

NORTH YORKSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

23 February 2006

Ranger Service on Barden Fell

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.2 The purpose of this report is to explain a forthcoming extension to the area covered by the Open Access Volunteer Service in relation to Barden Fell and to seek views from the LAF on the options available for future wardening.

2.0 Background

2.1 Barden Fell and Barden Moor are part of the Bolton Abbey Estate and cover some 14,000 acres of mainly open moorland owned by the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement. In 1968 the then West Riding County Council negotiated an Access Agreement under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 with the estate which enabled public access to defined areas of open country on either side of the Wharfe Valley north of Bolton Abbey. Bolton Moor lies to the west of the River Wharfe and Bolton Fell to the east. Approximately 49% of the Barden Fell block lies outside the National Park.

2.2 In 1974, following the re-organisation of local government, responsibility for this agreement passed to the Yorkshire Dales National Park, as the majority of the land fell within the National Park. The access provisions granted under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act are very similar to those under the CROW Act 2000, although there are some important differences. The main difference is that the estate has more control over when access to the land can be closed. Members should note that the Agreement land has been mapped as open access land and will be managed under CROW Act legislation when the existing agreement expires in 2018.

2.3 Under the Agreement, there is a requirement for the local authority to warden the area on behalf of the estate and this responsibility passed to the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) with the Agreement in 1974. Since 1989, however, the County Council has made an annual payment to YDNP to support the cost of wardening that section of the Agreement land that falls outside the National Park.

2.4 As the County Council has now developed its own Open Access Volunteer Service, there is now the capacity to warden the areas outside the National Park independently. It is therefore proposed to introduce new wardening arrangements for the forthcoming season. Discussions have been held with YDNP to agree how the transfer can take place and how future co-ordination can be achieved.

2.5 Attached to the report is a map illustrating the Barden Fell showing the access area and the National Park/AONB boundary.

### 3.0 Wardening Options

- 3.1 YDNP currently warden the Moor and Fell as two separate blocks. It is within the Barden Fell area that there is access land outside the National Park. This area covers Kex Gill Moor, Rocking Moor and The Great Stray. When the County Council takes over responsibility for wardening this area, there are two options available.
- 3.2 Option 1 – We could brief willing volunteers to patrol only the section outside the National Park. This would replace the need for the YDNP volunteers to patrol this area and satisfy the terms of the access agreement.
- 3.3 The benefits of this approach would be that, once the volunteers are trained, we can patrol this area independently and it would neatly define the responsibilities between the National Park and the County Council. However the area of land outside the National Park tends to be less popular with walkers and receives relatively few visitors. There is a risk that the volunteers might find these patrols unrewarding and we could be in a situation where we find it hard to attract people to patrol this area. This would cause a problem as there would still be a requirement under the access agreement to patrol this land.
- 3.4 Option 2 – We could treat the Fell as a whole block and work jointly with the YDNP to satisfy the wardening requirement. Under this arrangement, our volunteers would work along side the existing National Park volunteers to warden Barden Fell as a single block.
- 3.5 The YDNP rotas for wardening Barden Fell in 2006 are almost complete, so for the first year we would use our volunteers to fill in any gaps in the rota and provide extra cover when needed. In subsequent years the rota would be available for all volunteers to bid for at the same time.
- 3.6 The benefits of this approach are that the volunteers would be part of an existing team and would benefit from the experience already gained by existing volunteers. They would also get the opportunity to patrol land outside their normal area, including areas that are very popular such as Simon's Seat. The main disadvantage of this option is that we would be patrolling an area larger than we need to under the terms of the agreement, potentially requiring a bigger resource input.

### 4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The two options both provide workable solutions with positive and negative aspects. On balance, it is felt that the Option 2 would be preferable for the following reasons.
1. It would give our volunteers the ability to patrol new areas and would provide the opportunity for networking with other like-minded volunteers.
  2. It would provide the opportunity of working with the National Park, sharing our experiences, which could be beneficial to both parties.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that future arrangements for wardening the area of Barden Fell outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park be negotiated on the basis of an integrated NYCC/YDNP partnership, in line with Option 2 in paragraph 4.1 above

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