

## **ENGLAND ACCESS FORUM - DRAFT CONSTITUTION for comment and approval on 15 May 2008**

**At a meeting on 24 January 2008, between representatives of Local Access Forums and Natural England, it was decided to establish a national forum on access.**

**We propose the name: the England Access Forum.**

### **Its purpose is to:**

- provide balanced views and feedback to Natural England about all relevant access matters;
- exchange information;
- co-ordinate effective joint lobbying across Government;
- provide accurate information on policy initiatives and feedback on their implications and implementation; and
- to exchange best practice.

### **It will be organised as follows:**

- its constitution (this document) will be simple and informal;
- the forum will meet three times per year, March/April, October/November and one other, normally in the summer;
- membership will comprise 16 Local Access Forum (LAF) members, two nominated by each region (the process for nomination to be agreed by LAFs within their own region), and a smaller number of Natural England staff sufficient to provide support, expertise and Director level representation.
- The term of office for all individuals will be up to three years, but not exceeding their period of office as an individual LAF member:
- the Chair will be appointed from the LAF members;
- venues will be in Natural England offices around the country;
- the secretariat will be provided by Natural England who will liaise with the Chair. Papers could come from either the LAFs or Natural England;
- communication between LAFs and the forum will be through LAF Regional Co-ordinators who will be involved in raising agenda items, disseminating papers, etc;
- Natural England will reimburse travel expenses according to its transport and subsistence policies; i.e. travel by sustainable means on public transport at standard rates. A simple mechanism for claiming expenses will be used;
- appropriate liaison will be fostered with equivalent UK and European bodies.

The value of LAF volunteer time and additional professional support members can draw on is recognised as a vital contribution to the Forum.

### **Additional points**

- the Forum must be a constructive partnership not an occasion for LAFs simply to hold Natural England to account. The emphasis is on understanding and working together;
- LAF members will be representatives not mandated delegates;
- there can be substitution for LAF members but every effort should be made to ensure continuity;
- each LAF region is free to determine how its two members are chosen;
- opportunities for regional development and inter-regional liaison will be explored;
- LAF regions will be encouraged to submit agenda items and to discuss agenda items prior to meetings. LAF Regional Co-ordinators have a key role to play.

4 April 2008