. The Board is looking at incorporating these changes so that local health services take into account recreational and leisure facilities that can be enjoyed by local residents and visitors.

Stuart Cowley: Director for Adult Social Care & Health in Wigan suggested that the local Health and Wellbeing Board could link in with the Greenheart initiative: an extensive network of high quality landscapes and open spaces which provide an attractive countryside setting for Wigan Borough. By working with the LAF on the "Live Well - Age Well" strategy the Board would be able to monitor the extent to which behavioural change can save money.

The Wigan LAF is encouraging dialogue with local communities to find out what is wanted regarding access – especially for mothers with prams and for people who are disabled. Physical interventions in the public health arena can lead to healthier lifestyles and it is hoped that LAF involvement will result in an environmentally sustainable future where the potential of green open spaces is maximised and the quality of the local street scene improved.

Stuart Cowley's advised the LAF to contact the local Community Voluntary Services who could help increase the LAF's youth, black, minority and ethnic membership - and also assist with funding and commissioning opportunities.

LAFs can help Health and Wellbeing Boards shape local planning policies and influence integrated care plans for improving health delivery in the local area. By working with partners and developing useful contacts in the community LAFs can help to deliver the health message and have an influence on future health behaviours.

Links

[Wigan Local Access Forum website](#)

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MENE survey helping Local Nature Partnerships

By the Outdoors for All team, Natural England

Natural England, in partnership with Pennine Prospects, have analysed the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey (MENE) data on behalf of the South Pennines Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to help them shape their public engagement work. The South Pennines (National Character Area 36) is the distinctive area of uplands between the conurbations of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Pennine Lancashire.

Mark Turner, Programme & Operations Director at Pennine Prospects said: "The analysis of the MENE data is helping the South Pennines LNP to move away from its comfort zone and to develop projects that engage new audiences. Many of the people who stand to benefit most from the South Pennines currently do not come to our area but are on the doorstep. The MENE report is a really valuable tool to help address that challenge and in particular our plans to increase social inclusion".

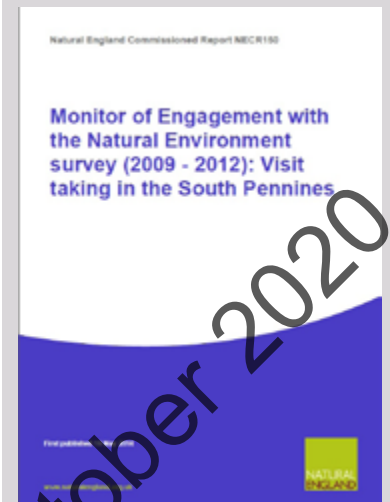
The analysis showed that between 2009 and 2012, an average of 20 million visits were taken per year to places within the South Pennines, however it also showed that the South Pennines is visited by three distinct groups:

- Residents of the South Pennines: 7.1 million visits (36%), equating to an average of 35 visits per year by each of the c.0.2 million adults who live in this area.
- Residents of the former industrial towns around the South Pennines (Catchment Area): 3.6 million visits (18%) equating to an average of around 3 visits per year by each of the c.1.4m adults who live in this area
- Residents of more remote areas: 9 million visits (46%) originate from further afield with large volumes from cities such as Leeds and Manchester.

The analysis highlighted some interesting differences between these population groups which include:

- Residents of the South Pennines are more likely than residents of the surrounding Catchment Area to be in the most affluent socio-economic groups while, by contrast, residents of the Catchment Area are more likely to be in the least affluent socio-economic groups, to be members of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population and to live in urban and deprived areas.
- On average 27% of people from the least affluent DE socio-economic groups had taken a visit to the natural environment in the 7 days prior to interview, a much lower proportion compared to the most affluent ABs socio-economic groups (48%).
- Furthermore, over half the visits to the natural environment taken by DE residents of the Catchment Area involved a journey of less than a mile, and 79% were taken on foot. Just 12% of visits involved a journey of over 5 miles.

Links



[Outdoors for All - reports](#)

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- Nearly all of the BAME population from the Catchment Area lived in urban areas (99%) and nearly half (48%) lived in areas classified as deprived.
- On average 24% of people in the BAME population had taken a visit to the natural environment in the 7 days prior to interview, compared to 38% for the rest of the English population. Furthermore, 69% of these visits were to places within 2 miles of home most commonly urban parks.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012, gives local authorities a duty to reduce health inequalities and increasing the use of the natural environment close to where people live can be a tool for local authorities to deliver these responsibilities. MENE tells us that diverse communities access the natural environment the least, but these communities suffer the greatest inequalities and so have the potential to gain the most from increased use.

South Pennines LNP are now using the information in this report to develop better targeted outreach projects so that the opportunities to benefit from spending time in the natural environment are open to a wider range of individuals; helping to deliver a series of outcomes including higher levels of health and reduced inequalities.

Accessing England's Landscapes

By Cara Courage - National Character Areas, Natural England

Natural England's National Character Area project, defining all of England's 159 major landscape areas, was completed in June.

This means wherever we want to walk, ride or cycle in England, there is a description of that landscape, making trips out and about much more fascinating and exciting.

These landscape profiles provide a unique, free and highly accessible information resource, highlighting how England's varied landscapes function and how they can be cared for. They can provide useful background information, all in one place, when planning guided walks and tours across England.



Burrs Country Park - NCA 54 - Manchester Pennine Fringe

[National Character Areas \(NCAs\)](#) integrate a wide range of environmental information to create a 'profile' for each of England's 159 major landscape areas, exploring the characteristic landscape, wildlife, cultural, geological features and access to be found, and providing information on how the landscape is changing, how it supports economic activity, and what are the local environmental opportunities for the future. Access data is a fundamental data set within each profile allowing national data to be compared between areas. Access data can be found in the 'key facts' for each NCA and is carried forward in to the Statements of Opportunity. Almost every NCA has a Statement of Opportunity which focuses on people and place, including access. This may help to support local

[National Character Area profiles: data for local decision making](#)

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access initiatives and other projects to take an integrated approach.

Jim Smyllie, Natural England Executive Director said: "NCA profiles talk about places which people can relate to very personally. They explore what makes those places distinctive, and explain how they function. I'm delighted that the complete set of these profiles is now available to help decision making at a really local level".

National Character Areas map



NCAs are already being used for a wide range of purposes which include:

- Providing local context and a sense of place to support local tourism marketing.
- A resource for schools and students.
- Providing a local context for Rights of Way Improvement plan reviews and updates, and for a local cycling and riding strategies.
- A local evidence base supporting applications to Heritage Lottery funded landscape projects - £20 million this year alone.
- Environmental information and opportunities for Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Providing land use planning authorities with the natural environment context necessary for local development strategies.
- A geographical framework for the new Countryside Stewardship scheme.
- Information support for development and land management plans and strategic environmental assessments.
- Information to support local environmental protection initiatives and action plans.
- Support for national policy development and implementation.



Walkers above Borrowdale - NCA 8 - Cumbria High Fells

Richard Rampton, a consultant with Rural Advice Ltd said: "The NCA profiles are being very useful, not to say essential, in providing background for what will become Local Development Strategies and bids to Defra for funding the two LEADER areas proposed for Suffolk and North Essex: the Heritage Coast and the Wool Towns. The Character

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Area profiles have provided us with really thorough descriptions and pointers to opportunities for the Local Area Groups to pursue.”

Awarded ‘Highly Commended’ in the Landscape Institute Awards 2013, the profiles are set out in an accessible tabbed format, creating an easy to use, one stop shop, and designed to help equip local communities with the tools needed to understand and shape their natural surroundings.

What’s Hot on Huddle

By Rob Leek - Lead Adviser, Natural England

A whiteboard was recently created on the LAF Huddle workspace with information and links regarding the Department for Transport Cycling Delivery Plan consultation (which closed on the 27th November) and all Huddle members were sent an email alert about it to make LAFs aware in case they wanted to respond. A number of Huddle members have started discussing the consultation and related matters in the comments section underneath the whiteboard.

Links

Huddle specific links

[Department for Transport Cycling Delivery Plan consultation Whiteboard](#)

Comments and suggestions on how Huddle could be improved are welcomed – please contact

[Rob Leek](#)

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This content was withdrawn 12 October 2020