

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

11th November 2004

Open Access Update

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update members on the progress of the Access Management Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 The County Council have been awarded a grant to produce an Access Management Plan. The Plan is designed to assess the potential changes Open Access will bring about and put measures in place to manage that change for the benefit of land managers and visitors alike. Once the potential changes were identified and management solutions proposed, the draft plan went out to consultation.

3.0 Consultation

3.1 The Local Access Forum were consulted first, initially by the main group and subsequently by the Sub-Committee at a separate meeting. After a number of small changes the Sub-Committee endorsed the County Council's approach.

3.2 The next stage in the consultation process was to a much wider audience. Over 950 landowners and tenants were invited to "drop in" to one of 4 workshops that were organised around North Yorkshire. These were held in Richmond, Malton, Skipton and Nidderdale with around 100 people attending in total.

3.3 The wider consultation process found that there was a low level of knowledge about the implications of the Act. Rights of way staff used the events to give out a lot of information and to raise people's awareness. Overall those consulted were happy with the approach adopted by the County Council but were confused over the terminology of what actually constituted access land.

3.4 Feedback from user groups has focused on areas of proposed open access land with no current or limited access to them. Suggestions were made for the creation of new access routes and points. These recommendations are being fed into the development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

4.0 Bid for Infrastructure Grant

4.1 The next stage is to submit a grant bid for infrastructure items that have been identified by the Access Management Plan. The Countryside Agency is willing to fund between 50 and 75 percent of the cost of new infrastructure items depending on location and importance in terms of nature conservation. The main items of infrastructure we have identified are information points to be located at popular visitor areas.

4.2 The bid, should it be successful will allow us to get on with the job of designing and installing the access information points. The Access Grant Scheme has been granted funding for the next two financial years after this one. This means that any work that has not been anticipated in the plan for this year can be included in a new bid for funding in subsequent years.

5.0 Written Plan

5.1 The findings and results from the Access Management Plan are in the process of being written up to form a published document. The document will also set out how we intend to manage open access in the future. The first draft of the plan has been sent out to the Local Access Forum Sub-Committee for comment.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 It is recommended that this report is received for information.

Contact Officer

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