

## **Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum**

### **Our vision for funding post-Brexit access to the countryside**

The United Kingdom's departure from the EU provides an opportunity to re-model funding schemes, including for agriculture, to ensure that public money achieves maximum public benefit, promotes health and wellbeing and supports the wider rural economy.

The Local Access Forum has identified that there is an urgent need to separate vulnerable, non-motorised users from vehicles either by providing new multi-user routes (walkers, cyclists, equestrians and disabled people) on parallel alignments or funding diversions and creations. This would reconnect and deliver a non-motorised network easily accessible from where people live or from suitable car parks.

In Northumberland the network of public rights of way is supplemented by extensive swathes of open access land. However, for all users to be able to enjoy existing access to the full, it is necessary to make use of metalled roads.

The level of traffic, even on minor rural roads, is continuing to increase in quantity and size and, as a result, they are becoming unsafe for non-motorised users. This has led to the access network becoming more fragmented as people avoid routes that include busy roads or road crossings.

It is recognised that a well-connected public rights of way network is beneficial to physical and mental well-being as well as supporting the local economy, tourism and road safety. In these terms, investment in improving the access network provides excellent value for money.

Subsidies to landowners/ occupiers should be used to improve and expand the public rights of way network where needed to benefit the public who contribute to those subsidies. The required new links should be identified via the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Local Transport Plan.

The Local Access Forum has a role in ensuring the new access is targeted, selective, based on demand, and acceptable to landowners/ occupiers as well as to all categories of non-motorised user.

We will be working with all relevant organisations to make better access routes, to and through the countryside, for those who live in and visit the most rural county of England.

Amanda Earnshaw  
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