

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

24 November 2005

Rights of Way Improvement Plan
Progress Report

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review progress in preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for North Yorkshire.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One Rights of Way Improvement Plan is being prepared for the whole of the County which will gradually be merged into the Local Transport Plan for North Yorkshire.
- 1.2 So far there has been limited input into the Rights of Way Improvement Plan process by all members of each forum, however each forum has been represented by two members who sit on the RoWIP steering group.
- 1.3 This group has not met since December 2004 when the RoWIP submission for the LTP was completed.

3 PROGRESS OVER THE YEAR SO FAR

- 3.1 The technical work group have focussed their efforts on finding an effective way of assessing the adequacy of local rights of way. The statutory guidance for the preparation of a RoWIP (Defra 2002) refers to 'assessing the needs of different classes of user' (2.2) and 'making the assessment' (2.3). A number of areas needed to be assessed in a manageable way which included the requirement to assess:
- 3.1.1 An assessment of the extent that local rights of way meet present and likely future needs of the public.
- 3.1.2 The opportunity provided by local rights of way (and in particular by footpaths, cycletracks, bridleways and restricted byways) for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of their area.
- 3.1.3 The accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.
- 3.1.4 How the rights of way network integrates with the rest of the local highway network in delivering transport shared priorities with a view to the eventual merger of the RoWIP with the LTP.
- 3.2 The County is the largest in England with over 10,000km of local rights of way, larger than the road network by 8,000km and therefore the task initially seemed daunting. A review of RoWIP exemplar projects funded by the Countryside Agency revealed a way forward. City of York contracted ENTEC Consulting to come up with a model which could be

used to assess the adequacy of local rights of way. This looked in detail at the use and demand for local rights of way and their relationship to where people live. A model was devised which looked at opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding using local rights of way from the edge of a settlement. Various statistics could be built up by counting the availability of routes for different groups of users in relation to population size. It was felt that North Yorkshire needed to tailor this approach slightly in order to take into account the fact that consultation results revealed a propensity to undertake circular as well as linear journeys. Adjustments were also made to relative distances that various users would travel based on short and long distances which could be achievable over different periods of a day, ranging from a short walk for example to a longer distance walk. Settlements were selected in order to apply this adapted model. These correspond with service centres which have been defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Transport Plan and various planning documents. Details of this model and approach will shortly be forwarded to all members of each local access forum as well as other steering group members. The availability of local rights of way for horse and carriage driving and lawful vehicular use of the network has been investigated at county level, this also corresponds to the ENTEC assessment model.

- 3.3 The rest of the County required a meaningful assessment in terms of local rights of way provision. On browsing through literature produced by the Countryside Agency a booklet entitled 'Landscape Character Assessment' Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency & Scottish Natural Heritage 2002) was found to be of use. This looked at the fact that policy makers and practitioners 'need techniques to identify what gives a locality its own sense of place and makes it different from other areas, and which conditions should be set for any new development or change' in that area. The authors of the booklet believe that the division of landscape across Britain 'can help inform those decisions and underpin planning policies'. Landscape areas were therefore used in order to provide manageable chunks to assess the network. It has been found that landscape character areas show similar patterns in terms of the evolution of communication routes and settlement and that they also show similar features for example one area may have more woodland and reservoirs than another area which has moorland characteristics. The approach taken was to look at current and potential demand locations. This included reviewing public transport corridors, honey pot locations with car parking provision, horse riding establishments (where known) and to look at how walkers, cyclists and horse riders could use the available network, what limited movement and whether a low availability of provision could be countered by the fact that users had alternative provision in the form of roads, green space and other access for example. Planning options have also been derived by looking at the key issues and future changes that the Countryside Agency has specified for each landscape character area. An example of this is development pressures for land use change and how these affect the integrity of the existing local rights of way network, future use of the network and changes in local demand patterns as a result of changing social structures for example.

3.4 Results for each service centre or landscape character area assessment have been written up in a 2 page report for each area or centre with the following headings and content (outlined in brief):

3.4.1 Key access issues

A bullet point summary is provided at the beginning of each report which shows the short, medium and long term issues which need to be addressed to improve the rights of way network in terms of usability, definition, promotion, partnership and resource provision.

3.4.2 Service centre distinctiveness and demand initiators (service centres)

A brief summary about what makes the service centre unique and the range of factors that determine demand for local rights of way provision.

3.4.3 Key characteristics of area (landscape character areas)

A summary of the landscape character area reports that were published by the Countryside Agency which define the landscape area and what would determine demand for local rights of way provision in that area.

3.4.4 People with different abilities

This looks at the provision of hard surfaced routes suitable for people with mobility aids which are currently or potentially available through improvement and barrier reduced routes also currently or potentially available. Access which is suitable but which is not a local right of way and the promotion of currently available routes is also addressed.

3.4.5 Equestrians/ off road cyclists

The provision of bridleways and higher status local rights of way is looked at here including use of roads and the potential conflict between road traffic users and riders. This section also looks at Cycling Plans and proposals from Highways North Yorkshire regarding utility cycling.

3.4.6 Walkers

The provision of routes suitable for people on foot is reported upon with reference to circular and linear route provision including fragmentation by roads. Route promotion is also included in this section.

3.4.7 Access to and from peripheral communities

This section looks at the provision of local rights of way which link a service centre to peripheral communities. It also looks at the potential use of local rights of way for walking and cycling between service centres and peripheral communities to access recreation and goods and services. Linkages are made with Service Centre Transportation Strategies and Cycling Plans that look at movement between settlements from a service centre perspective.

3.4.8 Access to routes and transport links

Access to local rights of way from home or temporary holiday accommodation is considered, including how much road local users must negotiate in order to start to use the rights of way network. Public

transport provision in relation to visitors using the local rights of way network is provided in summary as well as car parking provision where known.

- 3.5 An example of a draft report is attached for information purposes only. All 60 or so reports, both service centre and landscape character area are subject to internal consultation between rights of way staff in all access authorities, access staff at Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils, National Trail Officers and various staff in Highways North Yorkshire. Further consultation with Area Traffic Managers is expected to take place from mid December 2005.
- 3.6 Local access forum members will receive all reports prior to a special RoWIP steering group meeting on the 9th of January 2006 when the findings of the reports will be reviewed and steering group members will have the chance to comment. Prior to this meeting, letters will be forwarded to all invitees outlining the format of the day and its purpose and follow on letters will be sent with service centre and landscape character area reports enclosed. This day will allow local access forum members to meet key field staff who have been key in contributing their knowledge and proposals for rights of way improvements to the reports. It is intended that members review those reports that are relevant to the access areas that they represent and also that some LAF members review reports for neighbouring access authority areas in North Yorkshire in order to gain a more integrated view of access planning and input into this. Many reports have acknowledged cross boundary issues and neighbouring authorities will be able to add and contribute to strategic development of the RoWIP.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) All local access forum members, representatives from the District Councils, AONB's and neighbouring highway authorities are asked to attend an all day series of workshops on 9th January 2006.
- b) That this report be received for information.

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EXAMPLE OF DRAFT SERVICE CENTRE REPORT
Currently being consulted upon internally, subject to amendments.

Hunmanby Service Centre

See Yorkshire Wolds and Vale of Pickering landscape character area reports

Key access issues

- Humanby has a rapid reduction in the density of local rights of way to its south up to the border with the East Riding. This may correspond with low demand for access in that area and the natural movement of people from the south of Hunmanby into the rest of North Yorkshire rather than to East Yorkshire.
- Demand for access to the coastal side of Hunmanby remains strong especially due to the location of Reighton Sands Holiday Village and Primrose Valley Holiday Centre nearby. Access is discontinuous along the coast. The creation of continuous access should be considered with a viable and long term route option in mind. The whole of the coast is adjusting to the forces of nature, particularly the Yorkshire Coast which is prone to erosion by the sea at the base of cliffs and from above. The geology of the coast gives rise to coastal slips, especially when aided by enhanced rainfall. Climate change is resulting in more storm events and this natural process of coastal erosion is thought to be speeding up. This increases maintenance liability for those structures such as gates and steps which are erected on routes that are progressively changing and disappearing at the coast. Access to the coastline of Britain has been promoted not only by the television series 'Coast' but also by moves from the Government to consider making the coastline as accessible as open access areas. From the perspective of local rights of way there is a balance to be had between demand, public safety, the liability of future maintenance of surfaces and structures and the needs of strategic coastal plans which address all of these issues as well as the appetite of the public to learn about coastal heritage.
- There is equestrian and other user demand for better access to the beach. This is expected given the location of temporary visitor accommodation in the area and local resident demand for walking or riding next to the sea. This is an exhilarating experience for all users. Current access to the beach is a challenge due to the terrain, coastal movement and lack of access to the beach arising from neglect and lack of the large sums of money required to maintain, reinstate, create and improve such access. There is one notable route to the beach, at the top of which there is parking for around ten cars. This was laid in concrete before the war and blown up during the war to deter invaders using emergency powers. It has since remained neglected passing through the responsibility of various bodies. It would need considerable sums of money to restore this access.
- Access between Hunmanby and surrounding communities could be improved to remove people from roads including links between Reighton (an off road linkage) and temporary holiday accommodation centres. Demand needs to be gauged and options assessed.
- There are some scenic routes on the higher ground of the Yorkshire Wolds looking over to the Vale of Pickering and sea. These are not currently promoted.

Service centre distinctiveness & demand initiators

Hunmanby is a popular village and was once the largest village in England. It is located on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds looking down over farmland to the coastal resort of Filey with lovely views. Hunmanby was a major trading centre in the past, lying on the main route between Bridlington and Scarborough. This route has since moved coast wards however the built heritage around the market place remains.

People with different abilities

There is one section of hard surfaced route to the north of Hunmanby, and a low density of local rights of way leading from the village.

Equestrian/ off road cyclists

There are no bridleways either from the built up area of Hunmanby or around the urban fringe, there are however some minor roads that may be used by riders currently. Demand for cycling or riding around Hunmanby is as yet ungauged however quieter roads may afford amenable recreational access currently.

Walkers

Walkers pass through Hunmanby on the final leg of the Centenary Way, thus providing potential economic benefit to the area. While there are relatively few routes around Hunmanby, by venturing west on the Centenary and Yorkshire Wolds Way there are some very picturesque views from the Wolds (Flixton Wold) to the Vale of Pickering and the coast. These are not fully promoted and links to these routes could be improved in terms of overall usability of a recreational network.

Peripheral communities

There is no off road route between Hunmanby and Reighton or a link to Primrose Valley Holiday Village. The link between Hunmanby and Reighton Sands Holiday Village is by coastal rights of way however one must use minor roads to access Hunmanby. Filey and Hunmanby are virtually linked entirely by local right of way and this affords both recreational and utility access between the two centres for walkers. One must negotiate either a roundabout on the A165 or a staggered junction when using this link.

Access to routes & transport links

Hunmanby is accessible by train from York, Scarborough, and Bridlington and further south. The town is accessible by road using the A165 from Scarborough south along the coast, there is some parking in the town. Public transport links the main service centres in North Yorkshire together.