

North Yorkshire**Local Access Forum****4 December 2015****Countryside Access Service Review****Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services****1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform members of the LAF of the current review of NYCC's Countryside Access Service, and to suggest how LAF members might provide practical advice and support within that review.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Countryside Access Service went through a restructure process in 2015/16 as part of the council's 2020 change programme. New staffing structures for both the Public Rights of Way team and the Definitive Map team went live on 1st October 2015.
- 2.2 The service is now undertaking a full service review to ensure that it delivers an appropriate and sustainable service that meets the county's statutory duties in respect of the Public Rights of Way network.

3.0 Countryside Access Service Review

- 3.1 The comprehensive service review process is considering the following aspects of the service:
- Service objectives and policies,
 - Detailed working processes and procedures, including IT systems used by the service,
 - Public documentation and communications,
 - Approach to prioritising the PRoW network,
 - Approach to prioritisation of maintenance and improvement works,
 - Approach to enforcing landowner responsibilities,
 - Defining service standards,
 - Providing more opportunity for volunteers and other interested groups to support the maintenance of the network,
- 3.2 The review process is intended to be a fundamental and comprehensive reworking of how the service operates. Outline timescales are that we intend to have agreed a new policy framework and prioritisation model by April 2016. Follow up work to define our service standards will follow on as a second key piece of work, with the intention that clear service standards are published by June 2016.

3.3 The immediate priority within the programme is to develop detailed proposals on our proposed service objectives and policy framework, our guidance to the public over the approach they can expect from us, and our proposals over how we will prioritise routes and issues reported to us. These proposals will need to be set out in a public consultation document.

4.0 Potential role for Local Access Forum

4.1 The service would welcome the advice and guidance of the LAF in this development process. Given the timescales and the need for detailed consideration of (for example) complex prioritisation models, it may be more practical for the service to engage a smaller sub-group of interested LAF members in January. This would ensure that the LAF had input into the proposals to go forward for public consultation in February and March of 2016.

4.2 If the LAF found this approach useful, we would seek to take the same approach to developing proposals around service standards - which is the other element that will need a period for public consultation.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any legal implications arising from the recommendations included in this report. It is the view of officers that there are no legal implications.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any financial implications arising from the recommendations included in this report. It is the view of officers that there are no financial implications upon the County Council.

7.0 Equalities Implications

7.1 There are no equality implications of this report given its very simple recommendations. A robust equality impact assessment is being undertaken as part of the service review.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that:

- i) LAF members take note of the report.
- ii) LAF consider setting up a smaller working group to advise the service on its consultation documents.

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Background Documents: None