

NORTH YORKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

17 August 2006

Outdoors for all?: Draft Diversity Action Plan

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide a brief overview of the consultation document which has been produced by Defra in May 2006 titled 'Outdoors for All?: Draft Diversity Action Plan.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Local access forums are required to provide input into the production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) covered by their area and general advice regarding access improvement and development in the future. There are three local access forums in North Yorkshire, one for North Yorkshire outside the National Park Authority areas and one each for both the North York Moors National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- 2.2 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan has a specific statutory duty to assess the needs of people with mobility and sight impairments with regard to improvements to the rights of way network (Defra statutory RoWIP guidance, 2002).
- 2.3 The Countryside Agency carried out research for The Diversity Review in 2005 looking at the requirements and perceptions of under-represented groups and how aware outdoor providers are of these needs. It concluded that under represented groups desire enjoyment of the outdoors, there is a lack of information for them, access to transport is perceived to be a barrier and that there is a lack of confidence in engaging with diverse groups amongst recreation providers.

3.0 BRIEF REVIEW OF DOCUMENT

- 3.1 The vision of the document is to see people from under-represented groups enjoying the outdoors, providers working with these groups, constructive relationships forming, users being welcomed, accessible information and information about available transport being provided for them.
- 3.2 The Diversity Action Plan wants to see an increase in general awareness among under-represented groups and an increase in people enjoying outdoor recreation which has measurably risen between 2006 and 2016. The Plan believes that this will be achieved by partnership, training, networking, information and marketing, research, funding and

performance monitoring. Local access forums as well as local authority access staff have been identified as requiring training.

- 3.3 Local Area Agreements are seen as having the potential to deliver the Diversity Action Plan. These agreements are part of the 10 year strategy to improve public services shared by local delivery partners as well as the delivery of Local Community Strategies which include promotion of well being and social inclusion.
- 3.4 Everyone enjoys access in an integrated way including under-represented groups and therefore the strategy applies to parkland, green space, rights of way and all other public access provision. The RoWIP for North Yorkshire also recognises that people don't just enjoy the rights of way network in isolation and therefore its assessment includes integrated access such as green space including parks, rights of way, permissive routes, canal towpaths, public transport and roads.
- 3.5 The Diversity Review would like to see an impact on one of the shared LTP transport priorities of 'accessibility' in order to enhance access to services and the countryside where the latter is appropriate. Enhancing accessibility does include all available public access including rights of way.
- 3.6 With regard to the rights of way network, the Diversity Action Plan points to the need to consider a wider group of people than people with mobility and sight impairments which are referred to in the RoWIP statutory guidance provided by Defra. The North Yorkshire RoWIP has already pre-empted the narrow consideration of disability through discussion with Social Services to define a wide spectrum of abilities. This includes older people as well as people who lack the confidence to enjoy the network such as younger people and people from different backgrounds. The RoWIP does not use the term disability but refers to people with different abilities which is a much more positive term. The Diversity Action Plan suggests that reference is made to the Countryside Agency publication 'By All Reasonable Means: Inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people'.
- 3.7 The Diversity Action Plan looks at the provision of tourist information for people with different abilities and accessible accommodation provision, a need for good design, training and more research in order to undertake a national campaign.
- 3.8 The Plan looks at the added value achievable from partnership, sharing funding, expertise and planning, it advises of a step change required to work more cross sectorally across tourism, transport, culture, access etc. with organisations signing up to five areas: commitment, involving users, mainstreaming equality and diversity, monitoring performance and sustainability. This is also recognised by the RoWIP.

- 3.9 The Diversity Action Plan includes appendices with information about the 'Diversity Review', 'A Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment', 'A summary of the diversity review action plan proposed activities' and a list of consultees. A copy of the consultation document and accompanying letter can be found on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk. Further hard copies have been ordered and it is hoped to have these available at the meeting.
- 3.10 The consultation document poses 25 separate questions and many of these relate to a variety of different issues. It is considered that the best way to address the formulation of a response on behalf of the LAF would be to convene a small group of members who can consider the issues raised in detail and devise an appropriate response. Members will note that Defra are suggesting that Local Access Forums should appoint a 'diversity champion' to act as a prime point of future contact. This would be a positive move and would enable the views of the Forum to be co-ordinated. Members are therefore asked to consider the appointment of a diversity champion, to take the opportunity to access the report and submit any views to the diversity champion who would be responsible for convening a small sub-group as and when required to formulate a response to Defra.
- 3.11 Responses to the consultation are to be returned by 30th **September 2006** to: The Outdoor Recreation Team, Sponsorship, Landscape and Recreation Division, Defra, Zone 1/04 Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol. BS1 6EB.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 It is recommended that:

- a) this report is received for information;
- b) the Local Access Forum consider the appointment of a 'Diversity Champion';
- c) members read the full consultation document and submit any views on the questions posed in writing to the Diversity Champion; and
- d) the Diversity Champion be responsible for convening a working group of Local Access Forum members to formulate a response on the consultation document.

Contact Officer:

Angela Flowers
PROW Improvement Plan Officer
01609 532774