

Creation of Public Bridleway - Givendale Head to Lingy Plantation

Supporting Statement of Karl Gerhardsen, Head of Recreation and Access North York Moors National Park Authority (NPA)

The location of this route is of great importance for people traversing the southern edge of the National Park due to its location in the landscape. It lies on the crest of the Tabular Hills. So called because of their distinctive table-top shape, they rise up gently from the south ending abruptly in a series of steep north-facing headlands or nabs. Ranging from 150m to over 300m, the nabs have developed as springs have eroded the face of the scarp away and offer a striking contrast to the sloping moors beyond. The rocks of the Tabular Hills are known as the Middle Oolite Group as they are made up of ooliths which are tiny grains of sand or pieces of shell, surrounded by layer upon layer of lime to make limestone. This is naturally free draining, so makes for sustainable ground for horse-riding, walking and cycling throughout the year.

The short stretch of bridleway to be created completes a missing link in a superb access route for bridleway users extending to 11 km of hill crest route between the valley of Dalby beck to the west and Forge Valley to the east. Once the valley sides are climbed, the route along the top is almost flat, making for easy and convenient progress. The only other direct east-west route is the busy A170 lying near the foot of the Tabular Hills some 4km away to the south but this is too busy to be a recreational route to be used for pleasure by non-motorised users. There are other routes to the north, but these are off the tabular hills so are often wet and require significantly more effort due to hilly terrain and challenging navigation. The hill-crest route by contrast is dry and easy to follow with a natural flowing line along the hill top with extensive views to both north and south to be seen where there are gaps in the trees.

The National Park Authority already promotes this route as part of its Regional Route Network. These are multi-day routes, waymarked on the ground for people to enjoy under their own steam using local facilities to put something back into the local economy. The 48 mile long Tabular Hills Walk from Helmsley to Scarborough comes this way as does the Moor to Sea Cycle-route from Pickering to Scarborough and Whitby. Further details of both routes are attached.

In the late 1990s I recall receiving regular complaints from local horse-riders (including Joan Lasham of Clock Cottage, Main Street, Irton) frustrated by a large wet hole which had appeared in the route. They found this difficult or even impossible to ride, either through or round and were therefore unable to complete their chosen rides. This demonstrates the local demand for the route as a public bridleway and the value of it as a vital link facilitating circular local riding routes. The omission of this section from the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way, made resolution of the problem more complex, but the NPA was able to use its sustainable tourism budget and, with the agreement of respective frontagers, was able to repair the hole and the track itself to its present condition. This now appears to sustain the current level of recreational use and agricultural access without the need for any further work.

To conclude, I believe this bridleway creation to be necessary to meet demand from both local people and visitors to the National Park. It is a strategically important link in the local network for horse-riders, pedal cyclists and walkers and can I hope be created without further delay.

Karl Gerhardsen Head of Recreation and Access 4 October 2011