



Leeds Local Access Forum Annual Report 2005-2006



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEEDS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM APRIL 2005 - APRIL 2006

Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the second Annual Report of the Leeds Local Access Forum, the independent body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and whose primary purpose is to advise Leeds City Council on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable.

The past year saw the final tranche of access land in England opened on 31st October 2005 for responsible access on foot, and included the 352 hectares of access land within the Leeds Metropolitan District. Much of this access land comprises the open country of Hawksworth Moor and Otley Chevin. In addition, there are four smaller parcels of open country, as well as a number of areas of registered common land that are also classed as access land. Although much smaller compared to the large expanses of access land in areas such as the Yorkshire Dales, nevertheless it forms an important part of the countryside within Leeds. It is hoped that, with the help of funding from the Access Management Grant Scheme, progress will be made on making this land more accessible.

The main focus of the Forum has been the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP), particularly advising on the assessment process to establish whether local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public. The Forum looks forward to commenting on the draft RoWIP next year.

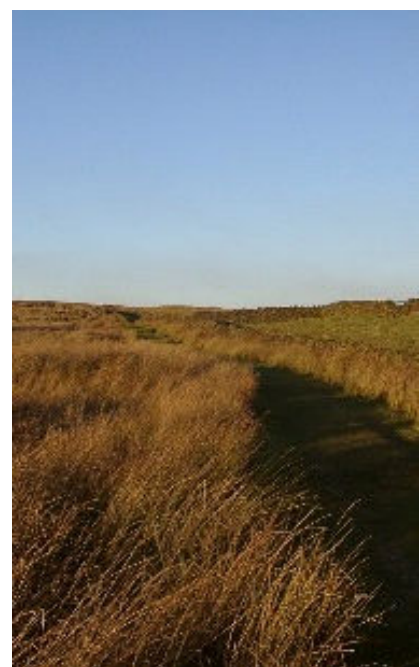
Local access forums are very still evolving. During the year the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) consulted on proposed changes to the regulations for the operation and membership of forums to which our Forum responded. We hope that the new regulations and accompanying guidance will provide clearer way ahead.

All meetings of the Forum are open to the public. If there is a topic you feel the Forum should address please contact me through the Secretary*.

Finally, I should like to thank the members of the Forum for their help and support, and also to thank officers of Leeds City council, in particular Joanne Smyth (lead officer) and John Grieve (secretary), who have ensured the smooth running of the Forum.

Mike Willison
Chairman
Leeds Local Access Forum

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Hawksworth Moor, our largest area of access land

1. Background

The Leeds Local Access Forum first met on 27 April 2004. Since that time the Local Access Forum Representatives have responded to many of the DEFRA Consultation papers and have given their advice in compiling the Rights of Way Improvement Plan questionnaire.

Although the main focus has been on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the Representatives have also been actively involved in giving advice on wider recreation issues involving large new development sites in Leeds such as Kirkstall Forge and have also attended the Liaison meetings for the West Leeds Country Park and Green Gate Ways.

2. Dates of Meetings

21 June 2005
20 October 2005
17 January 2006

Members of the Forum and attendance at the various meetings of the Leeds Local Access Forum can be seen in section 12.



The local access forum site meeting at Parlington estate, 6 June 2006

3. Business of the Forum

The following is a record of the main items of business dealt with by the Forum; further detail can be obtained by referring to the minutes of the meetings.

Particular reference is made to items which gave rise to discussion and to items where the Forum agreed that specific advice be made to the Countryside Agency and the Government.

5. Kirkstall Forge development site

A presentation was given outlining the proposals for this development site. The proposals for the site include 1,385 new houses 16518m² of office space, support facilities including bars, restaurants, small-scale retail, health and fitness, a hotel and multi story car parking.

The Forum members asked to be kept informed about progress and stressed the importance of establishing public access to and through the site.

6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The questionnaire survey was amended and agreed by members of the Forum who advised on the best way forward to implement this survey.



Test-driving Trumper scooters with the Otley Disability Advisory Group on the Chevin, 24 February 2006

6. Open Access

A number of Access Bulletins were circulated to each member of the Forum, giving the latest information from the Countryside Agency and DEFRA.

During the course of the year, Leeds City Council was able to apply for funding through the Access Management Grant scheme. As part of this funding a temporary Open Access Ranger was appointed who could deal with the process of managing the interpretation / signs on open access land. It was envisaged that the second phase of this funding would cover costs to extend this new post.



Ranger-led guided walk on Burley and Hawksworth Moor. 25 October 2006

7. Recruitment of Forum Members

A number of adverts / flyers were produced throughout the course of the year to fill the vacant posts on the Forum. Unfortunately, no application was received and it was felt that the recruitment procedure was too complicated for a voluntary position. It was agreed to look at this again to expedite matters

8. Annual Report

The first annual report of the Forum was received. A discussion took place about presentation of the annual report and that the annual report should perhaps be from the Local Access Forum as opposed to a Leeds City Council Report.

It was acknowledged there was a lack of funding to produce this annual report and although it may not be a glossy report, did reflect the business of the Forum and met the statutory requirement.

9. West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways. A presentation was given outlining the proposals for this new project. The aim is to develop the Country Park to ensure suitable and sustainable green space availability, quality recreational areas, diverse wildlife habitats and a strong community involvement. In order to achieve this, a number of short, medium and long term objectives were set out.

10. Responses to Consultations on Draft regulations and Circulars

Throughout the course of the year, the Forum discussed and gave responses on some of the following documents:

DEFRA Confirmation of Byelaws relating to Countryside Recreation: Proposals for Change - A consultation document

DEFRA Consultation relating to the Amendment of the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002

DEFRA Consultations on Diversions of Rights of Way

Countryside Agency - Review of Local Access Forums: Report of research commissioned by the Countryside Agency

West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan

Kirkstall Forge development site

11. Relevant Documents

Copies of the following documents can be obtained by contacting the Leeds Countryside and Access Unit on 0113 395 7400. These documents will also be available on Leeds City Council Website.

- 🌳 Leeds Local Access Forum Terms of Reference
- 🌳 Approved minutes of all the Leeds Local Access Forum meetings

12. LEEDS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - ATTENDANCE OF MEETINGS

Name	Representing	21/06/05	20/10/05	17/01/06
Dr M. Willison (Chair)	Walking interest	✓	✓	✓
Ms S Goodall (Vice Chair)	Horse Riding interest	✓	A	✓
Mr P. Maude	Cycling interest	✓	-	✓
Mrs D. Metcalf	Horse Riding interest	✓	✓	✓
Mr F. Hirst	Farming interest	A	✓	✓
Mr A. Hepworth	Farming interest	Resigned	-	-
Mr M. Dyer	Walking interest	✓	-	✓
Mrs D. Lawson	Land Owning interest	A	✓	A
Cllr R. Harrington	Ward Member for Gipton and Harehills & Shadow SpokesPerson for Leisure	A	A	A
Cllr C. Fox	Ward Member for Adel & Wharfedale	✓	✓	✓

In attendance				
Mrs J. Smyth	Leeds City Council (Countryside and Access Manager)	✓	✓	✓
Mr J Grieve	Leeds City Council (Secretary of the Leeds LAF)	✓	A	✓
Mr R Welbourn	Leeds City Council (Support Services Manager)	A	No longer contact Officer	-
Mr R. Brookes	Leeds City Council (Development Officer)	A	✓	✓
Douglas Louis	Leeds City Council (Technical Manager)	-	-	✓
Mr M Sellens	Principal Planning Officer	✓	-	-
Mr P Bowers	Leeds City Council Legal Services	A	✓	

Key: a: attended the meeting A: apologies - did not attend