

NORTH YORKSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS

November 16th 2006

Rights of Way which are available for people with disabilities

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with information about some of the routes which are currently available to people with disabilities which are maintained by the County Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the previous Local Access Forum meeting members of the Forum requested that the County Council concentrate its efforts on improving the accessibility of rights of way to people with disabilities. They also requested to view a list of routes which are currently available for people with disabilities.

- 2.2 Disability has recently been defined by Social Services at the County Council as:

2.2.1 Impairments which are a result of illness, injury or congenital condition which affects physical appearance/function and

2.2.2 A loss or limitation of opportunity to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers.

Barriers are not created by the person's body but by people, whether through prejudice, stereotype, inflexible practises, inaccessible information/buildings or transport (Disability a Social Model, NYCC 2006).

- 2.3 It is recognised that everybody cannot access all rights of way equally, only the physically fit choose to enjoy rights of way which climb steeply up hills for example. Defra guidance for the RoWIP points out that there are relatively few rights of way which are suitable for use by people with mobility problems due to barriers ranging from the number of steps, stiles and gates one encounters to narrow bridges and poorly maintained routes. The guidance suggests that it would be relatively easy and inexpensive to open such ways to everyone, using accessible stock proof gates to British Standard 5709 and the fact that there are now more robust powered wheelchairs to enhance accessibility to the countryside.
- 2.4 The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on highway authorities to assess the needs of people with disabilities and the need for new ways to enable people with mobility problems, the blind and partially sighted to access the network through their RoWIPs. It also recognises the importance of publicity and information in enabling people to make an informed decision about enjoying the rights of way network.
- 2.5 "Section 69 of the CRow Act 2000 places a duty on local highway authorities to have regard to the needs of people with mobility problems when authorising the

erection of barriers on footpaths or bridleways under S147 of the Highways Act. New S147ZA will empower them to make agreements with owners, lessees and occupiers of land for works to replace or improve structures (such as gates or stiles) to make them safer and more convenient for people with mobility problems” (Defra guidance RoWIP, 2002).

- 2.6 It is recognised that there are many variations of ability and therefore many different kinds of improvement that could potentially be made. It is also recognised that some improvements could be made which unduly benefit one kind of user over another kind. One might lower a gate opening device for example for a wheelchair user but this may disadvantage someone with a different impairment or another user such as a horse rider on a bridleway route for example where they would need to dismount to open the gate. “Wherever possible proposals for improving rights of way should not unduly benefit one class of user at the expense of another” (Defra guidance RoWIP 2002). Improvements will therefore benefit the widest possible range of users.

### 3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In assessing rights of way which are available or could be potentially available for people with disabilities the RoWIP technical work group commissioned consultants to provide gradient information for all rights of way in the county. This was done by calculating the difference in gradient between 5 metre intervals along each right of way in the county. This information is presented in gradient classifications starting from 1:8 to 1:20 and greater. It is stored on a Geographic Information System layer.
- 3.2 The RoWIP took the view that there are two broad classes of access which are available to people with disabilities:
- 3.2.1 Access which can be used by people with a mobility aid, whether push chair, wheelchair or other aid.
  - 3.2.2 Access which is barrier reduced and therefore meets the needs of people with less dexterity and agility such as older people such as the replacement of a ladder stile with a gate.
- 3.3 The availability and potential availability of these two kinds of route was assessed over the entire 10,061km of rights of way network in North Yorkshire in preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Results from this assessment are incorporated into the draft plan. The RoWIP also recognises the need for more detailed information about rights of way which needs to be made available to the public over the web for example, from gradient and surface type to a description about camber and the kinds of barriers one might encounter when using the route. This allows people to make their own minds up about which part of the network they want to enjoy and removes assumptions which might be made about individual ability in deciding whether a route can be classed as wheelchair friendly for example.
- 3.4 The plan has also recognised the need to publicise information about rights of way which meets the needs of the user or importantly potential user with a disability rather than being produced for the convenience of the access authority. This means a more critical review is required about how the information is

produced, its size and degree of folding for example (which is important to people with dexterity and grip issues), the colour of the font and contrast (catering to people who are partially sighted), the simplicity of the message being conveyed and where it is located. It needs to be located where there are likely to be potential users which may not necessarily be tourist information centres and libraries but possibly day centres or supermarkets. The expertise of Social Services will help to achieve this.

- 3.5 A request was made to the four Rights of Way Officers in the County to produce a list of four routes which are suitable for wheelchair users and four routes which are barrier reduced and these are provided in the following table. Some staff identified more than four routes for each category but they have not been presented here while one area identified three for each category.

Administrative Area	Routes suitable for people using mobility aids	Barrier reduced routes, suitable for older people for example.
Northern	<b>Thirsk Market to Tesco's and Racecourse.</b> From the west end of the Market Place through signed access (Racecourse) across Castle Garth Scheduled Ancient Monument to Station Road or connect with Picks Lane and on to Kirkgate(Herriots Museum)	<b>Great and Little Ayton.</b> From Captain Cook Museum cross River Leven. Follow field paths south-east to Little Ayton. Turn right onto Cross Lane. After 500m turn right onto Easby Lane. At War Memorial turn right onto public footpath to return to start. 3.5km
Northern	<b>Richmond to Easby Abbey.</b> From the station car park follow the former railway line until you cross the Swale on the railway bridge. Turn left and follow Love Lane to the Abbey. Return on same route. 4km.	<b>Potto.</b> From the pub take the public footpath opposite for 250m to the dismantled railway. Turn right onto the railway for 1km to Gold Hill Loop Road. Turn right for 300m. Turn right over footbridge (signed public footpath). Return to village via Cooper Lane. 3km
Northern	<b>Jervaulx to Cover Bridge.</b> From Jervaulx Abbey head west on the road to East Witton. After 200m turn right onto a public footpath. Follow the River Ure for 3km upstream to Cover Bridge. Return on same route. 6km	<b>Thornton-le-Moor.</b> From the village head north on Thieffhole lane. After 400m turn left onto Bestmire Lane. At the end of the lane turn right onto a public bridleway. After 1km turn right onto a public footpath which becomes Endican Lane and returns to the village. 6km
Northern	<b>Leyburn Shawl.</b> From the car park at the west end of the Market Place (Shawl Terrace) west onto Leyburn Shawl. First section 400-600metres of level field path then onto wooded section along the old quarry edge with a firm surface - Extensive views across Wensleydale. Linear route of 1.4K	<b>Great and Little Thirkleby.</b> From the end of the road through Great Thirkleby head south along a field path beside Balk Beck. At the road turn left and take the next road on the left (Flats Lane) to Little Thirkleby. Return via a footbridge at the end of the village. 1.5km
Southern	<b>Selby.</b> Take the Trans Pennine Trail leading out from Selby along the	<b>Minskip.</b> Take the circular bridleway route leading out to the east of the

	disused railway track towards York. Much of the Trans Pennine Trail has been developed on former railway lines – see website for details.	village which returns to the village.
Southern	<b>Selby Canal.</b> A right of way which is maintained by the County Council which leads out from the south of Selby alongside the Selby Canal. It is part of the Trans Pennine Trail.	<b>Arkendale.</b> A circular route which is a mix of bridleway and quiet road leading away from and back into the village.
Southern	<b>Barlow Common.</b> Access which is a mix of rights of way and other access provided at the site which enables people to enjoy the site and nearby countryside.	<b>Roecliffe.</b> A bridleway and footpath circuit which includes access alongside the River Ure.
Southern	<b>South Stanley to Brearton.</b> Rights of way linking the two villages together.	<b>Coneythorpe.</b> A circular route leading out and returning to the village. There are many other villages in southern area with barrier reduced routes.
Western	<b>Pateley Bridge.</b> Rights of way alongside the river in the centre of Pateley Bridge which runs along both banks of the River Nidd, linked by the newly opened Millenium Bridge.	<b>Skipton.</b> Roman Road which leads onto Skipton Moor, though it is a steep climb.
Western	<b>Pateley Bridge to Glasshouses.</b> A linear route leading to Glasshouses which has been promoted to all abilities in the past however the surface does need some attention.	<b>Gargrave.</b> A circular route leading from Gargrave, part of which includes the Pennine Way which is maintained by the County Council. This is barrier reduced apart from one barrier at the railway and it sets off across fields.
Western	<b>Embsay Railway to Bolton Abbey,</b> on the old A59 with wheelchair accessible gates. Highways North Yorkshire installed a crossing point over the A59. A permissive route means avoiding having to cross the A59.	<b>Bentham.</b> A popular linear route leading out from the village, used by local dog walkers.
Western	<b>Ripon.</b> Quarry Moor, an open area of grassland over which there are rights of way some are surfaced with no barriers and there is parking, on the outskirts of Ripon	<b>Scarr House Reservoir, Nidderdale.</b> A route around the reservoir, part is an access road and suitable for mobility aids on the southern side but all is barrier reduced. There is parking.
Western	<b>Brimham Rocks.</b> A mix of rights of way and other access in and out of the rocks at this National Trust site which offers parking.	
Western	<b>Kex Gill Moor.</b> Linear route, room for one car to park, great scenery.	
Eastern	25.60/47/1 – Westgate <b>Old Malton</b> to Highfield road Malton. An	25.60/21/1 – Town Street, <b>Old Malton</b> to Old Malton Road. A popular link

	important link between two communities, access to goods and services and also creates a circular walk in conjunction with the footway along Town Street. Resurfaced and kept free of encroaching vegetation to allow use by wheelchairs.	from the town passing behind Old Malton priory which is often used in conjunction with the footway on Old Malton Road/Town Street to create a circular walk
Eastern	30.23/11/1 – High Stakesby Road to Runswick Avenue, <b>Whitby</b> . A popular through route in the town recently resurfaced to allow wheelchair access. Also school route.	25.83/7/1 – <b>Settrington Beacon to North Grimston</b> . Linking the Wolds Way and a stretch of UCR to provide access from the village of North Grimston to Settrington Beacon, a popular view point.
Eastern	25.5/12/1 – B1257 to Main Street <b>Amotherby</b> . A short link recently resurfaced and kissing gate removed to allow wheelchair access on this popular route giving access to the church. Also school route.	25.45/8/1 – <b>Helmsley</b> to Low Woods Farm and return alongside the River Rye, enjoying Woodland scenery. Stiles recently upgraded to kissing gates complemented by the removal of two Cattle Grids on the route.
Eastern	25.28/3/1 – Main Street to Back Lane, <b>Ebberston</b> . Recently resurfaced allowing wheelchair access to the village playing field and creating a circular walk around the village.	30.18/1/1 – The Cliff Walk, <b>Speeton</b> . Commencing at Speeton Church, a scenic walk to the Cliff top and beach below, enjoyed as a there and back route or connecting to the headland Way to Filey or Flamborough. Old stiles have been upgraded to hand gates and kissing gates.

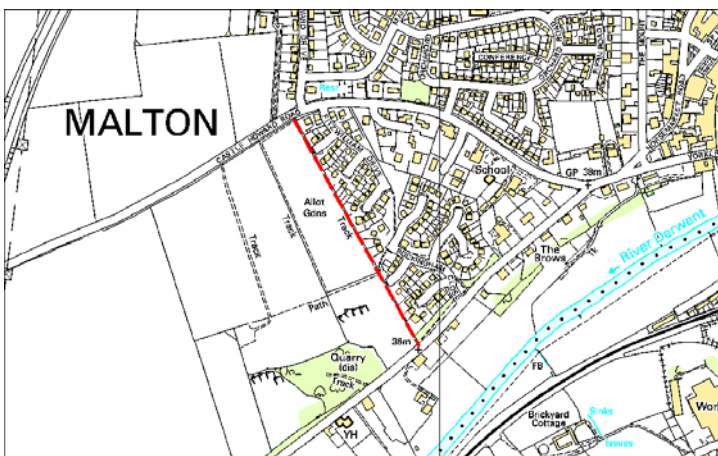
- 3.6 Rights of way integrate with other public access which can be available for people with disabilities. This includes green space, parks, access which is managed by Yorkshire Water around reservoirs to the west of Harrogate, access at National Trust sites and other highway network such as pavements, cycle ways and quiet roads. In preparing the RoWIP, all available public access was considered in relation to improving rights of way as it is part of an integrated whole.
- 3.7 In order to give members an idea of the scale of costs involved in improving accessibility to the network and to demonstrate that rights of way staff at the County Council are actively thinking about the kind of projects that can make a difference, some **potential** projects which have been proposed by Eastern Area have been reproduced below. Staff are also working towards the 'least restrictive option' in line with the Widening Accessibility Policy which was introduced on commencement of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and which was put before the LAF at a previous meeting.
- 3.8 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan has been criticised for raising public expectation in a climate when resources to deliver public services are falling. The Government has provided very little direct funding to support the delivery of the Improvement Plan so far, though this may change. This means that all improvement projects including those which enhance accessibility to the network for people with disabilities will be prioritised in order to bid for available funding. There is also potential to apply for a variety of funding and work with partners,

from groups representing people with disabilities and Parish Councils to District Councils to enhance accessibility to the network in the future. Parish and District Councils have contributed to improving accessibility in the past.

## Malton



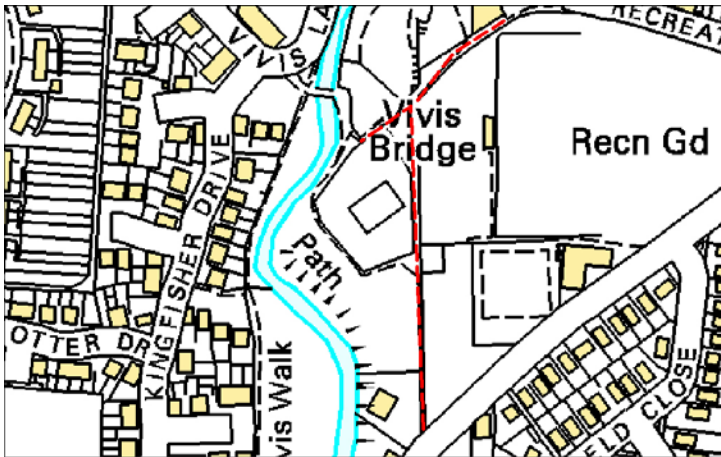
Many “snickets” in Malton require improvement to their surface. Once improved several “town walks” can be created on many themes regarding the history of Malton. At £20 to £25 per m<sup>2</sup> for surfacing, this type of project may require at least £25K.



### Focus on one route in Malton

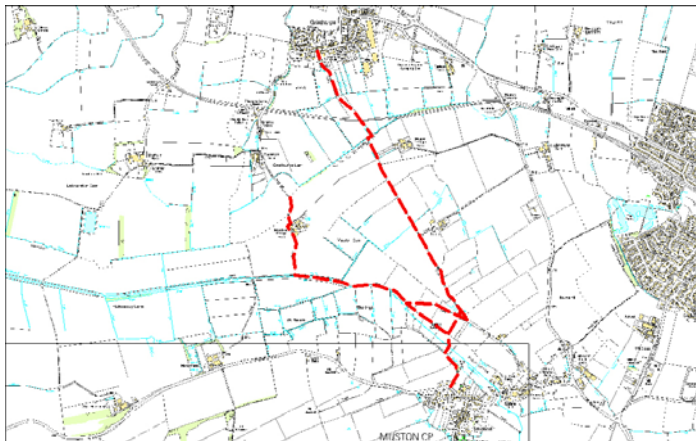
This route in Malton is partially unmade and needs to be surfaced to improve the use by the residents, especially in the winter. Estimated cost £3K+

## Pickering



This route in Pickering is unmade and needs to be surfaced to improve the use by the residents, especially in the winter. Estimated cost £5k+

### Muston and Gristhorpe



These routes connect Muston with Gristhorpe and are close to the Yorkshire Wolds Way. Barrier reduction and promotion is a possibility as several improvements have been undertaken in the past. Estimated cost £3K+

### Sleights



The surface and drainage of this route adjacent to Iburndale Beck could be improved to increase the use by the residents and visitors. The surface is the barrier at the moment. Estimated cost £30K++.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

a) This report is received for information

Contact Officer:  
Angela Flowers  
PROW Improvement Plan Officer  
01609 532774