

North Yorkshire County Council: Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads Liaison Group Notes of Meeting: 28th January 2008

Present:

Cllr John Fort - NYCC, Executive Member H&T

Richard Gunton - NYMoors NPA
Catriona Cook - NYMoors LAF

Paul Burgess - Nidderdale AONB

Rachel Connolly - NY LAF

Kathryn Beardmore - YD NPA

Jane Harrison - Yorkshire Country Land & Business Association Ltd

Doug Huzzard (DGH) - NYCC H&T
Aidan Rayner - NYCC PROW (substitute)

Apologies

Cllr Heather Garnett - Member of Transport and Telecommunications and Environment and Heritage Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Tim Swales - Member of Transport and Telecommunications and Environment and Heritage Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Malcolm Petyt - YD LAF
Paul Jackson - Howardian Hills AONB
Iain Burgess - NYCC PROW

Welcome and introduction

- The meeting began by Cllr Fort welcoming everyone, and everyone introducing themselves.

Background

DGH explained the background and history of unsurfaced unclassified roads (UUR) maintenance in North Yorkshire, which included:

- 800km of unsurfaced unclassified roads in NYCC
- no grant / money from government for maintenance of these routes.
- Backlog of >£400 million of maintenance work acknowledged by government office on the surfaced highway network
- Currently no objective maintenance or management policy in place for the unsurfaced unclassified road network which leads to both reactive and ad hoc maintenance measures being initiated by Area Offices in isolation, both inefficient and unsustainable.

DGH circulated a paper which outlined highway and rights of way issues and suggested a mechanism for prioritising routes for inspection purposes based upon on a risk matrix. DGH confirmed that he would challenge the status quo and be intentionally provocative as there were some difficult issues to address and he wanted to provoke comment and thought.

The task

A Highway Maintenance Plan was adopted by the County Council as part of LTP2. NYCC were looking to produce a complimentary section covering the unsurfaced unclassified road network.

The group discussed the paper and highlighted the following issues:

- Using a scoring system meant any 'weighting' would need to be justified e.g. where user type and likely erosion were being scored
- The UUR network in many places was an integral part of the rights of way network, and a system of prioritisation should recognise the network importance of a particular route
- Highway responsibilities are not the same as rights of way responsibilities, and this could be problematic if it was considered that the two were to be reconciled, i.e. rights of way responsibility to 'assert rights of users' how does this fit? because for many UUR routes the public rights which existed along a route were unknown and would take a long time to find out,
- It was trying to consider 'sustainable' use, and only allow use that was sustainable. There was some concern that prioritisation would disadvantage motor vehicular users, and horse riders because the cost of maintaining routes for these users was likely to be higher (and therefore demand a greater proportion of the budget) than for other users
- What was the legal basis for the UURs being considered?

Points of clarification were:

- NYCC are aiming for a 'minimalist' policy, and this was to be produced by end of March 2008
- The policy was to deliver statutory highway function only – the key issue being safety
- As part of a 'risk' management approach we would look at 'defects' and thresholds for both monitoring and intervention
- The policy would apply only those routes which were on the list of streets and not on the definitive map
- It would only apply to those routes which were NYCC's maintenance responsibility and would not apply to Rationale Tenurae (RT) routes, as these privately maintainable
- Ideally each UUR would be inspected once a year
- It was intended that the Group produce a draft policy document which would be consulted upon, the Liaison group would identify the appropriate consultees

Tasks to be completed before the next meeting

Identifying what we've got has to be the starting point. To this end each NPA and NYCC PROW section were asked to:

- Identify 'dual status routes – that is routes on the 'list of streets' and definitive map
- Identify which of the 'dual' status routes have an application for BOAT status before the NERC Act cut-off date or routes where it is believed some other NERC exception applies
- Identify routes that thought to be on the list of streets but are 'missing' from the GIS layer provided by DGH
- Consider types of 'defects' that would cause particular types of users' difficulty in using a UUR. 'Condition reasonable for expected use' case law of RoW

Date of next meeting

18th February 2008 at 14:00 County Hall, Northallerton (venue to be confirmed)

Topic: "Sensitivity Assessment Criteria", Mark Allum, Yorkshire Dales NPA