

NORTH YORKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

WEDNESDAY 27th JUNE 2012

NATURAL ENGLAND DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL TRAILS FROM APRIL 2013' – DRAFT RESPONSE OF THE FORUM.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out and agree the response to be made by the Local Access Forum to Natural England.

2.0 RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS WITHIN THE CONSULTATION

2.1 ***A New Deal:***

1. Do you agree that these propositions describe the right direction of travel?

We strongly disagree:

We feel that the current situation should be left well alone and works well.

Quality Standards:

2. Do you agree with the proposed approach to quality standards for National Trails?

We agree:

The list contained in The Annex reflects key commonsense criteria.

3. Do you have any comments on the proposed framework or the draft Family and Trail Standards in the Annex to this discussion paper?

We question the need for working parties to 'refresh' the categories of trails, although we recognise that some trails attract more users and have more facilities than others.

Resourcing a well maintained trail:

4. Do you agree with our proposals for how we provide the central government contribution for local delivery?

No, we disagree.

We feel that a limit of a 3-year grant is not conducive to good management or the confidence to take a longer-term approach.

5. What special factors do you think should be taken into account in determining the level of award to individual trails?

Whilst we recognise that the level of funding should differ from trail to trail, we are sceptical that funds will be allocated on current usage rather than potential of increased users, with

some areas of the country failing to get the support needed. Certainly the physical aspects of a trail should be the priority.

6. Do you agree that we should no longer specify that a proportion of any grant must be used to fund a National Trails Officer

We strongly disagree

An accountable officer, with funding ring-fenced centrally, is essential in our view because otherwise there is no guarantee a local authority would do so.

7. Are there any other issues you'd like to raise about our funding proposals? Please explain.

We cannot usefully comment as the proposed model has not yet been revealed to us.

8. Do you agree that Trail Partnerships should be responsible for local delivery?

We distrust expanded partnerships because we feel that it introduces a layer of expensive and unnecessary bureaucracy with no guarantee of efficiency or accountability. Currently, in our instance, the clear-cut partnership arrangement between local authority and central government works well.

9. How can Trail Partnerships demonstrate value for money?

Resist localism and concentrate on the core purpose. Keep it simple.

10. Do you agree that users should be involved in monitoring quality of provision and have more say in how Trails are provided?

It is right that local feedback should be reflected in maintenance and management but we do not feel additionally contrived user involvement in decision-making would improve the situation.

11. What could be done to help users get more involved in looking after National Trails?

We are in favour of encouraging volunteers to become involved in support through monitoring and upkeep.

Raising the profile of National Trails:

12. Do you think we could improve the way that the family of National Trails is promoted?

No.

- 2.3 In conclusion we think it is not appropriate to apply localism to projects that are national?

The strength of 'the brand' is essentially that these trails are National, are accountable nationally, and should remain that way

**The North Yorkshire Local Access Forum
June 2012**