

## NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013

### ACCESS TO OPEN ACCESS LAND

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on issues concerning the accessibility of Open Access land within the County.

#### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000), significant areas of Open Access land were created in North Yorkshire as a result of a mapping exercise undertaken by Natural England.
- 2.2 The mapping exercise primarily focussed on the type and usage of land being considered rather than creating a fully coherent network of land, resulting in some inaccessible and hard to access areas of Open Access Land being created.
- 2.3 The area of 'land-locked' Open Access land is relatively small at around 1.5 Ha whilst land difficult to access covers a much larger area. A study by the Ramblers has recently identified 11 areas of access land which could be improved in accessibility terms.

#### 3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Open Access Land does not represent a Statutory element of the work of the Public Rights of Way team and as such is not a priority in the team's workload.
- 3.2 A request has been received via the Local Access Forum to investigate the accessibility of access land in the county.
- 3.3 Whilst Open Access Land is not a general priority, there are areas which, through their interaction with the rights of way and unsurfaced unclassified road networks, contribute to existing priorities and could provide a useful contribution to Health & Wellbeing and Economic agendas.
- 3.4 It is proposed that a small project is undertaken to focus on access to Open Access land where maintenance and small improvements

to the existing highway network and creation of short sections of new route through agreement with landowners can help realise the full potential of Open Access Land. It is anticipated that any costs for small sections of new route would be the subject of a bid to Natural England's 'Paths for communities' fund.

- 3.5 Any creation of additional route length will be achieved through agreement rather than imposition.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 A small work programme will be undertaken in 2013/14 to assess the feasibility and take forward access improvements to priority areas of Open Access Land.
- 7.2 The work will complement and help to achieve priority maintenance objectives as well as deliver health and rural economy benefits with the aim of utilising external funding for any costs over and above statutory maintenance.

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APPENDIX 1

Public Rights of Way Maintenance Team

