

Photograph of finger post in the Dales by Ursula Wolff

LAF NEWS

2015/16

Issue 8

Welcome

Welcome to Issue 8 of the LAF newsletter.

I hope that you all had a good festive period despite the seemingly relentlessly bad weather which unfortunately brought much more than the inconvenience of staying indoors to those affected by the terrible flooding in so many areas. Hopefully we've seen the worst of it for now and can look forward to getting out and about in 2016.

We're all looking forward to the upcoming LAF conferences in Bristol and Leeds in February/March and Rob Leek has been very busy organising these events which we hope will be a great opportunity to meet-up and promote the great work that LAFs do. The programme is now just about settled and it looks to be both varied and challenging.

Speaking of variety we have a wide range of topics in this edition with an update from the England Coast Path team, a follow-up item on the Black Environment Network, an introduction to IPROW and articles about Local Nature Partnerships and the Cotswold Water Park. There's also more information about the conferences and what we think is a significant report on the socioeconomic value of the Paths for Communities Scheme; one that highlights the immense benefits that public access can bring.

So I hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to seeing many of you in February and March.

Andy Mackintosh, Natural England

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Local Nature Partnerships

By Paul Hill-Gibbins, Defra

With the topic of physical and mental health fast rising up the political and public agenda's a number of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) have been involved with projects to raise awareness and get people outside.

Natural Devon, Devon's LNP, has a vision for everyone to be 'naturally active'. The '[Naturally Healthy](#)' theme is led by a collaboration of partners including Public Health, Active Devon, Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, Local Authorities, AONBs and the Devon Countryside Access Forum. Work includes research into the barriers which stop people accessing the natural environment, two health projects in the National Parks, a *Naturally Healthy Week* and a research project with schools. The national LAF conference on 23rd February includes a workshop on the two National Park projects. With only 13% of adults in Devon regularly participating in a sport or active recreation (including walking and cycling) the challenge is clear.

[Nature Connected](#), the LNP for the Liverpool City Region, was involved with The Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing [Programme](#). Funded by the Liverpool Primary Care Trust, communities were asked to design their own projects to improve health and wellbeing through utilising the local environment. This included developing connections with others and the environment through 'green exercise'.

The LNP is now, through one of its partners The Mersey Forest Team, backing '[Nature4Health](#)'. A three year project which uses the natural environment to reduce health inequalities by encouraging community participation in activities that include woodland walks, therapeutic gardening and practical conservation sessions designed to get the heart pumping. Both Liverpool University and Liverpool John Moores University will be studying the new programme as part of the emerging Centre of Excellence for Research into the Natural Health Service.

Announced by the government in the 2012 Natural Environment White Paper, 47 [Local Nature Partnerships](#) now cover the majority of England. Founded on the principle that local people know their local environmental priorities better than central policy officials they empower local people to make decisions. Consequently the activity, expertise and priorities of LNPs will often differ as they are tailored to local needs.

However, one aim that LNPs are likely to share with LAFs is ensuring that the value of nature, and the services it provides to the economy and the people who live there, nowadays referred to

Links

[Naturally Healthy](#)

[Nature Connected](#)

[Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing Programme](#)

[Nature4Health](#)

[Local Nature Partnerships \(.GOV.UK\)](#)

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as 'natural capital', is taken into account in local decisions. This will include the creation, restoration and enhancement of green space and the importance of access to it for recreation. So a great deal in common with the aims of LAFs.



Membership of LNPs is wide-ranging and includes local conservation organisations, landowners, businesses and individuals with many led by Wildlife Trusts or local authorities. They work in a strategic way, encouraging cooperation and facilitating the coordination of action on the ground.

Working with your local LNP could provide you with a greater strategic overview of projects in your area. They may enable you to develop and strengthen local relationships with many now increasingly forging links with the health sector. LNPs would also benefit greatly from an increased awareness of access.

Further details on individual LNPs, including a map and contact details, can be found on [.GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or you can contact Defra via LNPs@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Links

[LNP Map and Contact details \(.GOV.UK\)](https://www.gov.uk)

England Coast Path – work now underway to open up half of England's coastline

By Sue Shipston, Coastal Access Team, Natural England

Natural England has reached a key milestone in its work to deliver the England Coast Path, with work underway to open up half of England's coastline. Set to become one of the world's longest coastal walking routes, the path will stretch out across 2700 miles of stunning walking routes covering 100% of the country.

What Natural England has achieved so far

Natural England has already opened up 101 miles of our spectacular coastline via the England Coast Path in Cumbria, Durham, Dorset and Norfolk, with a further 95 miles of new routes

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set to open in Kent and Somerset in the Spring.

They are now building on this progress with the aim of completing the coastal path around England by 2020. It is hugely challenging – Natural England staff are learning lessons as they go and sharing these around the coastline.

What benefits will the England Coast Path bring?

Walking in the countryside is good for people's health and wellbeing, and providing more access to our coastline brings huge benefits by both connecting us with nature and boosting local tourism.

Tourism is hugely important to the rural economy, contributing around £11 billion each year – and by attracting even more visitors to explore our iconic coastline, we expect the England Coast Path to benefit even more local businesses like pubs and hotels.

The new routes will also improve public access to our coastline, beaches and foreshore, with existing coastal footpaths used where possible, or in some cases moved nearer the sea so walkers have a better opportunity to properly enjoy our coastal views and beaches.

The England Coast Path will be a well way-marked National Trail around the whole of the English coast, passing through some of our country's finest and iconic landscapes such as the White Cliffs of Dover, St Bees Head, and the sunny beaches of the South West, together with picture postcard villages and the cities that plot our colourful maritime history.

Boosting local economies and supporting tourism

Welcoming the development Rural Minister Rory Stewart said:

"None of us lives further than about 75 miles from the sea, and most of us live much closer, so it's vital to our ongoing relationship with our countryside that the public has easy access to our outstanding coastline."

"We have already opened up miles of our beautiful coastline for everyone to enjoy, boosting local tourism and growing the rural economy, so it makes sense to extend these plans even further. We know that walking in the countryside is good for people's health and wellbeing, and what better way to do it than with the accompaniment of a nice sea breeze?"

Andrew Sells, Natural England's Chairman added:

"This is the most significant footpath project for a generation, it will be an incredible legacy for our island nation and I'm delighted to report on our excellent progress this year. Visitors from home and abroad enjoy our spectacular coastlines and love to walk our National Trails, which pass through some of our most stunning countryside."

"We know from our evidence of spending by visitors to the coast, that the route will boost the local economy and help support coastal communities. We are on target and have built a momentum to complete the entire route by 2020."

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How Natural England are opening up the England Coast path

To establish the route we've divided the coast of England into 66 'stretches' with eight Natural England delivery teams working around the country. The teams 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.

Work to open up or improve access along our coast is underway around the country, with work recently started in Essex, Devon, Hampshire, Lincolnshire and Lancashire.

Find out more

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

[England Coast Path \(.GOV.UK\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Or you can contact Natural England's England Coast Path Delivery Leads:

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West andrew.chester@naturalengland.org.uk 07900 608 111

North West gerry.rusbridge@naturalengland.org.uk 01931 7144985

Black Environment Network (BEN) Training Event

By Kathy Miles, Secretary Cumbria LAF and Gareth Lawler, Natural England

This is a follow-up to the article in [LAF News Issue 6](#)

[LAF News Issue 6](#)

The trainers for this event, held in March at the Quaker Meeting House in Manchester, were Max Ghani and Saleem Oppal from the [Black Environment Network \(BEN\)](#). The day was fully-subscribed, with representatives attending from most of the Northwest's LAFs, as well as a Woodland Trust officer, and also three from Natural England. Thanks to Natural England's David Jeffreys' hard work in pulling the event together – putting in a successful funding bid, liaising with Saleem/BEN, and arranging an excellent venue and catering – everything was in place for the day's training. We crowded around tables in a 'cosy' meeting room: ready for group work at various points through the day.

[Black Environment Network](#)

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Photograph by David Jeffreys

We naturally began with introductions and then, from Saleem and Max, a brief on the day's structure, aims and objectives, followed by some information about BEN's origins and work. We looked at case studies on working with and engaging black and minority ethnic communities, and then took part in an exercise and discussion on cross-cultural working and communication. Before lunch we learned about cultural and religious awareness.

After our break and some networking we resumed

for the afternoon, hearing about communication with community groups and organisations and the pitfalls of consultations if not done well. A little quiz followed and then the morning's case studies were reviewed. This showed that participants' initial views had to some extent changed over the course of the day.

A lively open discussion ensued, including talking about the barriers that may prevent BME communities and people from accessing the countryside; that accessible routes are transferable to health walks for the elderly or for BME groups; and that sport is a key way to engage with young people and can lead on to further activities including those based in the countryside.

There were varying views in the room on the role of LAFs and what level of engagement was appropriate for them; considering their own role and how they act in partnership with other groups, including the highways authorities. Following the event David Jeffreys observed:

"We had a good mix of experiences in the room which helped stimulate some really useful discussions on the day, which I found most thought-provoking. I'm sure that the learning from the day will also help drive debates at a local level within each LAF as they examine how they continue to deliver their core aims whilst also adapting to the changes that are taking place around them."

A participant from Bury LAF fed back:

"I learnt such a lot and now feel much stronger to market our

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new Walking Loop to a wider group and hope to interest the ethnic community in Manchester North.”



Photograph by David Jeffreys

Finally, Saleem and Max drew the day to a close with a brief review of its aims and objectives and some parting thoughts and comments. They encouraged everyone to use them as a resource and said they would be happy to come and talk to individual LAFs if this would be helpful. With that, participants chatted as they left, still mulling over the issues they had covered.

Introducing IPROW

By Jayne Benson, IPROW President

IPROW, or, to give it's full title, The Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management, was established in 1986 as the membership organisation representing professionals involved in the management of public rights of way and access in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, principally, but not exclusively, as local government officers.

2016 is thus a celebratory year for us since we will be 30 years old!

IPROW exists to represent and promote the views and interests of members, raise standards of management, encourage the exchange of ideas and information in public rights of way and access management, and to foster communication and co-operation between related bodies. Our member services include: exclusive access to information and the opportunity to share experiences and ask questions of colleagues via our website and online forum, reduced fees for specialist training, direct mailing of job opportunities and receiving our in-house journal 'Waymark' four times a year. Some of these services are also available, either free or for a modest charge, to other interested parties.

The website [IPROW](http://www.iprow.org.uk) has a number of public-facing pages in the 'Good Practice Guide' containing information on a range of rights

Links

[IPROW](http://www.iprow.org.uk)

[Good Practice Guide](#)

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of way/public access topics. Groups, such as a LAF, can also subscribe to Waymark for £78 (plus VAT) and several LAF's are already subscribers; (Please contact Lisa Smith on 01768 840428 or email membership@iprow.co.uk for more information.) You can also follow us on Facebook by "liking" our page [IPROW FB](#); here we post news items of interest and information about what we are doing as an organisation.

One of our main activities is providing specialist training courses on a range of rights of way and access subjects; we are the leading training-provider in our field. Non-members are also welcome to attend training courses. Bespoke training for groups can be arranged at a time and venue to suit (if your LAF is interested please contact Geri Coop on 01536 514749 or by email training@iprow.co.uk for more information).

As well as these services, IPROW is a respected and consulted voice for the profession. We respond to Government consultations, in England and in Wales; a recent one for example being the proposed 'Guidance for the Review of ROWIPs in Wales', (issued by Natural Resources Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government), and we are currently helping DEFRA with the revision of Circular 1/09. IPROW is also represented, either in its own right or via members with dual roles, at ADEPT Rights of Way Managers Group national meetings and on Rights of Way Review Committee meetings.

IPROW does not provide an information service to members of the public over and above what is on our website. We will however, try and put enquirers in touch with individuals or organisations that may be able to assist. As an organisation we generally do not intervene in specific rights of way or access cases, even where there are concerns about poor practice, since there are other mechanisms which are enabled to do this, such as the Local Government Ombudsman. However, where a member of the public considers that an IPROW member has behaved unprofessionally, we have a code of conduct and disciplinary process, in common with other similar professional bodies but, in our 30 year history, complaints of unprofessional conduct have been very rare.

So, in short, IPROW is:

- A respected and influential voice for access professionals
- Concerned with rights of way and access matters
- A leading provider of specialist training
- Consulted by government and representing members on national and local bodies
- Helping to keep access issues on the political agenda
- A great way for rights of way people to keep in touch and share their professional knowledge.

Improving Access – Cotswold Water Park

By Gloucestershire Local Access Forum (GLAF)

A meeting between Swindon and North Wiltshire LAF and Gloucestershire LAF was arranged to share matters of common interest. One issue that emerged was an unspent 'pot' of money that was being held by the Cotswold Water Park Trust for access

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[IPROW Facebook](#)

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[Cotswold Water Park Trust](#)



Bridge before improvements

improvements within the Water Park.

This was investigated by Gloucestershire PROW team at the request of GLAF, and a representative of the Trust was invited to a GLAF meeting. It transpired that approximately £5,000 of funds

remained from an original sum of £21,000. Importantly, if the fund was not spent before the end of the 2015 financial year in April, it might be 'lost'. A couple of projects were considered by GLAF and following consultation it was agreed to explore the potential of replacing a narrow foot bridge on a heavily used route near the Gateway Visitor Centre, South Cerney with a multi- user fully accessible bridge.

To access the funds an independent organisation was required to make the application. The local Cirencester Ramblers agreed to take on this role for GLAF. With



Bridge after improvements

the support of local disability organisations, parish and district councils as well as other local organisations, an application was made to the Trust's Community and Environment Improvement Fund. The application was successful and the Ramblers, with the assistance of Gloucestershire Public Rights of Way, Amey PLC and a local contractor, completed the new bridge earlier this year. Concurrently, a significant project was undertaken to upgrade and improve the muddy footpath running along the lake edge.



GLAF site visit - June 2015

These projects now enable anyone with limited mobility and those with pushchairs to access a circular walk from the Gateway Centre along a wildlife lake, returning via the Thames and Severn

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Canal. The Gateway Centre also provides the added benefits of parking, toilets and a café.

The whole project was initiated by a chance remark by Swindon and North Wiltshire LAF at the joint meeting, without which GLAF would never have been made aware of this source of funding. The pivotal role of the Ramblers and the co-operation of other local organisations was crucial to its delivery.

Further information available from GLAF member Richard Holmes horbox@hotmail.com

National Conferences

By Rob Leek, Natural England

As covered in an article in the [last edition of LAF news](#), from 11th to the 30th September 2015 we ran a short online survey of LAF members and Officers regarding the possibility of holding national LAF conferences this financial year. We had 138 responses to the survey and many thanks to everyone who responded to it.

Using the information provided to us from the survey we concluded that LAFs would value national conferences being held this year and that their Appointing Authorities would mostly be prepared to pay travel and subsistence expenses for LAF representatives to attend.

To try and keep delegate's travel costs and time to a minimum, we are holding two national conferences, one in the north and one in the south, in locations with good national rail links. Both conferences will run from 10.30 to 16.30 and lunch and refreshments will be provided free for all delegates.

The dates, venue addresses and links to the online delegate booking pages for the conferences are:

LAF National Conference (South)

Tuesday 23rd February 2016

Temple Quay House

2 The Square

Bristol

BS1 6EB

[LAF National Conference \(South\) Online Booking](#)

LAF National Conference (North)

Tuesday 1st March 2016

Oxford Place Centre

Oxford Place

Leeds

LS1 3AX

[LAF National Conference \(North\) Online Booking](#)

The conference ticket options that can be booked via the links above are:

- LAF Representatives (LAF Chair, member or officer - 1 per LAF)
- Speakers or workshop leads

Links

[LAF News - Issue 7](#)

Huddle specific links

[Conference Survey Results](#)

[Conference Whiteboard](#)

[LAF National Conference \(South\) Online Booking](#)

[LAF National Conference \(North\) Online Booking](#)

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- Natural England/Defra staff
- LAF Volunteers to help on the day (LAF members or officers - limited spaces available)
- Partner organisation representatives to run stalls (limited spaces available)
- Reserves list (for any LAF members or officers - will be able to let delegates know nearer the date of the conference if a space is available)

There will be talks at both conferences from Defra, the Disabled Ramblers, the British Horse Society and a presentation on alternative sources of funding.

Workshops (delegates can choose 2 per conference)

Bristol - South

- 2026 – Open Spaces Society
- Recreational Vehicles - LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association)
- Registering our White Roads - Herefordshire LAF
- Nottinghamshire Guided Walks Partnership - Nottinghamshire LAF
- Disability Access - Gloucestershire LAF
- Naturally Healthy Project - Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks
- Charitable status for sub-groups - Norfolk LAF
- Dementia Adventure - Dementia Adventure

Leeds - North

- 2026 – Open Spaces Society
- Recreational Vehicles - LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association)
- Registering our White Roads - Herefordshire LAF
- Nottinghamshire Guided Walks Partnership - Nottinghamshire LAF
- Cycling on a footpaths - Redcar & Cleveland LAF
- Access prioritisation - Durham LAF
- Dementia Adventure - Dementia Adventure
- Story behind the Sandstone Way - Northumberland LAF

We also hope to produce a conference briefing or newsletter to include information and topics that can't be fitted into the programme so please contact LAF@naturalengland.org.uk as soon as possible if you would like something included.

Paths for Communities (P4C)

By Pippa Langford, Natural England

The Paths for Communities grant scheme run by Natural England on behalf of Defra closed in March 2014 after awarding just under £2 million to 43 projects. At the end of the scheme Natural England produced a final report which includes information about all the projects that were supported. More recently Defra have released a report which assesses the economic and social impacts of the project. The results of the project are significant: from a grants programme of £2 million the Gross Value Added

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Bottesford Beck before P4C improvements

was estimated to be over £7.5m with an estimated 187 full time equivalent jobs supported or created. There were also significant benefits to the health of users. Whilst it might seem obvious to LAF members that improvements to the rights of way network result in more people using paths and those extra people also generate local economic and health benefits, actual evidence of the benefits of investing in new public rights of way and improved surfacing and signage is rare. This report should provide very useful data which could be

used by LAFs in conversations with their local authority, LEP and Local Health and Wellbeing Board to demonstrate the local benefits of a programme of path improvements.

The results are provided in the executive summary of the final report which can be downloaded from [here](#)

The Natural England final report which gives more detail about each of the projects is available from [.GOV.UK](#)



Bottesford Beck after P4C improvements

What's Hot on Huddle

By Rob Leek, Natural England

Public Participation in the Management of PROW's Survey

Sue Philipson an Access Ranger for West Sussex County Council is running a survey via Huddle to gather thoughts on the 'effectiveness' of LAFs, be that from a members point of view or from the view of a member of the Appointing Authority. My end goal is to develop a model of participation for Access Forums and Appointing Authorities to use to further develop their working relationships and processes to become as effective as possible in improving access in their local areas.

Although this research is for academic purposes I hope you will find the outcomes both interesting and useful and I have agreed to share my final report with Huddle members. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete and closes 31st January 2016.

Organised Events on ProW

A number of comments have been posted to this whiteboard regarding policy/guidance to give to walkers, equestrians, cyclists etc. holding organised events using wholly/partly PROW

Consultations whiteboard

Links

[P4C Executive Summary](#)

[P4C Final Report \(.GOV.UK\)](#)

Huddle specific links

[PROW Survey](#)

[Organised Events on PROW](#)

[Consultations Whiteboard](#)

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This whiteboard was introduced on Huddle in October 2015 and is used to alert Huddle members to consultations that they or their LAFs may be interested in responding to. Natural England will continue to keep the whiteboard updated with new consultations though Huddle members are welcome to also use it to alert other members to consultations they may become aware of.

Huddle or alternative?

In 'what's hot on Huddle' in [issue 7 of LAF News](#) it included an article on an informal consultation that was held In September 2015 of all LAF Huddle members for their views and suggestions about whether an alternative social media platform might be more suitable for LAFs than Huddle.

The feedback received suggested that the overwhelming majority of Huddle users would prefer to keep using Huddle rather than move to an alternative) though Natural England will work to try and improve, simplify and produce new guidance for the workspace for its users

For more details see the Huddle link to the right.

Links

[Issue 7 of LAF News](#)

Huddle specific links

[Huddle or Alternative](#)

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This content was withdrawn 12 October 2020