

N.Y.C. C. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE WIDER ACCESS WORKING GROUP

THURSDAY 22ND JANUARY 2009

Present:

Alan Aspden, Paul Chapman, Rachel Connolly, David Gibson, Tony Martin, Stephen Ramsden, David Shaftoe, David Swabey, John Taylor, Tony Turner
Aidan Rayner (NYCC) also in attendance

In the absence of Paul Tibbetts, David Gibson chaired the meeting and in the initial absence of Paul Chapman, Rachel Connolly took notes.

The meeting revolved around the matter of signage. Aidan Rayner wanted a decision from the sub-group to take to the LAFs of the Dales National Park and the North York Moors for their comments. He hoped they might concur, but if there was a wide disagreement, then it would be up to him and fellow officers to follow recommendations put by this group, as the other authorities were seconded in rights of way matters.

Aidan reminded the meeting that wooden posts and fingers had been agreed for cost and aesthetics already. Larch uprights stood wet ground better than oak, and were cheaper, but routing into larch was not satisfactory, so it was decided that ruled out putting the status on the upright. It was readily agreed that the tip of the finger post should be in the appropriate colour because that colour would be that of the subsequent waymarkers. However, lengthy debate followed on whether the status be shown in pictogram form or words? Members were equally divided whether to keep things as simple as possible (pictogram and painted finger tip) or go for destination and distance and even the legal users. This would entail bridleway signs also showing pictograms of cycles and walkers.

It was agreed that barrier-reduced routes could be shown by a separate symbol added to the upright in due course, but it was expected that this sort of information would be better available on the website and in leaflets on promoted routes. Aidan Rayner advised the meeting that the question of cost should not be the determining factor but how members felt about the principle of signage. It was felt on balance that as the LAF had a duty to expand the use of rights of way particularly to those unfamiliar with them, it was logical to go for the Status plus Destination and Duration option. However, there would be many instances where the ideal was inappropriate: in some urban settings and where the destination was not obvious, depending on which linkage options were taken, and officers would have to use wide discretion.

The pros and cons of having signposts at their 'usual' height was also debated, and it was agreed that generally this was about right. Lettering should be clear enough for anyone to read easily – the current yellow words routed into wood are not. White or black should be better. There are rules about sizes of lettering, but not the content.

David Gibson then produced a questionnaire which the Dales Nat.Park had completed with additions from their LAF. It had come from Natural England and was about National Trails. The original consultation had been lengthy, but those present just had time to skim through the questionnaire, the gist of which seemed to want support from 'interested bodies' to expand and improve national trails. However, it was the feeling of the meeting that if this move was encouraged, the everyday row network might have resources taken away to be channelled into these special routes, to the detriment of a wider public. Tony Turner said he would write to this effect, complaining that our LAF had not been consulted although Natural England had asserted that all LAF's would be circulated. The closing date for comment was February 6th.

Date of the next full LAF 26th February