

NORTH YORKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

17 August 2006

Provision for PROW Users with Special Needs

1.0 Purpose Of Report

1.1 To brief members on current position regarding provision for PROW users with special needs.

2.0 Background

2.1 At the last meeting of the Local Access Forum, members requested a report on current position regarding provision for PROW users with special needs.

2.2 What is quite clear is that currently users with special needs are not well catered for and this situation has to improve.

2.3 The Rights of Way and Access Group has been working to improve structures but not in a coordinated way. There has been as yet no promotion of routes that users with special needs can use.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), is at the centre of this authority's drive to improve access to the countryside for all. Section 60 of the act deals specifically with Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIP)

- Every local authority has until November 2007 to produce a RoWIP which should cover:-
- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the authority's area.
- The accessibility of the local rights of way to blind or partially sighted and others with mobility problems.
- Local rights of way are footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways, and restricted byways. It also includes Byways and Restricted Byways that are shown in a definitive map and statement.

4.0 Consideration by the County Council

- 4.1 The County Council has established an officer-working group, which includes both National Parks to establish a rights of way improvement by the deadline of November 2007.
- 4.2 The Local Access Forum receives regular updates and has been heavily involved in directing the work of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 4.3 With such a large County 10,000Km of Public Rights of Way it will not be possible in the RoWIP to go into as much detail as those authority's with much smaller networks e.g. York.
- 4.4 It was decided to follow the Local Transport Plan approach of using Service Centres, Appendix 1 shows an example of a service centre breakdown from the RoWIP. As can be seen general detail is given about the centre and those routes suitable for improving for user's with special needs.
- 4.5 Further work will be required to prioritise these routes and to identify funding to carry out the improvements.
- 4.6 North Yorkshire County Council will continue to work with users and the LAF to identify and improve routes for those with special needs.

5.0 Current Initiatives

5.1 Identification Of Gradients

Work has already taken place looking at the gradients on the network; this background information will help the County Council identify suitable areas to target for improvement.

5.2 Information Provision

This is a key area the County Council has begun to look at, currently As an able bodied user of the network all you need to make use of the network is An Ordnance Survey Map, available at a number of outlets and locations. As a user with Special needs the information you require is simply not there. This makes accessing the Countryside a very difficult and time-consuming task. The County Council is looking at providing this information online. We hope to include things like Gradient, Path Surface, Structures, Car Parking, and Toilets etc.

5.3 Structure Removal / Improvement

The County Council is actively pursuing the removal of redundant structures and replacement of those that are required with more users friendly ones. This is a slow process with such a large network. We intend to use the RoWIP and Users to target those areas where structure removal / replacement will have the maximum benefit.

5.4 Section 147 Authorisation

The County Council is currently revising the way it authorises new structures on the network to conform to the new British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles BS5709 (2006). As a principal the County Council will not authorise a stile in a new fence line, it will always be the least restrictive option.

5.5 Section 147ZA Agreements relating to improvements for benefit of persons with mobility problems

The County Council will seek to use this power to improve access for those people with mobility problems. The section allows the authority to enter into an agreement with a landowner, lessee or occupier to carry out works on their land at no cost to them. It also allows for the authority to take on the maintenance liability of these new structures.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 It is recommended that:

- (a) The Local Access Forum note this report and comment as they see fit.

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Appendix 1

Boroughbridge

Demographic and household trends relevant to access planning

	Boroughbridge	North Yorkshire
Population	3,184	569,660
Households with long term illness	28%	32%
Households – pensioner only	26%	26%
Households with dependant children	28%	28%
Area of service centre	1,157 ha	803,757 ha
Persons per ha	2.1	0.71
% households without a car	14%	20%
% households sharing 1 car	44%	46%

The service centre

The town lies on the River Ure and developed as a coaching stop on the Great North Road which is now the A1 (M) nearby. The town surrounds a cobbled market square with many individual shops. In 1322 the battle of Boroughbridge fought for control of a narrow bridge and ford where the Great North Road crossed the River Ure, crossing the river is still an issue with a lack of available bridges to link rights of way at either side resulting in a long detour. To the south of the town before the road goes under the A1 stands a 30 foot monolith, the Devils Arrow and the remains of the Roman town “Isirium” which lies at Aldborough nearby. Buses connect the centre with York, Harrogate and Ripon and the national rail network at York.

Count of potential routes available from the centre using ENTEC method

	Short circular	Long circular	Linear	Other access available
Potential pedestrian routes	1	1 involves busy road	11, 2 involve busy road	
Potential routes to enjoy off road cycling or horse riding	0	0	0	None but both quieter roads

Access to and from surrounding communities: there are 13 peripheral communities within 7km of Boroughbridge and 8 within 5km of town. There may be potential in the future to improve off road links with six villages. Most routes lead from the edge of town and therefore do not involve users negotiating road to start their journey.

Main issues:

- Crossing points over the River Ure can be fairly few which effectively sever the rights of way network at either side of the river and lead to long diversions to the next available bridge.
- There are route severance issues to the west of Boroughbridge as a result of the location of the A1 and A168 trunk roads and the A6055. Underpasses and overpasses allow some connections to be made between either side of the A1 (M).
- There is discontinuous access to the riverside. Boroughbridge lies in the catchment of the River Ure which receives regular surges of water downstream from Wensleydale. Flooding occurred in 2000 and repeated flooding could result in a loss of network assets. Partnership work with the Environment Agency is required in improving river side access and future proofing bridges.

Subsidiary issues:

- There are five hard surfaced routes in this area which are short routes enabling access to the riverside and countryside beyond with the potential to be used by people with a mobility aid and promoted.
- A fragmented bridleway network can be countered by a minor road network through busy roads present areas for conflict.
- Access is required to link bridleway via Westwick Lock.
- Walkers have access to the riverside and surrounding villages, longer walks involve road.

Please also refer to: the landscape character area report for Southern Magnesian Limestone North.