



## **The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007 No.268)**

- The regulations come into effect on 19 March 2007 and revoke earlier Regulations made in 2002. Parts 1 and 2 largely re-enact the earlier provisions concerning the establishment, administration and conduct of forums.
- Part 3 introduces new powers for appointing authorities to adapt the organisational structure and geographical coverage of forums. This is intended to assist authorities who wish to make changes to better suit changing local needs.
- Part 4 places a new duty on appointing authorities to supply Natural England with information on their forum (s). Regulation 19 requires authorities to provide the following information to Natural England:
  - A copy of the forum's annual report.
  - Details of the secretary's name, address, telephone number, etc, when employing a secretary for a forum, or becoming aware that any of the secretary's details have changed.
  - Relevant details (as specified in the regulation) after establishing a forum; making changes to the area covered by a forum; merging a forum with another forum, or; terminating the functions of a joint local access forum.
- Part 4 also prescribes additional bodies (Sport England, parish Councils and AONB Conservation Boards) to whom forums may give advice, and prescribes an additional matter on which forums may advise. This means that in addition to recreational access, forums will now be able to advise on 'functional' and 'utility' access.

### **Secretary of State's revised Guidance on local access forums**

- The Secretary of State's revised Guidance disseminates good practice and highlights how forums can most effectively "make a difference". The Guidance is primarily intended for forum members but will also be useful to forum secretaries and to anyone who has dealings with the forum.
- Ministers recognise that the influence of a forum will depend crucially on its reputation for providing good quality advice, and this in turn depends on the knowledge, energy and commitment of its members. Research shows that the role of secretary is also crucial to the success of a forum.
- The Guidance encourages forums to adopt a proactive approach and to focus on issues which they consider are most relevant to their area. Advice should inform, assist, encourage – and even inspire – local authorities and other 'section 94(4) bodies', and when it is necessary for advice to be of a more cautionary, challenging or critical nature, it should still remain constructive.

