



Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF)

for Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire

LAF Chairs' meeting with Natural England, Sheffield, 24 Jan 08

The JLAF Chairman attended a meeting, along with 13 other Chairmen of Local Access Forums (LAFs), with Natural England (NE) to discuss their future relationship. It was agreed to set up a national consulting group and call it the **National Access Forum (NAF)**.

The **purpose** of the NAF would be:

- a balanced view to NE and countrywide feedback
- to exchange information – political realities
- an effective and co-ordinated joint lobbying of Government
- to give accurate information on NE policy initiatives & objectives
- to feedback on initiatives and implementation
- to exchange best practice – less reinvention of wheels

The NAF would probably meet 3 times a year, consist of 16 LAF members from the 8 NE regions plus 2 from NE and the term of office for each member would be three years. Meetings would take place at NE offices around the country and NE would pay for these meetings and secretarial expenses.

Communication between NE and the LAFs would be through the regional NE secretaries.

The NE paper, **Recreation Policy Review** was discussed and NE said that the UK spends some £28bn. a year on preventable medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, stress and obesity and that NE was determined to show that the natural environment could help reduce this cost. This area is under-funded and we need to emphasise the benefits of getting out into the countryside and fresh air.

The funding of Rights of Way Improvement Plans (**ROWIPs**) was discussed and LAF members said that Highway Authorities were unlikely to pay for ROWIPs and that looking for alternative sources of funding was very difficult. NE replied that NE rarely funded specific schemes.

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