

Lancashire Local Access Forum

Terms of Reference

Title

1. The Lancashire Local Access Forum as defined by the administrative boundary of the County Council and the unitary authorities of Blackburn-with-Darwen and Blackpool Borough Councils.

Role and responsibilities

2. Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on highway authorities to establish advisory bodies to be known as Local Access Forums. The primary purpose of the Lancashire Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the authorities and to the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation, in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. The Forum will encourage and assist access provision, giving advice on issues of particular local relevance.
3. The Lancashire Local Access Forum will give advice on three main topics:
 - a. development of recreation and access strategies that cater for a wide range of people.
 - b. improving the rights of way network; and
 - c. implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside.
4. The Lancashire Local Access Forum will work to:
 - a. develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside;
 - b. respect local circumstances and different interests while operating within national guidance;
 - c. provide advice on issues of principle and good practice, which is consistent with national guidance;
 - d. engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible; and
 - e. where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of differing views, and suggest how they might be resolved.

In carrying out these functions the Forum shall have regard to:

- the needs of land management;
- the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area;
- guidance given from time-to-time by the Secretary of State; and
- proper liaison with neighbouring authorities.

Membership

5. The membership will:
 - a. be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group or coalition of like interests; and
 - b. include a cross-section of local interests in the Countryside.
6. The membership will include:
 - a. an independent chair; and
 - b. an optimum number of 12-16 and a maximum of 20 members.
7. Members in total must bring a wide range of experience, including:
 - a. recreational use, for example walking, riding, climbing, cycling;
 - b. land management, for example, tenants, landowners and occupiers, and others with an interest in the land; and
 - c. nature conservation, heritage, tourism, health, business, trade unions and transport.
8. Members not experienced in the topics at 7, or aligned with any particular interest group will be appointed and known as independent members.
9. Each forum should contain roughly equal number of members ascribed to each of the categories in 7a, b, c and 8. Members who genuinely have experience and credibility in relation to more than one category in 7 will be particularly useful.
10. Members will be appointed by the authority according to selection criteria, which assess if candidates have sufficient experience of access to the countryside in the local area to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving access provision.

11. Before appointment members will be asked to confirm:
 - a. their support of the positive purpose of local forums;
 - b. commitment to working within the terms of reference and achieving the aims of the local forum through constructive working with other members; and
 - c. that they are able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings, training and to network with a wide range of interest outside meetings.

Substitute Members

12. Occasional substitute members will be permitted to attend meetings of the forum, in place of the nominated member, provided that the substitute is adequately briefed and represents the member's category of interest and can therefore, contribute effectively to the meeting.

Attendance

13. In accordance with paragraph 11c, members are expected to be able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings. Where a member misses two consecutive meetings the forum shall review his/her position (a review shall be carried out even where the member has sent a substitute).

Subject to a review at paragraph 12 and it is agreed by the forum that a member be replaced, the replacement member should ideally be from the same interest group and the appointment shall be subject to the usual selection procedure (organised by the lead authority).

Administration

14. Meetings will be held at least twice a year, and more frequently when necessary. One of these meetings will be the Annual General Meeting at which the Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected.
15. Meeting agenda will be agreed between the chair and the secretary.
16. Members of the Forum will be entitled to submit agenda items to the Secretary 14 days prior to the meeting.
17. Meetings will be advertised in advance and held in public.
18. Agenda, papers and minutes of meetings will be available to the public
19. The chair will invite observers to the meeting when appropriate.

20. Observers will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the chair.
21. The public will be able to ask questions on the business of the meetings at the discretion of the chair.
22. The lead authorities will have the right to review the membership of the local forum on a three yearly basis if necessary.

Reporting Lines

23. The secretary shall prepare regular progress reports of the forum's business to the lead authority.