

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

26 FEBRUARY 2009

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY
DEFINITIVE MAP TEAM - CHANGING PRIORITIES

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise members of proposed changes to working practices within the Definitive Map Team, and to seek members support for these changes.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The authority has had a backlog of DMMO applications since the mid 1980s following an 'invitation' to Parish Councils to put forward amendments that they considered were necessary, as part of the early stages of a Review, (subsequently abandoned), of the Definitive Map. Limited staff resources at that time meant that few applications were resolved and the subsequent applications received just increased the backlog.

2.2 The total number of 'applications' unresolved in 2003 was approximately 300. Over the last 5 years 121 cases have been resolved either by making an Order or by rejecting the application. However 63 new applications have been made during this time, with the result that there are 174 applications currently outstanding, of which 45 are in progress. A substantial backlog therefore remains.

2.4 Whilst the Definitive Map Team has many other additional day to day duties, the main focus has certainly been to reduce the backlog of DMMO applications.

2.5 This has resulted in limited scope for the Team to contribute towards the improvement of the network in response to demands and aspirations of our customers, the ROWIP, the Countryside Strategy, the Local Transport Plan (LTP etc).

3.0 REQUIREMENT FOR CHANGE

3.1 In response to the County Council's Transformation Agenda we are required to investigate new ways of working, to achieve the streamlining and development of our service.

3.2 We have examined the work that we currently undertake in the light of the various strategies in already in place, particularly the ROWIP, and have

identified that we are failing to have a proactive effect on the Public Rights of Way network, and are failing to make any substantial impact on the implementation of the adopted strategies.

3.3 The work that is currently undertaken by the Team constitutes:-

- Investigate and process DMMO applications.
- Produce Omnibus Orders.
- Produce new Definitive Maps.
- Process Diversion applications received from landowners.
- Process a limited number of Creation Agreements.
- Keep an up to date record of the Section 31(6) submissions, and provision of database on website.
- Provide information relating to the DM, internally and externally.
- Resolve DM issues such that the network on the ground can be maintained correctly.
- Prepare monthly walk for NY Times.
- Maintain involvement in Service publicity programme.
- Land charge searches, and other searches.
- Respond to planning applications.

4.0 PROPOSED CHANGES

4.1 The proposed changes are intended to move the focus of the Team's work to concentrate on responding to the public's aspirations for the PROW network particularly as evidenced by the public consultation undertaken for the preparation of the ROWIP. The consultation indicated a clear wish for circular routes, routes which remove people from roads, routes which better link communities together and routes which link to attractive areas.

4.2 Many very good suggestions have been made to us in previous years for substantial lengths of routes to be added to the DM, linking existing PROW and integrating with other means of access, such as permissive routes and other highways. Sadly we have been unable to satisfactorily embrace these schemes due to our rather restrained responsibilities. These are exactly the type of proposals that we feel would make a substantial positive improvement to the network.

4.3 This will not mean the abandonment of the DMMO applications, which would not be possible as we are statutorily obliged to process DMMO applications but it would mean a thorough re-assessment and prioritisation of the applications. Whilst it is appreciated that routes may be very important to the applicant, few routes applied for actually provide a great benefit to the network.

4.4 The proposed work for the Team would be in addition to the existing work, but would move the focus of the work towards projects that would have a more proactive effect on the network, and would include:-

- Work with users groups', parish councils etc to see if the network can be improved in their areas-Community Paths Initiative work achieved significant practical improvement to parish network.
- Implement sections of RoWIP that relate to the Definitive Map
- Map the former excluded area of Scarborough.
- Continuing of the production of new Definitive Maps, ensuring that the existing network is recorded accurately or can be used.
- Work with adjoining authorities to look at cross-boundary routes/access.
- Resolve anomalies-ensuring that routes correspond with the routes on the ground.
- Record footways not adjacent to carriageways onto the Definitive Map.
- Liaise with OS map to ensure their maps are up to date as possible.
- Investigate the possibility of converting permissive routes into permanent PROW via Creation Agreements.
- Investigate the possibility of dedicating PROW on NYCC owned land-where increased public access would be advantageous.
- Identify improvements that can be made to the network on an area basis.
- Address dual status routes in line with national guidelines.
- Ensure/improve access to Open Access Land where necessary.
- Produce walk books containing NY Times walks, walk leaflets.
- Promote and publicise the work undertaken by the Definitive Map Team.
- Work with maintenance staff to make definitive map improvements to the network.

4.5 As an example, the Countryside Service is currently involved in the early stages of the Vale of Pickering Landscape Partnership whose key drivers are Natural England, the Environment Agency, NYCC, English Heritage and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Their main aims are to develop a 'whole landscape' approach to safe guard landscape, including water management, improving biodiversity, safeguarding historic resources, promoting sustainable agriculture and also to engage local communities. Their overall vision is to re-connect people with the river and its landscape'. There are huge possibilities for promoting and improving access under this project, and similar projects that are proposed for the future.

4.6 Keeping to our current working practices would have seriously limited our ability to engage with this important project that the Countryside Service is so closely involved with. Under the new practices we have looked at the DMMO applications, and anomalies on the DM that we have in this area, and in conjunction our colleagues in the Heritage Section are identifying the 'hot spots' within the project area where we can look to improve or possibly create new PROW to work towards linking people to their landscape.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The new working practices will focus more on improving and increasing the network, achieving a more positive impact on the access in the countryside, in closer response to our customers' aspirations. Existing work will

continue to be undertaken, but will be prioritised to integrate more strategically with other community requirements.

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