

NEW WORKING PRACTICES

The Transformation Agenda sets the challenge to critically review the way in which we use technology, accommodation and how we deliver services to the public. To ensure that the work of the Definitive Map Team becomes integrated with the challenge to deliver change and improvement it is important that we commence a review of our present working practices.

The DMT has gone through a long period of relative continuity during which our established working practices have remained largely unchanged since 2003, when the DMMO policy was accepted by Members. The result of this is that the DMT concentrates predominately on DMMO applications. This has caused strategic drift as our working practices fail to achieve our mission statement of **“to keep and maintain an accurate and up to date Definitive Map and Statement of public rights of way”** and achieve any significant performance strategies or provide a suitable customer service. The current way of working provides very little scope to enable other areas of definitive map work to be looked at by officers: working practices are rigid and non-movable resulting in the inability to respond for example to improvement requests from the public (see RoWIP).

A commitment to undertake a review can provide the catalyst to become a pro-active service maximising best use of resources to perform at the highest standard.

A New Approach

Accepting the challenge of implementing the Transformation Agenda requires focus towards the investigation of new ways of working and the streamlining and development of our service. The DMT needs a new strategic and pro-active approach which will enable us to become more flexible, more able to complement and work to the NYCC corporate objectives, the Directorate objectives and the Countryside Service mission statement **“to help build, support and sustain balanced community, environment and economy within North Yorkshire”**. In order to achieve this there must be a shift in primary focus away from DMMO applications work. The DMT mission statement, see above, actually involves a varied compilation of work. A wide range of inclusive definitive map work is identified and listed under ‘Works not undertaken’. Analysis of the current position (using the 4 C’s-challenge, consultation, comparison and competition) and with the help and support of admin services we can incorporate more focussed and strategic activities to compliment the corporate objectives of NYCC.

Vision

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To aspire to be a 'Beacon' authority for Definitive Map work and through innovative methods of working to maximise the outputs of the Definitive Map Team to progress positively towards achieving an up to date Definitive Map and Statement for the county of North Yorkshire'.

Strategic Aims

In the first instance a commitment to undertake a critical review of current working methods and practices of the Definitive Map Team we can assess the extent of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Definitive Map Team in contributing towards the overall objectives of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The following questions are posed:

1. **Should the DMT concentrate/focus on one area of activity or should it have many.**
2. **What is our vision/aim to work towards? e.g. accurately recorded network, resolve DMMO backlog.**
3. **What work/projects are important to the majority of our customers.**
4. **What are our capabilities? Are we capable of doing/achieving the work deemed as 'aspiration tasks'? Are relevant skills/resources in place?**
5. **Are procedures/practices in place to begin working on aspiration tasks?**
6. **How can we provide a better value service for the customer?**
7. **How can we measure performance? What targets can be set by new working practices?**
8. **How do we prioritise existing and aspiration tasks that meaningfully contributes towards NYCC objectives?**
9. **How can we link what we are doing to the Corporate Strategy, the Directorate Strategy and the Service Strategy, etc?**
10. **Can we generate any money? Can we attract external funding? Both would improve the profile of PROW.**
11. **Are there other comparable authorities we can look at for better working practices?**

Furthermore there is the opportunity to be able to identify specific areas for improvement ensuring that the aims of the Definitive Map team are compatible, wherever possible (subject to present legislation) and work in conjunction with strategic aims of the Countryside Service, BES Directorate and Corporate aims of the County Council.

Through the means of critical assessment we seek to improve and increase

our contribution seeking to gain maximum benefit for users wishing to access the public rights of way network.

Aim

The primary aim is to draw focus and direction from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Plan provides the framework to enable the structured prioritisation of all elements of Public Rights of Way work inclusive of Definitive Map work to achieve maximum benefits to the network as a whole. The present working practice isolates and limits significantly the contribution of the DMT to the network and objectives of NYCC.

Background

The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal document which records the rights of the public to access the local landscape (over 10,000 km of rights of way). The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (NPACA 49) placed specific duties upon all county councils. Firstly, county council's had to survey and map all public rights of way in their area and then to ensure that the Definitive Map and Statement is continuously kept up to date. The definitive map and statement can be amended through a variety of legal orders, for example Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO), Creation, Extinguishment and Diversion Orders (Diversion, Creation and Extinguishment orders are processed by the Definitive Map Team as and when required). The definitive map is then subject of an Omnibus Order to change the particulars contained therein. This exercise has been completed for the Districts of Craven, Hambleton and Richmondshire. The district of Harrogate remains part complete and the districts of Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby are yet to commence.

The focus of the Definitive Map Team has been for many years to reduce the backlog of DMMO applications. The authority has experienced a backlog of DMMO applications since the mid 1980s' as a result of openly inviting applications. The total number of applications received had at one stage exceeded 300 plus. At present there are approximately 180 (this is a fairly constant number, and has been for the past ???, reflecting applications received and those which have been resolved) DMMO applications (a culmination of both old applications (the oldest of the applications dates to 1973 relating to a number of applications within Ripon) and relatively recent applications) that require determination by the authority to either proceed with the application or to reject. If a Highway Authority does not determine an application within 12 months of receipt the applicant can appeal to the Secretary of State who then may or may not instruct the Authority to make a decision. An estimate of 10% (of the total 180 DMMO) reflects the applications pending or sent to the Secretary of State waiting decision. It is readily acknowledged that this specific element of work and its contribution to the formal recording of existing public rights are an important part of definitive map work. There are however additional elements of definitive map work that are currently either not undertaken or on a very limited basis. For example the first two Aspiration Tasks could contribute significantly towards our mission statement.

EXISTING WORKS UNDERTAKEN BY DMT

The definitive map work currently undertaken by the team comprises of the following;

- Investigate DMMO applications.
- Produce Omnibus Orders.
- Investigate the provision of a working copy of the Definitive Map on the Website.
- East Riding map.
- Creation Agreements
- Process Section 31(6) agreements and provision of database on website.
- Provide information.
- Prepare monthly walk for NY Times.
- Maintain involvement in Service publicity programme.
- Land charge searches.
- Map work-check alignments, produce new maps etc.
- Check the alignment of currently recorded routes.

The current position of works undertaken that actually provide a real and significant contribution towards the overall benefit to the public rights of way network is limited (DMMO applications progressed on the basis of date order and which may provide little or no strategic value to the network or its users overall) due to the narrow focus and vision that presently persists. The challenge that is presented to us is to achieve and provide a network that is formally recorded and which gives purpose for all levels of capability. The latter is customer driven and has been readily identified through the public consultation of the RoWIP and addresses the wants, needs and interests for those who wish to use and do you use the present network.

To be in a position to move forward with strategic direction and purpose thus ensuring that resources we have at our disposal are used to the best possible effectiveness and efficiency it is vital that we integrate with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The plan provides the basis by which means we can expand our focus and pro-active management to integrate further with the corporate aims of the County Council.

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (RoWIP)

In 2007 the RoWIP was completed. The RoWIP is a statutory document which considers how to manage and enhance the rights of way network in the county for the next 5 years. At the present time the DMT has not considered the strategic changes and improvements highlighted in this plan.

The function and scope of Rights of Way Improvement Plans is the “prime means by which a local highway authority will identify changes to be made to the management and improvement of the local rights of way network to meet the Government aims of better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility problems.” It is felt that “improved management of the

network and the creation of some carefully chosen routes would make a significant difference.” The results of the RoWIP were concluded following extensive public consultation. Therefore the RoWIP provides an insight to the network that the customer requires, therefore leading to better customer focus and community engagement.

The RoWIP identified nine overall objectives;

1. To improve the accessibility of goods, services and recreational opportunities.
2. To improve and promote the use of the network for people with a range of expectations, interests and abilities.
3. To maintain rights of way in a manner that reflects current and future demand.
4. To maintain and maximise the significant benefit the rights of way network provides to the local and regional economy.
5. To develop rights of way to meet current and future demand.
6. To sustainably manage and promote the rights of way network and maximise its contribution to a more sustainable environment.
7. To encourage the use of rights of way to promote health and well-being as part of an active lifestyle.
8. To improve the safety of non-motorised users both on highways shared with motor vehicles and on the rights of way network.
9. To promote the partnership at all levels in delivering this plan.

These nine objectives sit under an overall vision of ‘continually improving sustainable access for all’. The plan touches all areas of our lives including health, economy, culture, tourism and many other spheres.

The Rights of Way improvement will be progressively integrated with LTPs (and the Governments shared priorities for LTPs) and therefore will;

- Provide an assessment of the extent that local rights of way meet current and likely future public need.
- Assess opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment.
- Assess the accessibility of local rights of way to people who are blind or partially sighted and others with mobility problems.
- Contribute to the Governments shared priorities for Local Transport Plans of reducing congestion; improving air quality; enhancing accessibility and improving safety.

The Plan provides the framework through objectives and actions by which annual work programmes can be more clearly defined. To date there has been no integration or review.

WORK NOT UNDERTAKEN/ASPIRTION TASKS

The following are a range of examples of Definitive Map work currently not undertaken but would contribute significantly towards the overall duty of the Authority to produce an up to date Definitive Map.

- Map excluded areas such as Scarborough and Harrogate.
- Record non highway footways on to the Definitive Map.
- Work with maintenance staff to make definitive map improvements to the network.
- 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.
- Work with adjoining authorities to look at cross-boundary routes/access.
- Resolve anomalies-ensuring that routes recorded on the map are usable.
- Production of remaining Definitive Maps-ensure that the existing network is recorded accurately or can be used.
- Align the OS map with the Definitive Map.
- Formally record permissive routes-through possible creation agreements to record routes for prosperity.
- Dedicate public rights of way on NYCC owned land-identify council land where increased public access would be advantageous.
- Identify and improve the network on an area basis-be proactive.
- Implement sections of RoWIP that relate to the Definitive Map
- Address dual status routes.
- Finalise the digitisation of the definitive map.
- Implement definitive map parts of RoWIP.
- Sort dual status routes.
- Ensure/improve access to Open Access Land-expand areas of partnership work.
- Produce walk books containing NY Times walks, walk leaflets.
- Promotion of Definitive Map work.
- Work to increase access to Heritage and Economic (honey-pot) sites-countryside strategy (green mapping).

LINKING DEFINITIVE MAP WORK TO EXISTING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is to merge with the Local Transport Plan by 2011. The work of the DMT can play a part and contribute towards an integrated transport network.

The LTP was developed in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy which identified 28 service centres in North Yorkshire. The same service centre approach was adopted in the development of the Improvement Plan. A logical step would be to prioritise the work of the DMT to compliment the existing service centres approach.

The RoWIP further divided North Yorkshire into landscape areas. The relationship between people, landscape and travel/transport has always been inextricably linked and so the availability of rights of way was considered to be broadly similar within each landscape character area. The public consultation results 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.

It would appear a logical step to identify and integrate, where possible, the work of the Definitive Map Team to compliment the existing working practice of the LTP. In so doing there is the opportunity to work in a beneficial partnership with our colleagues in Highways and Transportation. Thus contributing towards the achievement of the Government's four shared transport priorities; reducing congestion, improving air quality/environment, enhancing accessibility and safety.

The LTP is one of a number of strategies in place which are able to provide direction and purpose for the DMT. The Development and Countryside Services, Service Performance Plan 2008/2009 refers to North Yorkshire County Council Policy Framework. The NYCC Policy framework includes for example the NYCC Council Plan (2008-2012), Local Area Agreement 2 (2008), Sustainable Community Strategy/NYSP (2008) and the Cultural Strategy (2005).

BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC APPROACH

The four-stage model of strategic decision making (Analyse, Evaluate, Change and Review) offers a structure which identifies and enables for the most effective and efficient use of existing resources (human, physical and financial) in the short, medium and long term.

The benefits of a strategic approach are the provision of a framework through which large tasks (bounded and unbounded) can be broken down into manageable components. A county the size of North Yorkshire presents an unenviable task for the DMT to keep the Definitive Map and Statement up to date. Through the use of a strategic approach there is the opportunity to re-evaluate the current position to allow for the integration of the RoWIP. In so doing this would maximise the potential of the Plan to accommodate the needs and wishes of users and potential users of the proW network.

SYNOPSIS

The authority has an overall duty to keep the Definitive Map and Statement up to date. The processing of DMMO applications is only one element of this work. Staff time and effort has been focused primarily towards the processing of DMMO applications. In so doing it is possible that by giving greater emphasis to the processing of DMMO applications to the detriment of other

contributing aspects which when combined could have enabled the contribution of the DMT to have been far greater and more positive than is the present position. Thereby the challenge is presented to staff to always be aware of the wider issues that the County Council wishes to engage with.

Our present way of working provides very little vision, inspiration and direction, utilisation of the management techniques that are available it is possible to identify both strengths and weaknesses to enable positive improvements to be made.

A commitment to undertake a review can create the opportunity to facilitate the promotion of all elements related to and that have a direct impact on the requirement to keep the Definitive Map and Statement up to date and provide the catalyst to become a pro-active service.