

Helen Phillips
Natural England Chief Executive
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Duncan Graham CBE (Chairman)
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Dear Ms Phillips,

National Access Forum

On behalf of a number of colleague LAF Chairs I have been engaged in discussion with David Gear for some considerable time now. I am concerned that with your Executive Committee about to discuss the topic David has been unable to assure us that we will be consulted and our views heard. We are much encouraged by the openness and transparency of our relationship with your regional and local staff and can only imagine that you will wish to replicate this at national level. We are aware of the esteem in which our work is currently held.

Without at this stage going into the history of the former body on which LAFs were singularly unrepresented, there is a strong feeling that all the effort and expertise which we deploy at local level should be reflected in a National Forum where Natural England and DEFRA can benefit from this and at the same time inform LAFs of views and developments. There are various ways in which this body could be constituted, some of which I have discussed with David. We are confident that your Executive would wish to discuss these with LAF Chairs before coming to any final decision.

There was a most successful meeting of 16 LAF Chairs with DEFRA and the then Countryside Agency some years ago in Bristol which led to a great deal of progress and led to agreement on the need for revised Regulations from DEFRA and informal guidance for LAF members from the then Countryside Agency. I do not believe the latter is yet available.

Whether by means of a similar exercise or in some less formal way can I suggest that you consider how best we can be involved and consulted?

On behalf of myself and fellow Chairs, I look forward to hearing from you,

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Graham".

Duncan Graham
Chairman – Cumbria Local Access Forum