

North Yorkshire**Local Access Forum****2 March 2017****Public Rights of Way Consultation****Report of the Secretary****1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To advise members of the current consultation and to invite the Forum to consider whether it wishes to formally respond to the consultation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Countryside Access Service is currently carrying out a public consultation exercise on its proposals for the future management of the public rights of way network.
- 2.2 The LAF has already commented on the proposals at an earlier stage, following a report to the Forum on the Countryside Access Service review in February 2016. The Forum's comments from this time are attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 At the last meeting of the LAF, Ian Kelly, Countryside Access Manager, reported on progress with the review and indicated that the service would soon be moving to a public consultation on their proposals.
- 2.4 The public consultation is live on the website at <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/33471/Public-rights-of-way-consultation>. All Parish Councils have also been directly notified and invited to respond. Ian Kelly will be attending this meeting to answer members' questions about the consultation. A copy of the consultation page from the website, the consultation document and the response form are attached as Appendix 2.

3.0 Responding to the consultation

- 3.1 The closing date for the public consultation is Sunday 19 March 2017.
- 3.2 It is suggested that the Secretary co-ordinates a draft summary of the Forum's views based on the discussion at the meeting. The draft response will then be circulated by email for members' comments prior to formal submission on behalf of the Forum by the given deadline.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Local Access Forum considers the content of any response it wishes to submit to the Public Rights of Way consultation.
- 4.2 That the Secretary co-ordinates a draft formal response to the consultation, and circulates it by email for members' comments prior to submission on behalf of the Forum.

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Background Documents: None

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

North Yorkshire County Council - Countryside Access Service Review

Comments of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

On 4 February 2016, the Local Access Forum considered a report of the Assistant Director – Waste and Countryside Services, inviting them to comment and advise on a draft proposed policy statement; proposals relating to route prioritisation and the proposed approach to issue prioritisation.

Members of the Forum considered and debated the matters raised in the report, focusing particularly on the questions raised in paragraphs 4.3, 5.9, 5.18 and 6.5.

The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- Members generally welcomed the consultation and the opportunity to contribute
- There was a range of views amongst Forum members as to whether the current prioritisation system did or did not work well
- Members expressed concern regarding the potential for ‘urbanisation’, although they also acknowledged that it could be the case that this reflected the reality of levels of path usage. Officers acknowledged the concern and clarified that this had not been intentional, but was a concern that they would take into consideration in further work on the model.
- The positive role of the 3 Local Liaison Groups was highlighted
- Whilst members recognised the need for a clear prioritisation framework, they welcomed confirmation that the proposals would be applied with a degree of flexibility by officers exercising their professional judgement in the light of individual circumstances.
- Members asked about the definition of a ‘link’ as the unit for assessing each section of path. Members were concerned about the potential for different ‘links’ within the same path to be assigned different levels of priority
- Concern about the work required to actually develop and implement the new model, rather than focusing on resolving issues, and whether the staff input required would be justified by the results. This concern was acknowledged, but officers also restated their view that effort put into prioritising the network now would bring a range of benefits, for example greater clarity for all and easier work programming.
- Clarification was provided at a general level over the implications for maintenance work once priorities have been assigned
- A general agreement that members of the LAF had confidence in the exercise of professional judgement by officers in assessing the priority of routes.
- Confirmation that officers would also be expected to make pragmatic decisions when commissioning work to be undertaken, to include appropriate lower priority work in the vicinity.
- Ian Kelly confirmed that it was intended to review the system after about 12-18 months of operation.

- With specific reference to the proposed draft policy statement, the following comments were made:
 - A suggestion that reference should be made to the importance of public awareness of the opportunities available and the obligation to use the network responsibly

- The suggested addition of a commitment from the service to respond to issues raised
- A request to replace the word “cattle” in vi with “livestock”
- A request to add specific reference to landowners/land managers in x
- A request for an alternative wording to “a timely way” in point xi, particularly in light of the 2026 deadline

Officers confirmed that the various points in the draft policy statement were not in any order of priority

- With specific reference to the Route characteristic element, the following comments were made:
 - A suggestion that proximity to facilities such as stables and livery yards should be included in the proposed path characteristic scores
 - A suggestion that connectivity between centres of population should be recognised as a criteria
 - A request to ensure that long distance walks are recognised
 - A proposal that the Path characteristic “Other routes” listed in Table 3 should be defined as “all routes that don’t have any of the above characteristics”

- With specific reference to the proposals in relation to the Community Value element, the following comments were made:
 - Some members were concerned that many Parish Councils may not be either willing or able to contribute to the proposed modelling of community value. There was therefore some reservation about the proposal in paragraph 5.12 of the report. Equally other members highly valued the role of Parish Councils and expressed confidence in their role in representing their local community.
 - That some routes may be little used or valued by local people, but have a high importance to users who came from further afield. For example a long distance trail might pass through a Parish which did not participate in the community value exercise. Officers acknowledged this and also reminded the Forum that, even if implemented, the community value element would comprise a maximum of 5 points, compared with 10 points associated with route characteristics.
 - It was also confirmed by officers that about 60% of feedback on the condition of routes currently came from individual members of the public rather than groups, and any model would need to take account of this.

With specific reference to the proposals on issue prioritisation, the following comments were made:

- That it was important to test the scores for unintended consequences – for example to ensure that a problem causing significant inconvenience but that was not classified as a high risk on a high profile route would still be addressed. Officers confirmed that some modelling had already taken place and that this would continue as the proposals are developed further.
- Some members felt that there may be an over emphasis on risk compared to obstruction in the balance of the three elements of the issue prioritisation model



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Public rights of way consultation

We are consulting on a proposal to change the way we prioritise management and maintenance of public rights of way within North Yorkshire, excluding those managed on our behalf by The North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

Public rights of way are footpaths, bridleways and other routes that everyone can use without needing permission from landowners.

At over 6,000 km, our public rights of way network is one of the longest in the country. One of our key objectives is to make sure this important asset is safe and usable for both residents and visitors. [A detailed map and other information about the public rights of way network in North Yorkshire can be found here.](#)

In an average year, customers will report 3,000 defects, such as a broken stile or a fallen tree. Maintenance of the network is arranged by a small team of officers with support from landowners, contractors and a dedicated group of countryside volunteers.

We have had to reduce our spending by around 35 per cent over recent years and this has affected all council services, including public rights of way. As a consequence we are now looking at ways to continue managing the public rights of way network with less money.

Network categorisation

The purpose of this consultation is to ask people for their views on a new approach to categorising the public rights of way network. Doing so will allow us to focus routine maintenance in areas where paths are agreed as being more important or better used. The category of a route will also help us to plan how we respond to defects that we find or are reported to us.

We will manage the network based on sections of the paths or 'links'. We will then assign a route category as follows.

- Each link will have a score for the key characteristic of the path. Example characteristics are safe routes to schools and paths in areas of outstanding natural beauty.
- Each link will also have a score based on an assessment of the value placed on the link by the local community.
- We will categorise each link based on the combination of characteristic and community value scores.
- We will map the category banding of all routes and publish this on our website.

We have taken this approach because we think that:








1. It is a transparent approach to assessing the entire network; and
2. The inclusion of community value will help focus attention and resource onto parts of the network that will provide greatest benefit and value to local communities.

Measuring the value that different communities place on different routes is intended to make sure that we focus resources and effort onto paths that benefit users and local communities the most. However, it is difficult to define and measure community value, so we intend to implement our approach initially based on path characteristics alone. An important part of this consultation is to gather views over how best to measure community value in future.

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Consultation documents

-  Consultation proposals [450kb] 
-  Table of proposed path characteristics and scores [74kb] 
-  Questions and answers [161kb] 
- [Map](#) 

Give us your views

This consultation asks whether respondents agree with this approach in principle.

Please help us to shape our proposals by taking part in the consultation:

[Give us your views](#) 

We will publish a summary of the results of the consultation and share this with councillors to help them agree on how we should progress.

Deadline for comments

The closing date for this consultation is Sunday 19 March 2017.

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A new approach to categorising the public rights of way network

January 2017

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Introduction

This paper sets out more detail on three proposals to govern how the countryside access service will undertake its work. This includes:

- a statement of service delivery principles;
- categorising the public rights of way (PROW) network; and
- prioritising the response to reported network defects.

These proposals have been developed taking account of discussion with and comments from the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum (NYLAF), and internal consultation with the Council's public rights of way and definitive map team members.

The statement of service delivery principles will provide a framework to govern the work of the public rights of way team. The consultation asks whether respondents are satisfied with the statement.

The proposed approach to network categorisation is new. We now want to consult the public about their views on how we can put in place a transparent categorisation of all the sections of path across the network.

The approach to how the service prioritises issues and defects reported to it has not changed. Therefore we do not intend to consult formally on this element. However the detail is provided in this document to ensure that respondents have a full picture of the models.

Proposed statement of service delivery principles

Asserting and protecting public rights of way on behalf of the public

The County Council has a duty to assert and protect public rights over the public rights of way (PROW) network. This duty includes an obligation to ensure the network is safe to use and free from obstruction. In order to fulfil this duty the County Council will ensure:

- Surfaces and items of infrastructure (e.g. stiles, gates and bridges) on the PROW network are appropriate and safe to use.
- Maintenance works on the PROW network are carried out so as to ensure provision at least equivalent to historic levels, with improvements made where resources allow, having regard to expected use, community value and significance of individual routes.
- Maintenance and improvement works are carried out within available resources and according to a published method of prioritisation.
- Access to the network from metalled roads is clearly signed.
- Provision of other signs including waymarks along the length of public rights of way is adequate and fit for purpose in order to inform and protect users and safeguard adjacent property and land.
- Landowners understand their responsibilities in relation to the PROW network where applicable, including those relating to maintenance of infrastructure and furniture, control of vegetation, control of livestock, reinstatement of surfaces and removal of obstructions.
- Appropriate enforcement action is taken where it is in the public interest to do so, to remove unlawful obstructions and reinstate obstructed routes.
- It is always responsive, open, honest and fair in its dealings with users, land owners and other stakeholders in relation to public rights of way.
- It collaborates and works closely with stakeholders, Parish Councils, user groups, volunteers and other interested bodies and individuals to share skills and resources and maximise the potential to maintain and improve the PROW network.
- It encourages users to use the network responsibly.
- It supports an effective Local Access Forum and appropriate liaison groups in order to facilitate strategic advice and good working relationships between users, landowners and the Council.
- It processes applications to record, divert or modify rights of way (through Definitive Map Modification Orders or Public Path Orders) in a timely way and will regularly communicate with applicants to keep them informed of progress.

Our activity will be carried out in accordance with legislative requirements; the Council's published guidance and resources available.

Route categorisation, issue prioritisation

North Yorkshire's public rights of way network is one of the longest in the country at over 10,000km. The two National Parks maintain that part of the network within their boundaries on behalf of North Yorkshire County Council. However outside of the two National Parks, the Council is responsible for approximately 6,100km of rights of way.

Highway authorities have an overriding duty under section 130 of the Highways Act 1980 to "assert and protect the rights of the public" to use public highways. This duty extends to public rights of way (e.g. footpaths and bridleways). It relates to keeping highways free of obstruction.

Further, section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on authorities to "maintain" highways that are maintainable at the public expense. That includes the majority of public rights of way. The duty to maintain extends essentially to providing that the route is reasonably capable of use safely by the traffic that ordinarily uses it.

These duties apply to any public highway whatever its status. Prioritising routes that make up the public rights of way network in North Yorkshire is seen as a way of meeting those duties in an efficient and appropriate manner with the resources available.

The aim of this proposal is to consult on and subsequently introduce a transparent categorisation of all the paths across the network. We can then use the route category to help us to prioritise defects that are reported to us.

A number of principles sit behind the recommended approach. These are that:

- Route categorisation needs to be meaningful and produce outcomes that distinguish effectively between routes – inevitably with some routes being seen to be lower priority than others.
- The desire to recognise the level of use of different types of paths as a key element of route categorisation. Paths which get the most use should be a priority, although we need to recognise that some routes will be less well used simply because they have not been well maintained or are blocked.
- With the above in mind there is a need to recognise how communities value their paths within the route categorisation. We want to work with parishes and user groups to understand which routes are most valuable to the different types of customer.

It is intended that the new model, once agreed, will present a realistic spread of high, medium and low category paths.

Why is route categorisation important?

Categorising the network will have three practical impacts:

- Over time, proactive maintenance will be focused onto higher category paths. For example the new route categories will influence the paths selected for inclusion in the seasonal strimming programme.

- The category of a route will be a factor in how we prioritise the reactive maintenance of defects that we find or that are reported to us.
- We will take a different operational approach to dealing with different category paths within the detailed work procedures. For example we may decide to make a larger financial contribution to the maintenance of furniture (a landowner responsibility) on higher category paths.

Overview of the proposed approach to route categorisation

The aim is to assign and then publish a route category for every section of path across the network. After consideration of a range of options, we are proposing a model with the following key elements:

- We will manage the network based on sections of the path or 'links'.
- Each link will be assigned a **characteristic** score – a points score between four and ten based on the key characteristics of the link.
- Each link will be assigned a **community value** score – a points score between one and five based on an assessment of the comparative value placed on the link by the local community.
- Each link will therefore attract a score between five and 15 points. The characteristic score will have more weight than the community value score.
- We will assign a category banding to each link based on the combined score.
- The category banding of all routes will be mapped and published on the County Council website.
- The category banding will be assigned based on the distribution of scores once all links have been scored, and on the capacity level within the service.

This approach has been proposed because we think that:

- it is a transparent approach to assessing the entire network; and
- the inclusion of community value in the model will focus attention and resource onto parts of the network that will provide greatest benefit and value to local communities.

Detailed route categorisation proposals: characteristics

Table 1 shows the proposed characteristic scores. It illustrates the type of characteristic that we consider important, how that characteristic is to be defined, and the score linked to each defining characteristic.

Many paths and sections of route are multi-faceted in nature and could fall into more than one of the defining characteristics set out below. It would be possible to give a multi-faceted section or path points for each of its characteristics. However this would make the model much more complex. Therefore we are proposing a 'key characteristic' model that will assign one score to each path based on its highest scoring characteristic. The characteristics chosen have the advantage of being factually objective and can all be mapped using currently available datasets.

Table 1: Proposed path characteristics and scores

Path characteristic		Length of paths with this characteristic (km)	Proposed characteristic score	% of network in each proposed category (Cat)
National trail	As defined by Natural England	88	10	Cat A 15.1%
National cycle network	As defined by Sustrans	260	10	
Safe routes to schools (SRTS)	Rights of way that coincide with the SRTS network. Only included within 3km of secondary schools and 2km of primary schools. Usually surfaced routes providing alternative direct pedestrian / cycle route from population centres to schools avoiding busy roads or roads without a footway. Just that section of the route defined as a SRTS scores ten.	412	10	
Routes within urban areas	Routes mostly within a development limit of service centres or large villages. The whole length of the route scores ten.	162	10	
NYCC promoted routes	A number of routes promoted by NYCC. This list will be subject to review over time.	610	8	Cat B 21.4%
Multi-user trails	Largely barrier free, surfaced strategic routes that can be used by walkers but which are also good for cyclists and horse riders, either linking communities or over 5km in length. For example Nidderdale Greenway.	65	8	
Routes within 1km of urban fringe	Routes that lie within 1km of the development limit of service centres/large villages. The whole route scores eight.	633	8	
Routes within 1km of village centres	Paths that lie within a radius of 1km from a village centre. The whole length of the route scores six.	2,212	6	Cat C 45.9%
Routes within AONBs	As defined by Natural England.	412	6	
Routes along main rivers and canals	As defined by the Environment Agency.	74	6	
Routes avoiding A and B class roads	Routes within 50m of an A or B class road that run parallel and offer an alternative route.	4	6	
Routes onto access land	As defined by Natural England.	103	6	
Other routes	Routes that don't have any of the other characteristics.	1,077	4	Cat D 17.6%
Totals:		6,112		100%

Measuring community value

While the aim to measure how communities value their public rights of way is an important part of the proposal, it is difficult to gauge the value that different communities place on different types of footpath. The challenges we face in relation to this are:

- a need to define the terms community and community value;
- a lack of information relating to how communities (however defined) value the different elements of the PROW network; and
- no method to measure community value.

The proposal is to initially implement route categorisation based on the characteristic score alone, and then to introduce a measure of community value into the model at a later date.

Therefore an important part of this consultation is to gather views from the public and from interested parties over how best to measure community value.

Initial suggested approach

The initial suggested approach is to recognise a primary and secondary idea of community.

The primary community would be those people living within each parish. We would expect to deal with the Parish Council as the representative of the primary community.

We will define the secondary community as other network users who benefit from and have an interest in the PROW network, and who will take a view on how NYCC prioritises and maintains the network. We expect that this would mean including a set of user groups who represent a range of different types of users of the network (walkers, horse-riders, cyclists, trail riders, and off-road drivers).

We propose to define the level of value by reference to a subjective assessment by the primary community (Parish Council), and by whether there is any evidence of interest in the route from one or more user groups.

Issue prioritisation

When defects or problems are reported to the public right of way team, the aim is to ensure that every defect reported is prioritised in a consistent manner. This will inform operational work programming to ensure that resources are focused onto the most important issues.

The proposal is to continue to use the current issue prioritisation model. Therefore we do not intend to consult on this element of the proposal. However it is included here for the sake of transparency and completeness.

Issues reported to the team are prioritised based on the following four factors:

- The path category score (category score).
- An effect score - the effect of the reported defect on the ability of users to use the path (effect score).
- A risk likelihood score – the likelihood of an individual injuring themselves through continuing to use the path despite there being a defect. (likelihood score).
- A risk severity score – the likely level of injury that could be incurred by an individual continuing to use the path despite there being a defect. (severity score).

Table 2 below shows the definitions for each of the four factors. The overall issue score is calculated using the following formula:

Issue score = category score + effect score + risk score (which is likelihood score x severity score)

Table 2: Issue priority scores

Category score	Effect score	Likelihood score	Severity score
Cat A path = 5	Defect likely to render path unusable = 6	Almost certain injury = 5	Possibility of death = 5
Cat B path = 3	Defect likely to render path inconvenient to use = 4	High likelihood of injury = 4	Possible major injury = 4
Cat C path = 1	Despite the defect the path remains available and easy to use, or the defect is easy to bypass = 2	Medium likelihood of injury = 3	Possible reportable injury = 3
Cat D path = 0	Defect unlikely to have any effect = 0	Small likelihood of injury = 2	Possible minor injury = 2
		Minimal likelihood of injury = 1	Difficult to see potential for any injury to occur = 1

The issue score will drive work programming. The service will look to address higher scoring issues before lower scoring issues.

As a highway authority, North Yorkshire County Council has a responsibility to ensure that the network is safe to use. Therefore we will treat any issues that attract a risk score (likelihood score x severity score) of 16 points and above as a high priority even if the total

issue score is lower than some other issues. For example a report of a collapsed bridge or a dangerous animal obstructing a Category D path would be treated as high priority.

We will also treat any issue that attracts an individual severity or likelihood score of five as a high priority even if the total issue score is lower than some other issues. This means that these issues would be picked up and pulled into work programmes quickly.

Practical examples

Tables 3 and 4 below provide an indication of how a range of issues would be ranked on different category paths.

However it is important to note that the effect, likelihood and severity scores are open to interpretation. For example if a customer reported a wire across a path that was popular with cyclists or trail-riders, then the likelihood and severity scores would be adjusted to 5x5 – higher than the score illustrated below, and the issue would need to be addressed immediately.

Table 3: Issue prioritisation scoring - examples

	Collapsed bridge	Slats missing from bridge floor, otherwise sound	Wire across path, dangerous obstruction	Intimidating animal in field, cross-field path effectively blocked	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	Damaged gate or stile. Difficult to by-pass – need to climb over	Path ploughed out, no obvious alternative	Muddy terrain	Missing signpost or waymark, navigation difficult	Alignment issue, navigation difficult	Obstruction, easily bypassed	Damaged gate or stile. Easy to by-pass
Cat A path	Cat = 5 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x5 = 20 Total = 31	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 25	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 25	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x5 = 15 Total = 24	Cat = 5 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 23	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 21	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x3 = 9 Total = 18	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x2 = 8 Total = 17	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 12	Cat = 5 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 12	Cat = 5 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 11	Cat = 5 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 11
Cat B path	Cat = 3 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x5 = 20 Total = 29	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 23*	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 23*	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x5 = 15 Total = 22**	Cat = 3 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 21	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 19	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x3 = 9 Total = 16	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x2 = 8 Total = 15	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 10	Cat = 3 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 10	Cat = 3 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 9	Cat = 3 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 9
Cat C path	Cat = 1 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x5 = 20 Total = 27	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 21*	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 21	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x5 = 15 Total = 20**	Cat = 1 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 19	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 17	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x3 = 9 Total = 14	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x2 = 8 Total = 13	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 8	Cat = 1 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 8	Cat = 1 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 7	Cat = 1 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 7
Cat D path	Cat = 0 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x5 = 20 Total = 26	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 20*	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x4 = 16 Total = 20*	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x5 = 15 Total = 19**	Cat = 0 Effect = 6 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 18	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x3 = 12 Total = 16	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x3 = 9 Total = 13	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 4x2 = 8 Total = 12	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 7	Cat = 0 Effect = 4 Risk = 3x1 = 3 Total = 7	Cat = 0 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 6	Cat = 0 Effect = 2 Risk = 4x1 = 4 Total = 6

* Treated as a higher priority due to a risk score of 16 or above.

** Treated as a higher priority due to a severity score of 5.

Table 4: Issue prioritisation scoring – issue ranking

Ranked Total Score	Issue	Path Category
31	Collapsed bridge	A
29	Collapsed bridge	B
27	Collapsed bridge	C
26	Collapsed bridge	D
25	Wire across, dangerous obstruction.	A
25	Slats missing from bridge floor, otherwise sound	A
24	Intimidating animal in field, cross-field effectively blocked	A
23	Wire across , dangerous obstruction.	B
23	Slats missing from bridge floor, otherwise sound	B
22	Intimidating animal in field, cross-field effectively blocked	B
21	Wire across, dangerous obstruction.	C
21	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	C
20	Wire across, dangerous obstruction.	D
20	Intimidating animal in field, cross-field effectively blocked	C
20	Slats missing from bridge floor, otherwise sound	D
19	Intimidating animal in field, cross-field effectively blocked	D
23	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	A
21	Damaged gate or stile. Difficult to by-pass – need to climb over	A
21	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	B
19	Damaged gate or stile. Difficult to by-pass – need to climb over	B
19	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	C
18	Ploughed out, no obvious alternative	A
18	Heavily overgrown vegetation, difficult to bypass	D
17	Muddy terrain	A
17	Damaged gate or stile. Difficult to by-pass – need to climb over	C
16	Ploughed out, no obvious alternative	B
16	Damaged gate or stile. Difficult to by-pass – need to climb over	D
15	Muddy terrain	B
14	Ploughed out, no obvious alternative	C
13	Ploughed out, no obvious alternative	D
13	Muddy terrain	C
12	Missing signpost or waymark, navigation difficult.	A
12	Alignment issue, navigation difficult	A
12	Muddy terrain	D
11	Obstruction, easily bypassed	A
11	Damaged gate or stile. Easy to by-pass	A
10	Missing signpost or waymark, navigation difficult.	B
10	Alignment issue, navigation difficult	B
9	Obstruction, easily bypassed	B
9	Damaged gate or stile. Easy to by-pass	B
8	Missing signpost or waymark, navigation difficult.	C
8	Alignment issue, navigation difficult	C
7	Missing signpost or waymark, navigation difficult.	D
7	Alignment issue, navigation difficult	D
7	Obstruction, easily bypassed	C
7	Damaged gate or stile. Easy to by-pass	C
6	Obstruction, easily bypassed	D
6	Damaged gate or stile. Easy to by-pass	D

Operational flexibility

The route categorisation and issue prioritisation models set out in these proposals will provide a guide for officers and the public over how paths will be categorised and issues prioritised.

The scoring mechanisms will provide us with significantly enhanced operational consistency.

The models will provide us with guidance based on robust analysis on what to do next in each circumstance. They will allow us to prioritise which issues are picked up and dealt with on a day to day basis. However we will continue to exercise a degree of operational flexibility. For example we will respond flexibly to take account of operational efficiencies or general public interest.

What next?

The consultation that accompanies this document asks whether respondents agree with the approach in principle. The consultation period runs until Sunday the 19th of March. A summary of the results of the consultation will be published on our website when these proposals are presented to councillors.

PROW consultation questions and answers

January 2017

Q: What are the implications of a path being categorised as high or low priority?

A:

- Proactive maintenance will be focussed on high category paths and issues will be addressed on these routes ahead of those categorised as low priority.
- The categorisation of the path will also affect how quickly issues are resolved, with an issue on a high priority route being addressed faster than the same issue on a low priority route.
- Within our detailed work processes we are likely to take a different approach to an issue depending on the category of the path. For example we are likely to make more effort to require landowners to reinstate a higher category path after ploughing or cropping including taking enforcement action. We are less likely to move to enforcement action on ploughing and cropping on a low priority path.

Q: The focus seems to be on paths near towns and villages. What about routes in rural parts of the county?

A:

- Some of the highest category paths are in deeply rural parts of the county. The aim of categorising routes is to make sure that we focus our resources onto paths that are likely to get more use regardless of whether they are in urban or rural parts of North Yorkshire.

Q: When will you start to do the community value scoring?

A:

- Depending on the outcome of this consultation we want to agree an approach to categorisation and then implement it on the basis of path characteristics by the end of spring 2017.
- If the responses to the consultation are broadly positive then we will map the network on characteristics alone, and start to use the new model to guide our work programme.
- We aim to develop detailed proposals to measure community value during the winter of 2017/18 and start to bring that measurement into place within the categorisation model in 2018.

Q: There is no point in community value scoring as all the Parish Councils and user groups will rate their paths as top priority. How will you deal with that?

A:

- Any measurement system that we develop will need to require the Parish Councils or user groups to prioritise their paths to avoid this happening.
- If some Parish Councils cannot or choose not to provide community value information then we would expect to continue to use the categorisation based on characteristics alone in that area.

Q: What are your service standards? How quickly will you fix things that are reported to you?

A:

- We're not able to set and publish service standards at this point in time but we aim to do this before the summer of 2018.
- Once the new categorisation model and new processes are implemented then we will be able to measure our capacity and understand how long it takes us to deal with different types of issues using the new processes.

Q: You have a statutory duty to keep all paths clear and usable. Does this proposal mean that some paths will not be maintained and will be lost?

A:

- Given the reductions in funding to local government, we feel that prioritising our resources is a reasonable approach to meeting our statutory duties.
- The proposed approach will see us focus resources onto the most used and valued paths although issues concerning safety will be prioritised regardless of category.

Q: Why not make use of volunteers to help you maintain the network?

A:

- We have a group of dedicated countryside volunteers who help us already and we are always keen to recruit more people.
- Within the new ways of working volunteers will help the PROW team deal with issues reported to us. This will save significant amounts of officer time and will allow us to progress issues much more quickly.
- We are running a pilot at the moment with a third party group of volunteers in the Lower Wharfedale area who have offered to work to maintain and improve the network across an area of 17 parishes. If this pilot project is successful then we will aim to roll it out further. This would ensure that there was a continuing opportunity for volunteers who wanted to do physical work on the network.

Q: How are you going to improve the network if these changes are implemented?

A:

- Given the reductions in resources we will need to prioritise maintenance of the network over improvements.
- However, we will bid for improvement funds whenever these are available, and we can make a strong business case for doing so. In addition we will also encourage landowners to improve the network where appropriate.

Public Rights of Way Consultation

A proposal has been put forward to categorise the public right of way (PROW) network based on a combination of path characteristics and community value. This will allow us to prioritise how we manage and maintain our routes and we would like your opinion on these plans.

If you have not done so already, please read the information on our website explaining the background of this proposal before answering the following questions.

The proposed statement of service delivery principles included in the [full document](#) explains how the council will fulfil our statutory duties in relation to public rights of way. These include making sure the PROW network is safe to use and free from obstruction.

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I am responding on behalf of:

- An individual
- Parish council
- Walking group
- Cycling group
- Horse riding group
- Trail rider group
- Car user group

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I understand that the council has put forward this proposal because of the need to manage the public rights of way network with reduced funding.

Yes

No

I agree with the proposed statement of service delivery principles

Please see page two of the [full document](#).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree



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I think that the proposed categorisation should be agreed based on a combination of both path characteristics and community value.

Please see page four of the [full document](#).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of categorising the network based on a combination of path characteristics and community value



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I agree with the different categories for proposed path characteristics

Please see table on page five of the [full document](#)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



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I think that route types in the path characteristic table are prioritised appropriately.

Please see page five of the [full document](#).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



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I agree with the proposal to define community value by working with parish councils and groups who use the network

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporate community value into the categorisation of public rights of way or suggestions of how we should measure this.

Please see page six of the [full document](#).



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I think that paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



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Please let us know any further comments or suggestions you have in relation to these proposals



Would you be interested in helping us develop our proposals to incorporate community value into the framework for prioritising issues?

Yes

No



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