

Annex 5: Stakeholder Consultation Responses

Name of stakeholder	Consultation response
Local Access Forum	The present definitive route from Pottergill over Low Fell and Darling Fell to Loweswater is a prime example of a Lake District historic right of way that is mostly unused, in part unsuitable but remains, and consequently is published and followed causing confusion, unnecessary navigation challenges and during this visit, marital arguments. In the brief time I walked over the fell I assisted two groups with this confusion. Consequently, the Access Forum welcomes this proposal for the diversion. The definitive line is steep, often on rough land and covered in bracken and heather. Its line is difficult to follow, mostly invisible. In contrast the proposed diversion is well used and despite being also steep, is easy to follow. It being slightly longer is not a disadvantage. The proposed diversion follows the well trodden path. From Pottergill the landowner's permissive path is very clear and well signposted. As the route ascends following the main fence line it becomes very steep but is still preferable to the definitive line. With more use, this difficult section will become eroded and broadened in time. At the highest point G NY1367 2239, a footpath sign will be useful indicating the path continues across the stile on the southern side of the fence line. Where the line crosses Crabtree Beck adjacent to the stile at NY1331 2248 adding several stepping stones would be helpful. The descent off Darling Fell is a welcome and sensible easier gradient. Finally, we agree that the stile at D is in urgent need of repair or replacement*. The LAF supports this proposed diversion. It will confirm the route regularly used and is a welcome improvement --

	*LDNPA comment – The stile near point D is in very poor repair. It is not part of the diversion, but we have written to the owner to remind them of their responsibility to maintain their furniture on public rights of way in a safe condition.
Loweswater Parish Council (draft minute note provided by Clerk)	856.01 Cllr M.A. advised the council that there was no requirement to make any changes what so ever to the existing footpath FP 243017. He quoted from his experience as NT Ranger and emphasised that the pathway was in open access, so folk could wander wherever they wished if the route got too steep or boggy. 856.02 further discussion resulted in the unanimous decision that there was no need to change the footpath. The current Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) covers all eventualities in the area and no changes are required. Clerk to advise Will Hinchliffe who raised the question with the parish council.
Member of public / local resident 1	• During the 17 years I have lived in Loweswater, I have used this path probably once every 4-6 weeks. • I object to an order diverting some the ROW to the route current proposed. • I have observed the current landowner fail to apply for appropriate planning permission in two instances in the valley, so you will understand that I am wary about the underlying rationale for their application for a change of right of way across their land. However, I am happy to note that on this occasion they have made a formal application, although they have tried to block the obstruct by a variety of methods over the past few years (see composite picture above). • The top right hand corner of the field by Pottergill was fenced off and the gate locked a few years ago. It was sometimes used as a footpath onto the fell, but according to your maps it never was a right of way, so this was acceptable and correct. (See picture above.)

- During the period in 2025 when larches were being felled in the wood adjacent to Pottergill, several residual farmhouse walls were razed to the ground. A pile of rubble remains. It may have been that they were unsafe. It was not a listed building, although of considerable historical interest as it was a home that accommodated single pregnant women.
- The landowner has restored the attractive curved wall — the only part of Pottergill that is now upstanding — and also the retaining wall on the left as you enter the field — ensuring that it has its previous thrutches (through stones in the wall enabling an ascent of the wall on foot) restored and useable.
- The current right of way that you are considering rerouting travels to Pottergill, then turns left at right angles up the hill, and through the fell wall onto the open fell. This fell wall has been rebuilt and any access that way has been blocked off. (See attached picture above.) I have tried to ascertain when this might have occurred and one of our local residents will be sending you their best recollections about this.
- The footpath that I have followed (and walked with the local Walking Group) for many years coming from the Loweswater end (concurring with the existing Right of Way) passes across the stream next to the rubble remains (see below your picture of the current stream crossing), up the low retaining wall (now on excellent thrutches, which are surely of interest to any walker) and along to just above the Pottergill ruin (the curved wall of historical interest). At this point it diverges from the Right of Way by turning back on itself at an acute angle for a short distance, before turning up the very steep hill to the existing stile through the fell wall. (Although this is now safe to climb over, the angle is pretty difficult when approaching from either uphill or downhill. You have said you would have to restore this if this right of way is retained.) This route therefore avoids crossing the stream higher up, which in my opinion would soon develop into a very muddy area (see your picture of proposed stream crossing below).

- The current owner has in my time used various means to DISCOURAGE walkers from proceeding to the far end of Pottergill, by putting up a fence across the ROW, although at present not fully obstructing the right of way (see picture below and above) although previously with a 5-barred gate right across (see picture); a fingerpost indicating the wall ascent was uprooted at one point during the tree felling and it is now wrongly directing walkers left up the hill from before the stream crossing. (I believe you will be taking this down until any decision about the rerouting has been taken.) To any walker who did not know the area, they could not help but feel that the "correct" way to ascend the hill to the fell wall was from a point well before the stream crossing. **XX** has sent you a number of pictures illustrating these attempts
- The current path ascending steeply to the stile can therefore be approached currently from two routes: 1. Ascending from the ROW well before Pottergill is approached — which is obviously what the landowner would wish you do to. (This track has now been worn down as a direct result of the deterrent actions of the landowner); 2. From the dogleg back from Pottergill, which only follows the historic ROW as far as Pottergill.
- Although I previously said I was not concerned about what happened above the fell wall as right to roam prevailed up there, there is an almost impassably muddy area that has developed if you cross the current stile at the top, turn left for about 30 metres along the wire fence and then try to cross the stream above the fell wall. It is a mud wallow, with nothing to hold onto, steep sides on one side, barbed wire fence on the other, thick mud at the base. You then proceed along the fence before turning right and ascending steeply through the bracken towards the top of Low Fell.
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So..... possible courses of actions would be:

1. Follow the original ROW across the stream (far less muddy and less likely to become so as there is gravel underfoot, washed down by the stream and a rock face above the crossing), up the thrutches (enjoyable and interesting), including a sighting of the curved wall remains of Pottergill — of historic interest — then:

EITHER take a right angled turn steeply up the hill and create a break in the fell wall (see picture, above just to right of beech tree trunk), closing off the current stile, and then follow the ROW straight ahead up Low Fell for a short distance, crossing the stream higher up. This is the solid line of the original ROW.

OR follow number 1 above, and then turn back along the blue dashed line to ascend steeply to the current stile, but without crossing the stream on the hill.

This route would need to be carefully signed, particularly on the way down.

3. As number 3 above, but creating a less acute ascent than the well trodden one up to the existing stile.

I personally would be prepared to accept option of crossing the stream on the level, ascending the wall on the thrutches, then backtrack to the steep ascent to the existing stile (which you said you would replace). If the landowner could be persuaded to create a less steep and slippery section up to the stile from the end of the wall next to Pottergill, that would be even better.

I should strongly object to the short proposed alteration (the initial section of the black, dashed line), ie turning left off the PRow before you cross the stream on the level, for the reasons outlined above: interest of the thrutches, historic interest of Pottergill wall and potential mud issues and also the fact that the landowner has tried to deter access along the PRow in a number of different ways.

On a separate issue, if you visit the site again, I do hope you will take a look at the muddy pool above the fell wall, which is nearly unnegotiable.

Member of public / local resident 2	Thank you for consulting me about this proposed change to this Right of Way. We know the area well and have been regular walkers on Low Fell and Darling Fell since we moved to Loweswater in 2008. Since your letter early this January 2026, my wife and I have walked all the tracks of the proposed changes, except the ascent from halfway between F and G, to G and down to C. I agree that the proposed diversions largely follow the routes that walkers currently have used since the start of 2023. But I want to point out to you and the LDNPA that the reason that walkers currently use the route from E to F is , in my view, because of the unregulated actions that have taken place around Pottergill over the last few years to discourage and prevent the public from using the official RoW route via Pottergill (point A) and to redirect the public to ascend the fell from point E up to the fell wall (F) , well before Pottergill. Details of these actions have been notified to the LDNPA footpath officer and should be held in LDNPA records if needed for future deliberations (see below). We have walked these footpaths on Low Fell and in the area of Pottergill since 2008. Until late 2022, when descending from the flanks of Low Fell the commonly used footpath followed the definitive RoW and crossed the fell wall at F and descended down by the north bank of the Pottergill beck to the retaining wall above the Pottergill track opposite the Pottergill farm (Point A). The reverse was true when ascending Low Fell. There was a clear track going up/down the side of a stone wall at point A Pottergill, and a public footpath post with yellow marker directing walkers up or down (Photos). The farmhouse ruin has since been demolished to rubble by the land owner. In support of this point, you can examine the excellent and very popular walking website <i>LOWESWATER CAM</i> (with millions of “hits”) produced by a local resident, Mr Roger Hiley, which includes the details of several walks
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passing through the area of Pottergill over the years (to find, insert *Pottergill* in the search window).

As an example, Roger Hiley (Loweswater Cam website <https://share.google/hkjddivRzGbeq6tXj>) describes a walk by a large and popular local walking group (the *Mockerkin Mob*) on 7th December 2022 as ascending an obvious RoW footpath up the wall opposite Pottergill farm (point A) and includes images illustrating the established footpath at that time and the yellow footpath arrow at A (photos below copied with permission; direct photo links <https://www.loweswatercam.co.uk/22120410.jpg>; <https://www.loweswatercam.co.uk/22120411.jpg>).



Date 7.12.2022 at point F <https://www.loweswatercam.co.uk/22120410.jpg>



Date 7.12.2022 at point F <https://www.loweswatercam.co.uk/22120411.jpg>

Actions taken to redirect the public away from the RoW through Pottergill

In 2020, *private property/ no access* signs appeared on the stile on the public footpath approaching Pottergill from the south (Foulsyke), and arrows appeared redirecting the footpath diagonally uphill towards Low Fell well before Pottergill (photos) at approximately point E. This was reported to the LDNPA, and the signs were painted over.

In late December 2022, the public RoW post with the yellow arrow had been uprooted and removed from the point A opposite Pottergill and the footpath up along the wall *destroyed* (Photos).

In 2025, a new finger post appeared with a yellow footpath arrow at point E directing walkers uphill towards F, and fencing and a gate was placed across the public RoW as it crossed the Pottergill beck and before the Pottergill ruin and point A (photos).

So, it could be argued that the only reason the track from E to F has become established is because of unauthorised attempts to obstruct use of the definitive RoW via Pottergill point A since 2020.



In answer to your enquiry, I agree that the proposed diversion of the RoW is no less convenient for the public than the current definitive line, but I deplore the repeated unauthorised actions that have taken place around Pottergill farm to divert a public right of way.

	I would ask that a record of these actions is provided to the LDNPA planning department, to be considered should any plans be presented to develop the Pottergill site in the future, taking advantage of the absence of a RoW on that land if you decide to divert the RoW.
Members of public / local resident 3	This is not a walk we did regularly but we are sure the route was changed a few years ago. Unfortunately we cannot remember the exact date. We certainly cannot recollect any opportunity to voice an opinion of a proposed change of route of the public footpath.
Member of public / local resident 4	If we went up Low Fell, we would have, in the past, walked and directed people along the route via The Lone Tree – i.e. start at Foulseyke and having passed through the gate turn left and then walk across the fields to the fell gate and The Lone Tree. We believe that this was the route that the Loweswater Show Fell race took when the Annual Show was held in the field next to Loweswater Village Hall. The Lone Tree route was stopped up by white painted stone signs put up directing walkers, having entered beside Foulseyke, to the right and along through the woods and the then owner did that because they no longer wanted visitors plus dogs going through their sheep fields. This ‘re-routing’ (not sure if it was a designated footpath) will have substantially increased the footfall along the wood track towards Pottergill. The woods at the bottom of Low Fell were sold recently (5 years?) and have been felled. Previously these woods were part of a shoot and were maintained by a syndicate of local people who fed pheasants there. We believe this syndicate also had permission in the woods further along the fell and towards Thackthwaite. The local hunt Melbreak Foxhounds will also have moved through that area during meet days and accessed the fell via stile, gate or in the case of the hounds over the walls. We mention these points because they illustrate the life of that part of the land and those that continue to and have used it and walked it. The path we would usually use to get onto Low Fell starts from what was the fir wood. The beginning of this path has fundamentally changed because of

previous felling when the new landowner was making the road etc. It's the diagonal path that reaches I think, the stile P14 in photos in first email you sent. To me, the purple line on the map shows a route that seems perfectly adequate – why would they create all that crossing back and forth when there's a straight path from Pottergill to the fell? There is the suggestion that the new landowner doesn't want people to access close to Pottergill. However, following the recent works carried out in that area there are no longer any buildings at Pottergill other than a curved high wall and therefore a privacy request presumably wouldn't apply.

The large field in which Pottergill is situated has one stile and four gates in it. All the gates bar the one which leads into a lower field, are chained and locked. The stile directly above the building area known as Pottergill is, in our view, the one through which the path goes. It has a sign on it "Low Fell Nature Reserve. Land acquired by Buy Land Plant Trees CIC to give back to nature. BLPT. www.buylandplanttrees.co.uk". Having passed over this stile to Low Fell there is a path which runs up beside the beck with a map showing the requested new route (photo 3) and then turns left to the muddy patch and then another right (sign posted photo 4) up the fell. We would suggest that all the finger posts with signs have been placed on the path by BLPT as they are all alike.

The Pottergill finger post path sign (which presumably is part of the collection of signs erected by BLPT) of recent years was, during recent track creating time, propped on the bank before Pottergill. This could have been done by anyone, not necessarily a landowner. We cannot recall a sign showing a path up the fell until that post appeared on that side of Pottergill. There was a series of steps in the wall and these have been sympathetically replaced by the landowner when reinstating said bank wall. A new gate entrance has been created near the kitchen sink water trough before Pottergill.

	The waterlogged path above the fenced water tank area was never as muddy and wet as it is at present until the August 2015 flooding which brought down a section of the fell, the scarring of which at the time appeared like a road. The topsoil had been removed by the sheer volume of sudden rain to leave stone and shale. This has now become a bog area and the water spreads across the footpath at the bottom of said area. This disruption occurred during the summer flood that created damage at Crabtree Cottage and prompted all the (new) impressive dry-stone walling that has replaced old at that property. This area is presumably the Delicate Flush that BLPT describes in the posted map and BLPT has presumably changed the footpath in that area because of their commitment to rewilding and planting of trees.
Member of public / local resident 5	To my way of thinking, the published official right of way (shown on the O.S. Map as green dotted) has only been a rough guide and here follows an impossible route. It was about time it was corrected, as is the case with many upland Rights of Way in the Lakes. I welcome this proposed change. The route proposed for the new definitive way seems reasonable and the current path (since the footpath post move 2024/25) represents a sensible start to this route in view of the indentations on the ground. It also more closely follows the O.S map. Until then, the path used to proceed through the new fence, over the beck to the edge of the old farm, then climb the wall on a stone step stile (point A). It proceeded the length of the buildings, before doubling back under the big tree and then climbing steeply up to the stile in the wall gap, seen as point F on the new plan. Neither this new route nor the old path on the ground match the O.S or the definitive map routes anyway.

	The 'new' route would avoid the historic farmhouse which I presume would have been preferable when it was an active farm, but of course in those days you didn't get passing walkers out on a leisurely strolls, so whether that is historically relevant is questionable. My only concern is whether the landowner wants the path re-aligned in order to replace the gate and re-develop the farm buildings. However, this would be a planning matter not a footpath matter . . . be aware that there is a lot of cynicism locally about the owner's intentions for this building. As for the rest of the path, the National Trust re-aligned the actual footpath higher up, moving it away from the fence line some years ago, so as to avoid damage to the new "Nature reserve" fence. It seems reasonable to follow the line they chose. On the Darling Fell end of the route, the path for the last 25 years at least has always followed the route you are now proposing.
Open Spaces Society	Many thanks for consulting the OSS on this proposed diversion. It has been some time since we used this route and I doubt if we can undertake a site visit. The terrain is Lakeland but in a miniature way - undulating, rough, varying vegetation but with rewarding views for those who persevere. The OSS have no objection in principle to the diversion notwithstanding the increased length of the route. This is difficult terrain to walk at the best of times and attempting to follow the exact line of the whole of the definitive route was all but impossible and involved some additional distance over that of the definitive line. However we have two concerns which arise from your detailed and helpful report. • Although this is a fell walk, albeit in miniature, the lower altitude is attractive to less mobile fell-walkers to whom the high tops are but a

	memory. We would press for pedestrian gates rather than stiles throughout the proposed diverted route. • Secondly you have noted a few areas of the surface which are unsustainable for a surface of a PROW. We would press for remedial works in keeping with the landscape on these sections of the proposed line.
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