

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum and the work of English Nature

The information laid out below summarises the work of English Nature, especially in relation to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Part 1 Access to the Countryside.

- English Nature is the Government Agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England. We are engaged in a diverse mix of work that will benefit nature conservation and biodiversity. We promote partnership working with a wide range of organisations, individuals and other statutory agencies to achieve our objectives.
- Through section 94 (6) (b) local access forums have a duty to have regard to the desirability of conserving flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the area. English Nature want to ensure that the forums have access to adequate expertise in this field. This may include encouraging voluntary conservation organisations and local authority staff to add their competence to any group, and English Nature could usefully advise on specific nature conservation issues.
- As an organisation, English Nature is strongly committed to promoting and facilitating access. We welcome access on foot so that people can get out and benefit from contact with nature. English Nature welcomes action to improve access on foot to the countryside and greenspace in towns and cities for quiet enjoyment and to enable people to experience and benefit from contact with nature. It is our belief that wildlife and natural features play a major role in contributing to people's quality of life.
- English Nature also believes that access needs to be provided in ways which will ensure that nature continues to flourish and is able to contribute to the quality of the experience. However, if public access conflicts with nature conservation, and management solutions are not available, then nature conservation interests should prevail.
- English Nature has now completed a major programme of examining *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)*, which will qualify for a statutory right of access for possible impacts. In fact, about half of access land will fall on SSSIs. This percentage is increased for areas such as the Yorkshire Dales as Open Country criteria such as unimproved grassland and open moorland are features that coincide with the majority of upland SSSI area.
- Based on both new research and current knowledge amongst relevant bodies, English Nature is in the process of providing advice to the Relevant Authorities on features both within and outside of SSSIs. While the bulk of this advice is being provided before the implementation of the Act, it will be the basis of all future advice and therefore be continually updated.
- English Nature has considered issues relating to local access forums and does not consider that it is appropriate for us to be in *regular and formal* attendance, however, we are anxious to assist the forum in fulfilling its responsibilities under section 94. Accordingly, we would be pleased to receive agendas and papers, and to advise when specifically requested. We would also like to offer to make a presentation to your forum concerning our work and the relationship between access and nature conservation. This would provide an opportunity to identify particular matters and issues where we might usefully input to the future work of your Forum.
- Contact details for your local EN access officer:-

