

LETTER TO ALL LAFs IN ENGLAND

(copies : Hillary Scott at Natural England in Leeds, local MPs, Minister for Rural Affairs, Pam Warhurst)

GETTING OUR VOICES HEARD

Like many other LAFs we have recently received copies of correspondence between certain Forums and Ministers and/or Government Departments/ Agencies. Our representatives have attended regional meetings over the last 18 months to discuss particular issues, and some Forums are also in touch with one another through other mechanisms.

It does seem clear from all those sources that there is an element of discontent within the LAF fraternity about some key issues. These are coupled with a frustration that we are asked for our views but don't always know what impact they have, if any.

At present there appear to be certain issues which are concerning many LAFs. You'll no doubt have your own list, but notable amongst the ones we hear about are:

- ❖ The lack of funding to implement RoWIPs,
- ❖ Lack of meaningful progress over the last 2 years by the 'Lost Ways' project,
- ❖ A certain slowness in getting Natural England's work off the ground, the lack of information about its detailed policies/ priorities, and the drop in project funding compared to its predecessors.
- ❖ No provision of ongoing funding for the management of CRoW Act Access Land.

I sense that several Forums feel it is all too easy for the 'Powers that be' to shrug off our views as being of purely local significance, or just a matter which our local authorities should deal with, or simply classify our pleas as yet another body whining about money. However, it seems entirely logical for us to say that we were set up by Parliament to represent local views on access issues but we now need a better mechanism to ensure that those views get through to the seat of power and are given due regard.

Without a real chance of influencing the funding bodies and policy makers our findings could be seen as pointless. Our members then become de-motivated as they've worked on schemes to improve access issues and identify new opportunities but find there is no prospect of them ever coming to fruition.

Is it realistic and/or desirable, to propose the establishment of a 'National Access Forum' which could coordinate the views of LAFs and present them to the appropriate people ? Views would be welcomed,

Yours sincerely

David Nortcliffe

CHAIRMAN