

NORTH YORKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

12TH FEBRUARY 2013

USE OF VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGEMENT &
MAINTENANCE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the level and nature of use of volunteers in the management and maintenance of the Public Rights of Way network

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the creation of Waste & Countryside Services, the function of management of Countryside Volunteers was transferred to the Development and Outreach Team, bringing together voluntary activity across both waste and countryside

2.2 The Countryside Volunteers are managed by Sheila Laking, Volunteer Co –Ordinator working closely with the seven Area Rangers

2.3 There are currently 85 registered volunteers with an interest in public rights of way work, supplemented by a number of external groups not directly registered as Countryside Volunteers

3.0 ACTIVITY

3.1 Activities undertaken by volunteers break down into two broad categories; Practical tasks and non - practical tasks

3.2 Practical tasks focus on the direct maintenance of the network encompassing a broad range of activity from waymarking of paths to construction of stiles and kissing gates

3.3 Historically practical tasks have been carried out under the direct supervision of a ranger in order to fulfil the key roles of landowner liaison, health & safety management and safe transportation of materials and equipment to site

- 3.4 Non practical tasks cover the surveying of the network in relation to Ploughing & Cropping checks, Bridge condition, General route condition and also assistance with back office functions such as data handling within the Countryside Access management system
- 3.5 Non practical tasks are usually carried out with no direct on site supervision allowing large areas and programmes of work to be undertaken without the same requirement for officer time to support this

4.0 ACHIEVEMENTS 2013/14

- 4.1 The current year has so far seen 22 Countryside Volunteers and several external groups carrying out work in support of public rights of way
- 4.2 147 practical tasks have been carried out and 350 volunteer days contributed
- 4.3 This allowed for a number of key initiatives, amongst a wide array of local improvements, to be completed. A number of these simply could not have been undertaken without the assistance of volunteers:
 - Surveying of over 300 paths to check for compliance with ploughing and cropping responsibilities
 - Condition Survey of 100 Unsurfaced Unclassified roads
 - Provision of easily accessible gates in place of stiles on numerous heavily used community paths
 - Clearance of seasonal undergrowth
 - Monitoring of Dead man's Hill UUR
 - Data cleansing undertaken on Management database (CAMS)

5.0 DEVELOPING CAPACITY

- 5.1 We have recognised that there is possibility to expand the contribution of volunteers and local communities – a limitation particularly on the practical side, has been the officer time available to undertake landowner liaison and supervision. This is particularly important in light of the unprecedented budget cuts the County Council is facing

- 5.2 A model is being developed to utilise volunteer task leaders to work with the Volunteer Co-Ordinator and Areas Rangers in expanding support to volunteers and therefore their potential
 - 5.3 The task leader role will be an unpaid voluntary role and will assist in the setting up and delivery of practical tasks on site. Training will be provided to the task leaders to ensure that they have all the practical and health & safety skills required to responsibly supervise volunteers
 - 5.4 The task leader roles are currently being advertised with a view to rolling out the initiative as soon as possible
- 6.0 CONCLUSIONS
- 6.1 Extensive use is made of volunteers, whose valuable contribution enhances the service we are able to deliver
 - 6.2 An initiative is underway to expand the involvement of volunteers and community groups

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