

**North Yorkshire County Council****North Yorkshire Local Access Forum****17 October 2018****Countryside Access Service Review Update****1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide NYLAF with an update on progress on a comprehensive review of the Public Rights of Way Service.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In Autumn 2015 the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) team started a fundamental review of its purpose and operational work models and practices. The aims were to ensure that the savings made were sustainable in the long run and that the service could continue to meet its statutory responsibilities while providing the best level of service for the available funding.

**3.0 Update on Review Progress at October 2018**

- 3.1 Paragraph 3.2 sets out the scope of the review programme, and provides an update on what has been achieved to date.

- 3.2 The workstreams within the review of the Public Rights of Way service are:

**3.2.1 To refresh the service's policy framework.**

*A new statement of service delivery principles was agreed in July 2017 following public consultation. This is complete but not yet published.*

**3.2.2 To deliver a revised, comprehensive and transparent route categorisation of all the paths on the network, resulting in publishing a category map of the entire network on the Council website for the first time.**

*A new route categorisation model was agreed in July 2017 following public consultation. The service has now implemented the model within its CAMS IT system. However the map of the new network categorisation has not been published yet. We are still working through some remaining technical mapping issues to remove a range of anomalies thrown up by the approach. We still expect to publish the map and the new policy framework on the Council website before the end of this calendar year.*

*A second phase of this element of the programme was to develop an approach to engaging with parish councils and user groups to allow the value placed in the path network by those communities to be measured in order to influence the path categorisation model. This idea received support in principle during the public consultation, particularly from parish councils. At*

*the same time, many respondents warned that developing such a model would be very complex and would take time away from 'bread and butter' path maintenance work. After exploring a number of ideas, we have reluctantly concluded that developing a formal approach to community value is too difficult given current resource levels, and so we have focussed instead on process work. We will continue to take a pragmatic approach to working with parishes or other local groups that approach us suggesting a need to make changes to a route priority on a case by case basis provided there is sound justification for doing so.*

**3.2.3 To refresh the model used by the team to prioritise the resolution of defects reported to it.**

*This element is complete with the review concluding that the team should continue to use the existing issue prioritisation model.*

**3.2.4 To revise all existing detailed work processes to ensure consistently efficient approaches are taken to reported network defects. New procedures will be developed for all of the 'volume' issue types reported by customers.**

*Work has been undertaken on all of the service's work processes. New processes have been written and implemented for the following types of issues reported to the team:*

- *Ploughing and cropping*
- *Signposting*
- *Waymarking*
- *Gates*
- *Stiles*
- *Overgrowing vegetation*
- *Other network obstructions*

*Together these cases account for about 70% of cases reported to the team.*

*Work is now being undertaken on how the team will tackle more complex obstruction cases (those requiring magistrates court enforcement), reports of terrain out of repair, bridges, and seasonal vegetation. We will be able to use the principles already established in this work. Once complete we will have updated processes for over 95% of the type of new cases that are reported to us. We now expect this element of work to be completed by April 2019.*

*Assessment of the new processes has started with the team's case management and workload kept under review.*

**3.2.5 To ensure that the service maximises the benefit from the continuing support of its existing group of countryside volunteers, by ensuring that the volunteer role is set out clearly within the new working procedures, and by ensuring that we manage our offer to the volunteers and other groups more efficiently.**

*Update: All of the work done on developing revised working processes have included an important role for the countryside volunteers, and have brought the countryside volunteers into the flow of work processes.*

*During Q1 2018, out of a total of 344 cases resolved countryside volunteers were involved in progressing 178 cases (51%), resolving 41 of those. During Q2 2018 countryside volunteers were involved in progressing 294 cases out of a total of 523 overall (56%), resolving 22 of those.*

**3.2.6 To decide on the future of the team's core IT system.**

*A decision has now been taken to retain CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) as the service's current core IT system. This decision provides stability, removes the need to undertake a time-consuming system change, and provides a basis to consider the potential to develop new IT functionality within CAMS.*

**3.2.7 To explore the potential to make use of new IT functionality around managing volunteers, enforcement activity, mobile working and statutory reporting.**

**To develop integrated on-line defect reporting for customers, to reduce administrative work and to provide better real time feedback for customers.**

*We are working with NYCC Technology and Change and Exegesis (CAMS suppliers) to develop new functionality within CAMS around managing volunteers and mobile working, together with the inclusion of the Definitive Map team workstreams. We are continuing to work to develop on-line reporting for countryside access customers via a customer portal.*

**3.2.8 To examine how we can work with existing community and user groups who want to work on maintaining or improving the network.**

**To set out our approach to requests from communities to improve the network to ensure consistency in response and that expectations are realistic.**

*Work has continued with Lower Wharfedale Ramblers (LWR) and Burton in Lonsdale Parish Council and other working groups have been established including Potto, Newton-le-Willows, Hutton Rudby and Goldsborough Parish Councils and Swaledale Outdoor Club. The extent and type of activity varies per group. As well as providing physical resource, they have also secured significant financial contributions and assisted with landowner negotiations to help successfully deliver projects at a local level. This aspect of the review has transitioned into 'Business as Usual' and we will continue to seek opportunities to work with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties using the framework developed as part of the LWR pilot.*

**3.2.9 To set out a published statement of service standards.**

*It is still an aim of the service to set out a statement of service standards, but it can only be developed and published once all of the new working processes have been implemented.*

#### 4.0 Service Metrics.

- 4.1 An analysis of data within CAMS gives cause for optimism that the change in approach taken by the team, expressed through the review of process, is having a positive impact in raising the effective capacity of the small team of PRoW staff.
- 4.2 The table below provides high level metrics comparing the first nine months of calendar years 2017 and 2018. They show an improvement in the volume of case resolution. They also show an increase in the proportion of cases logged during the period that have also been resolved during the period. The improvement is more marked for those case types for which new processes have been written and implemented.

	Activity 31/12/16 to 30/9/17	Activity 31/12/17 to 30/9/18	Change
<b>All cases</b>			
Total defect cases logged	1368	1428	+4%
Total defect cases resolved	777	1407	+81%
% of cases logged in period also resolved in period	24%	35%	+45%
<b>Cases for which new processes are in place</b>			
Total defect cases logged	923	980	+6%
Total defect cases resolved	437	976	+123%
% of cases logged in period also resolved in period	20%	31%	+53%
<b>Cases for which new processes are yet to be finalised</b>			
Total defect cases logged	445	448	+1%
Total defect cases resolved	340	431	+27%
% of cases logged in period also resolved in period	32%	43%	+34%

- 4.3 The 27% rise in the level of case resolution for the remaining case types (those that we are working on new processes at present) is notable. The new processes for these types of cases will all involve similar principles to those that have been completed thus far and staff have started to use these approaches across the whole range of case types with positive outcomes.
- 4.4 Over the last 9 months, the team has resolved 99% of the volume of cases reported to it, effectively 'breaking even' over the period and stemming the rise in the level of unresolved cases. While we will continue to monitor case management as a matter of course, this data should give NYLAF members a degree of reassurance about the decision to focus on process work to the exclusion of other work within the review.

**5.0 Recommendation(s)**

5.1 It is recommended that North Yorkshire Local Access Forum members take note of the content of the report.

Ian Fielding  
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Background Documents:

Report to NY Local Access Forum 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Report to BES Executive Members 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016

Report to NY Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Report to NY Local Access Forum 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016

Report to BES Executive Members 21<sup>st</sup> July 2017

Report to NY Local Access Forum 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017