

North Yorkshire County Council

Yorkshire Coast and Moors County Area Committee

5 July 2017

Public Rights of Way – A New Approach to Categorising the Public Rights of Way Network

Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a set of draft proposals relating to the categorisation of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Network.
- 1.2 To report the results of a public consultation carried out on the draft proposals, and to discuss key issues raised by the consultation respondents.
- 1.3 To ask the Area Committee to note the consultation responses and to comment on the service's suggested responses to the consultation.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report covers the responses received following public consultation on proposals for introducing new service principles to govern the work of the Public Rights of Way Service. The proposal is for a prioritisation framework aiming for a consistent approach across the network. It includes categorising paths into four groups. The proposals include enhanced engagement with the broader user community across the board (i.e. both local residents and users from further afield) aiming to achieve the most appropriate prioritisation of public paths and the associated work in managing those paths.
- 2.2 The report sets out the service's suggested response to the consultation results and comments, which include a small number of amendments to the original proposals. The Area Committee is asked to consider the consultation results and the service's suggested responses.
- 2.3 The report points to an ongoing concern expressed by a proportion of respondents including some of the key stakeholder groups, that by prioritising the County Council will effectively abandon low category paths. However we recognise our statutory duty, and work including enforcement activity will continue to be undertaken on low priority paths. The service considers that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Under the auspices of the North Yorkshire 2020 programme, Waste and Countryside Services undertook a restructuring exercise in December 2014 – March 2015 to move the service to a 'minimum standards' position. As part of the restructure, a new Countryside Access Service was formed by merging the Definitive Map Team and the Public Rights of Way Team at Service Manager level. One of the objectives of the restructure was to protect the front line service as far as possible within financial savings requirements.

- 3.2 The restructure removed 3FTE front line Public Rights of Way staff. The new staffing structure for the Public Rights of Way team became operational in October 2015. The team now has a Principal Officer, 4 Public Rights of Way Officers, 2 Field Officers and 2 Technical Officers shared with the Definitive Map Team. The saving also removed £105k from PRow maintenance and operational budgets.
- 3.3 In Autumn 2015 the team started a fundamental review of its purpose and operational work models and practices. The aims of the work programme were significant as set out below:
1. To refresh the service's policy framework.
 2. To deliver a revised, comprehensive and transparent route prioritisation of all the paths on the network, resulting in publishing a priority map of the entire network on the Council website for the first time.
 3. To review the model used by the team to prioritise the resolution of defects reported to it.
 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 about 15 'volume' issues reported to the service.
 5. To ensure that the service maximises the continuing support of its existing group of countryside volunteers, by ensuring that they support the new working procedures, and by ensuring that we manage our offer to the volunteers and other groups more efficiently.
 6. To decide on the future of the team's core IT system.
 7. To explore the potential of new IT functionality around management of volunteers, enforcement activity, mobile working and statutory reporting.
 8. To develop integrated on-line defect reporting for customers, to reduce administrative work and to provide better real time feedback for customers.
 9. To examine how we can work with existing community and user groups who want to work on maintaining or improving the network.
 10. To set out a published statement of service standards.
 11. To set out our approach to requests from communities to improve the network to ensure consistency in response and that expectations are realistic.
- 3.4 The aim is to ensure that the savings already made are sustainable in the long run and to ensure that the service meets its statutory responsibilities while providing the best level of service for the available funding.
- 3.5 Work has been undertaken on aims 1-6 and 9. A new project has now started to take forward aims 6-8 with the key objective of helping customers to report network defects to us easily and accurately.
- 3.6 This report focuses on aims 1 and 2. Initial ideas on these elements were discussed at the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum on 4th February 2016, and with BES Executive Members on 22nd April 2016. The Transport Environment and Economy scrutiny committee considered the draft proposals in October 2016. Resource constraints have meant that a final proposal was delayed against the original timescale. A public consultation on the proposed service statement and approach to categorising the network was undertaken ending 19th March 2017.
- 3.7 Aims 3, 4 and 5 from the list above are closely linked to aims 1 and 2. Following a review, we will continue to use the existing model to prioritise the resolution of defects reported to us (aim 3).

- 3.8 Work to implement revised operational processes (aim 4) is ongoing. In April 2017 the service commenced a trial of a new operational approach to ploughing and cropping obstructions, and waymarking defect reports, in line with the draft service statement. The new processes under development all give a key role to countryside volunteers to act as the eyes and ears of the service (aim 5). Once all new processes are in place the service will be able to develop and publish a set of service standards (aim 10).

Statutory Duties

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.

4.0 Public consultation

- 4.1 An online consultation on the service statement and approach to categorisation ran between 30 January and 19 March 2017. This included a consultation questionnaire, together with a statement of the proposals and information about how we will use the network categorisation to prioritise our response to issues reported to us, and about our desire to maintain a degree of operational flexibility in applying the models. We also provided some worked examples of how the route categorisation would affect issue prioritisation, provided an on-line map of the proposed route categories, and provided a question and answer document. We wrote to Parish Councils and other user groups and stakeholders, and publicised the consultation using social media.
- 4.2 The consultation asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

S1: “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.”

S2: “I agree with the proposed statement of service delivery principles.”

S3: “I think that the proposed categorisation should be agreed based on a combination of both path characteristics and community value.”

S4: “I agree with the different categories for proposed path characteristics.”

S5: “I think that the route types in the path characteristic table are prioritised appropriately.”

S6: “I agree with the proposal to define community value by working with parish councils and groups who use the network.”

S7: “I think that the paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority.”

- 4.3 In total, 370 on-line questionnaires were completed or part-completed. In addition, 31 written responses were received but these did not answer specific questions. A breakdown of the responses is shown in Table 1. Not all on-line respondents answered every question, which is why the numbers in the tables in the report add to less than 370.

Table 1: Numbers of responses

Responding as/on behalf of a:	On-line response	Written response
An individual	257	3
A Parish Council	72	14
Walking Group	26	7
Cycling Group	1	1
Horse Riding Group	8	2
Trail rider Group	3	0
Car User Group	2	0
NY Local Access Forum	-	1
Country Landowners Association North	-	1
Open Spaces Society	-	1
Howardian Hills AONB	-	1
Total	369	31

- 5.0 **Consultation results:** S1:- “I understand that the council has put forward the proposal due to the need to manage the public right of way network with reduced funding?”
- 5.1 Overall, 365 respondents answered this question. Of these, 98% agreed that they understood the statement. This suggests that there is widespread understanding from the public and stakeholders that the County Council has to manage the PRow network with a reduced level of funding.
- 6.0 **Consultation results:** S2:- “I agree with the proposed statement of service delivery principles.”
- 6.1 The proposed statement that we consulted on is set out below. The statement will govern the County Council’s approach to its work.

Table 2: Proposed statement of service delivery principles.

Asserting and protecting public rights of way on behalf of the public
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

6.2 Overall 65% of on-line survey respondents agreed, and 19% disagreed. The only set of stakeholders to disagree were the equestrian groups.

Table 3: Breakdown of responses to S2, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	255	160	63%	53	21%	42
A Parish Council	71	53	75%	8	11%	10
Walking Group	26	17	65%	5	19%	4
Equestrian Group	8	3	37%	5	63%	0
Trail Rider Group	3	2	67%	0	0%	1
Car User Group	2	2	100%	0	0%	0
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	366	238	65%	71	19%	57

6.3 Respondents challenged two of the individual principles:

- Maintenance and improvement works are carried out within available resources and according to a published method of prioritisation.

Two respondents (British Horse Society, Byways and Bridleways Trust) objected in written submissions specifically to this statement suggesting that it fails to recognise the Council's statutory duty to maintain all paths. A consistent theme from a proportion of respondents was that prioritisation would lead to neglect or abandonment of low priority paths, and that the Council had a

statutory duty to enforce and maintain all paths. This is a fundamental challenge to the idea of prioritisation in a context where some respondents believe elements of the path network will not be maintained – i.e. that given our funding levels the Council will not maintain low priority paths.

- Appropriate enforcement action is taken where it is in the public interest to do so, to remove unlawful obstructions and reinstate obstructed routes.

Three respondents (British Horse Society, Byways and Bridleways Trust, Open Spaces Society) objected in written submissions to the idea of a public interest test being added to the Council's commitment to taking enforcement action. Many respondents across most categories of user pointed to the Council's statutory duty to enforce and maintain all paths regardless of their status within any prioritisation scheme.

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

- 6.4 The County Council recognises its statutory duty to maintain all those paths which are publicly maintainable. The approach being proposed is aimed at the Council meeting its statutory duties across the network. Setting out a robust and transparent method of prioritisation will provide for the efficient organisation and allocation of resources and is a reasonable way of achieving those aims in an appropriate manner.
- 6.5 The proposals relating to enforcement contained in this report comply with the Government's Regulators' Code. The Code sets out amongst other things that an enforcing authority's enforcement functions should be proportionate, consistent and targeted. Therefore in principle the County Council believes that it must balance the need to fulfil statutory functions with the need for efficiency and with regard to wider public interests.
- 6.6 In conclusion, officers suggest that the statement in Table 2 should be adopted without alteration, given the overall level of agreement, and the spread of agreement across all but one set of stakeholders.

7.0 Route categorisation proposals

- 7.1 Section seven restates the proposals that were the subject of consultation, and provides additional information about issue prioritisation. Table 4 contains the original proposal for how to categorise the network.
- 7.2 The proposal on which we consulted the public is to introduce a transparent categorisation of all the paths across the network. We can then use the route category to help us to prioritise defects (network issues) that are reported to us. It is intended that the new categorisation model, once agreed, should present a realistic spread of high, medium and low category paths.
- 7.3 A number of principles sit behind the recommended approach. These are:
- 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.
 - A 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. Therefore we will aim to work with parishes and user groups to understand which routes are most valuable to the different types of customer.

7.4 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 financial contribution to the maintenance of furniture (a landowner responsibility) on higher category paths but not on lower category paths.

7.5 The proposed approach to route categorisation is to assign and then publish a route category for every section of path across the network. The proposed model has 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 fifteen points.
- We will assign a category banding to each link.
- The category banding of all routes will be mapped and published on the County Council website.

7.6 This approach has been proposed because we think that it is a transparent approach to assessing the entire network and that 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 and user communities.

Detailed route categorisation proposals: characteristics

7.7 Table 4 below shows the proposed characteristic scores. It illustrates the proposed characteristics that we consider important, how those characteristics are defined, and the proposed score linked to each defining characteristic.

7.8 Many paths and sections of route are multi-faceted in nature and could fall into more than one of the defining characteristics in table 4. It would be possible to give a multi-faceted section of path points for each of its characteristics. This would make the model much more complex and 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 4: 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. List is available on NY website.	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%

Detailed route categorisation proposals: community value

- 7.9 Categorising the network based on path characteristics is technically easy, is quick and easy to implement and results in a clear categorisation. We propose to augment the characteristic score with a second assessment of how communities that use the network value their paths. If successful, this will allow any anomalies within the characteristic score to be ironed out, and should ensure that communities are more likely to recognise that the value they attach to a route has been recognised within the eventual network categorisation.
- 7.10 Measuring community value is not simple, and we face the following challenges:
- 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.
- 7.11 The initial suggested approach to measuring community value set out in the consultation document was to recognise two different ideas of community. The first 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.
- 7.12 The second idea of community would be other network users who benefit from and have an interest in the wider PRow network, and who will take a view on how NYCC prioritises and maintains the network. We expect that this would mean consulting with recognised user groups who represent a range of different types of users of the network (walkers, horse-riders, cyclists, trail riders, and off-road drivers).
- 7.13 Our initial suggestion is to define the level of value placed in different sections of the network by reference to a subjective assessment of local paths by the Parish Council, and by whether there is any evidence of interest in the route from one or more user groups.
- 7.14 While we have an initial suggested approach to measuring community value, we are not bringing forward detailed proposals at this stage. An important part of the consultation was to gather views from the public and from interested parties over how best to measure community value.
- 7.15 Therefore the proposed approach is to initially implement route categorisation based on the proposed characteristic scores in table 4, and then to introduce a measure of community value into the model at a later date.

Issue prioritisation

- 7.16 The County Council's aim is to ensure that every network defect reported is prioritised in a consistent manner. The prioritisation will then inform operational work programming.
- 7.17 The proposal is to continue to use the current issue prioritisation model. The review has looked at different models, but concluded that the current approach provided the most appropriate prioritisation of those approaches modelled, and had the advantage of being well known to team members through being tested over time. Given that we propose to continue the current approach we did not consult the public on issue prioritisation. The consultation paperwork did include the issue prioritisation model and provided some worked examples for the sake of transparency and completeness. These are included at Appendix 1.

- 8.0 Consultation response: S3:-** "I think that the proposed categorisation should be agreed based on a combination of both path characteristics and community value."

- 8.1 This question asked whether people agreed to the principle of categorising the PRow network based on the twin factors of the characteristics of a path, and the value placed on paths across the network by the communities that use them.
- 8.2 The on-line survey results were that overall 67% agreed with the statement and 21% disagreed. There was much more diversity of opinion from the stakeholder groups on this question. Parish Councils were very strongly in favour. Walking groups were balanced in favour. But respondents that represented equestrian groups, trail riders and car users were not in favour on balance.

Table 5: Breakdown of responses to S3, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	255	163	64%	55	22%	37
A Parish Council	71	64	90%	4	6%	3
Walking Group	26	13	50%	8	31%	5
Equestrian Group	8	2	25%	5	67%	1
Trail Rider Group	3	1	33%	2	67%	0
Car User Group	2	0	0%	2	100%	0
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	366	244	67%	76	21%	46

- 8.3 All respondents were given an opportunity to provide supplementary comments on this question. 196 respondents provided 213 separate comments. 49 comments appeared more relevant to a different statement and have therefore been included under the relevant statement. The approach taken has been to group comments into themes, and highlight the most common themes in the body of the report, and then to provide all comments within Appendix 3.

Table 6: Summary of comment themes in response to statement 3

Comment theme	Number of comments	Service response
Important to maintain all paths.	38	We recognise our statutory duty, and consider that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.
Important to consult widely including those from outside the local area.	24	Agree. The proposal around Community Value makes clear the intention to consult with both local communities and network user groups. Our reference to a 'community' here is intended to cover the range of path users and not just the inhabitants of the area local to any particular path.
Comment in support of proposal.	18	-
Give more weight to Community Value.	13	We suggest that the most practical approach would be to wait and see whether we can successfully develop and introduce a workable method of scoring Community Value before
Just use path characteristics.	3	

		considering either changing its weight within the model or abandoning the idea.
Need more detail.	13	Agree. We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that provides detailed information.
Agree but need more detail	5	
Some paths will not be valued as they are in poor condition at present.	12	We recognise this as a potential difficulty. However the approach of using path characteristics will not be affected by this potential difficulty. Any future approach to measuring community value will need to ensure that community value can be measured regardless of current condition.
Too complicated.	11	The map-based path characteristics element will be quick, simple and easy to implement once agreed. The general survey response was positive in relation to the principle of community value. However we accept that measuring community value has the potential to be complicated. We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that proves as simple to use as possible.
Community Value too complicated.	6	
Bureaucratic – just get on with fixing the paths.	8	We take the view that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a necessary approach given our funding position, and will provide direction and consistency to the day to day running of the service.
Concern over Parish Council involvement.	6	NY Local Access Forum has supported Parish Council involvement as the first tier of local democracy.
Other comments.	7	-

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

- 8.4 The strongly positive survey results and the addition of many positive comments suggest a balance of support in principle for the approach being proposed.
- 8.5 However we recognise that we will need to provide more detail around the approach to measuring community value and in so doing provide further clarity on what we mean by 'community'. There is a risk that an approach to measuring community value will be divisive where different community and user groups disagree. There is a risk that some groups will attempt to game any model by stating that all paths are high value. Equally we recognise that some parishes responded by saying they would be unwilling to support the initiative. The intention has always been for the scheme to be implemented initially using path characteristics alone while we develop a method to

measure community value. There is a risk that we will not be able to develop a workable approach and that we operate a prioritisation model based on characteristics alone. However the County Council's view is that this would still be preferable to the current position.

9.0 Consultation response: S4:- "I agree with the different categories for proposed path characteristics."

9.1 This question asked respondents whether they agreed with the different types of proposed path characteristic set out in table 4.

9.2 The on-line survey results were that overall 53% agreed with the statement and 30% disagreed. Again, there was much more diversity of opinion from the stakeholder groups on this question. A larger proportion of Parish Councils were in favour. Half of walking groups were in favour. But respondents that represented equestrian groups, trail riders and car users did not agree on balance.

Table 7: Breakdown of responses to S4, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	253	132	52%	75	30%	46
A Parish Council	70	44	63%	15	21%	11
Walking Group	26	13	50%	10	38%	3
Equestrian Group	8	1	13%	5	63%	2
Trail Rider Group	3	0	0%	2	67%	1
Car User Group	2	0	0%	1	50%	1
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	363	191	53%	108	30%	64

9.3 Respondents had an opportunity to provide a supplementary comment on the proposed table of characteristics. 113 respondents provided 129 separate comments. 25 comments appeared more relevant to a different question and have been included under the relevant question.

Table 8: Summary of comment themes in response to statement 4

Comment theme	Number of comments.	Service response
All paths are important.	15	We recognise our statutory duty, and consider that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.
Prioritising is an excuse to do nothing.	10	
Connectivity important and routes between villages should be recognised.	8	Agree and we consider that in the vast majority of cases, the proposal for village paths ensure that routes connecting neighbouring villages are recognised and score at least Cat C within the model. Where stretches of path between closely neighbouring villages drop below Cat C, then we will correct this within the mapping as the model is implemented. It may be that a future Community Value exercise will allow communities to ensure

		that highly valued longer distance connecting routes are recognised.
Increase the distance around a village to include paths within 3km.	5	<p>Increasing the distance from 1km to 3kms would pull a very large proportion of Category D paths in the county into Category C, rendering the idea of Category D paths effectively meaningless.</p> <p>It is important that the proposal can lead to a spread of different categories of path, allowing the service to distinguish its service response.</p>
Bridleways should be a separate characteristic.	6	<p>Our preferred approach remains to characterise the network based on wider factors such as a nationally applied status, or likely level of use such as proximity to areas of population, rather than on using the legal user status of bridleways, restricted byways or BOATs.</p> <p>However we will amend the proposal to introduce a new characteristic to ensure that all higher status paths (bridleways, BOATs and restricted byways) at least come into Category C to reflect their potential use by a wider range of network users.</p> <p>Table 17 provides a breakdown of the network into footpath, bridleway, restricted by-way and BOAT, following this amendment to the proposal.</p>
Higher user status routes, Byways open to all Traffic (BOATs) or Car User routes should be a separate characteristic	6	
Long distance footpaths e.g. Coast to Coast should be a separate characteristic	6	<p>There are a large number of long distance footpaths across the county. Some of the long distance paths are also NYCC promoted routes. Other long distance footpaths have limited status and aren't recognised by NYCC. We consider that it is not practical to take on the additional maintenance expectations of long distance paths being promoted by third parties.</p> <p>A number of comments mentioned the Coast to Coast path. 64% of the Coast to Coast route will fall into categories A, B or C under these proposals. If discussions to bring the Coast to Coast path up to National Trail status are successful then it would all be scored as a Cat A path from that point on.</p>
Recognise routes promoted by other groups and bodies as a separate characteristic - not just those promoted by NYCC.	4	<p>NYCC considers that it is not practical to take on the additional maintenance expectations on a plethora of routes promoted by third parties.</p> <p>We are piloting an approach to encourage and allow third party groups to maintain and</p>

		improve the network without supervision. We could explore promoting more routes where we could arrange a third party maintenance agreement with those promoting it.
Comments that didn't appear relevant to questions.	17	-
Other comments.	27	-

9.4 In addition respondents provided 27 other comments – many of which suggested other types of characteristics that could be included – for example routes to SSSIs, routes avoiding C roads, routes with tourism potential.

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

9.5 We would like to recognise and invest in the tourism and health benefits of the PRow network. However increasing the number of separate characteristics along these lines would complicate the model and introduce a greater degree of subjectivity. Work is going on separately to seek other investment sources for tourism and health routes and this may lead to the service being able to identify further promoted routes in future.

9.6 In conclusion, just over half of respondents agreed with the proposed set of characteristics and just over a quarter disagreed. We have considered the suggestions made by respondents and will ensure that routes connecting close villages are all recognised on implementation. We will also amend the proposal to ensure that higher user status paths (bridleways, restricted byways and BOATs) are recognised in the model.

10.0 Consultation response: S5:- “I think that the route types in the path characteristic table are prioritised appropriately.”

10.1 This question asked whether respondents agreed with the proposed prioritisation of the path characteristics in table 4. In other words, have we scored the different path types correctly?

10.2 Overall 45% of on-line respondents agreed with the proposed scoring and 32% disagreed. None of the equestrian groups, trail rider groups or car user groups agreed. Nearly a quarter of respondents didn't express an opinion which may suggest that many respondents found it difficult to rank different types of path within the overall proposed categorisation approach.

Table 9: Breakdown of responses to S5, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	253	115	45%	74	29%	64
A Parish Council	70	35	51%	19	25%	16
Walking Group	26	12	46%	12	46%	2
Equestrian Group	8	0	0%	6	75%	2
Trail Rider Group	3	0	0%	2	67%	1
Car User Group	2	0	0%	2	100%	0
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	363	163	45%	115	32%	85

- 10.3 Respondents who disagreed or who didn't express an opinion could provide a supplementary comment. 113 respondents provided 144 separate comments and suggestions. Three comments appeared more relevant to another question and were included under the relevant question.

Table 10: Summary of comment themes in response to statement 5

Comment theme	Number of comments	Service response
Urban bias. Rural paths are just as important as urban paths.	25	<p>Urban paths are a small proportion of the network. The safe routes to school (SRTS) and urban network comes out at a maximum of 8% - with some sections of SRTS in rural settings.</p> <p>We agree with the comments from some respondents that urban paths are unlikely to need as much maintenance as rural paths due to their nature. In practice this is likely to mean that they will make a disproportionately low call on officer time. A greater amount of time would therefore be available to deal with issues on paths outside the urban network.</p> <p>Urban paths are scored as Category A as they are likely to have more users, which is a principle agreed by 60% of respondents (para 12.2)</p>
Village paths should have a higher score	16	As above.
Bridleways (if included as a separate characteristic) should have a high priority	13	As stated previously, we will amend the proposal to introduce a new characteristic to ensure that all higher status paths (bridleways, BOATs and restricted byways) at least come into Category C to reflect their potential use by a wider range of network users.
All paths are important	9	We recognise our statutory duty, and consider that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.
Prioritising an excuse to do nothing	2	
Paths within AONB areas should have a higher score	9	This links to the detailed comments provided by the Nidderdale AONB, and Howardian Hills AONB at Appendix 4.

		On balance we are not convinced and in any case there isn't any support for other characteristic types to be given a lower score to ensure that table 4 maintains a reasonable balance between higher and lower scoring routes.
Routes avoiding A and B roads should have a higher score.	8	On balance we are not convinced and in any case there isn't any support for other characteristic types to be given a lower score to ensure that table 4 maintains a reasonable balance between higher and lower scoring routes.
Connecting routes (if included as a separate characteristic) should have a higher score	8	Connecting routes are difficult to define and cannot easily be mapped. All but dead end routes connect somewhere. Therefore we don't see the concept as workable.
Multi-user trails should have a higher score	7	This type of path already scores in Category B.
Comments that didn't appear relevant to questions.	17	-
Other comments	27	-

- 10.4 Other types of route included in table 4 also had support for increased scoring from four or fewer respondents. Officers consider that table 4 gives a reasonable spread of scores between categories A and D. Therefore we don't think that the consultation responses have provided any strong reason to change the proposed scoring. Almost all those who commented suggested increasing the score of one or more characteristics. It is important to remember that one aim of the proposals is to allow the service to effectively differentiate between routes at an operational level. Increasing the scores of all categories would detract from this aim.

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

- 10.5 Officers consider that table 4 gives a reasonable spread of scores between categories A and D. Therefore we don't think that the consultation responses have provided any strong reason to change the proposed scoring. Almost all those who commented suggested increasing the score of one or more characteristics. It is important to remember that one aim of the proposals is to allow the service to effectively differentiate between routes at an operational level. Increasing the scores of all categories would detract from this aim.

11.0 Consultation response: S6:- "I agree with the proposal to define community value by working with parish councils and groups who use the network."

- 11.1 This question explored whether respondents agreed in principle with the proposal to work with Parish Councils to understand the value of paths to local communities, and to work with user groups to understand the value of paths across the network to different network users.

- 11.2 Overall 76% of on-line respondents agreed with the principle of consulting with parishes and user groups to develop a community valuation of paths, and just 15% disagreed. The trail rider groups and car user groups were less likely to agree.

Table 11: Breakdown of responses to S6, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	255	181	71%	46	18%	28
A Parish Council	71	67	94%	0	0%	4
Walking Group	26	21	81%	4	15%	1
Equestrian Group	8	6	75%	2	25%	0
Trail Rider Group	3	1	33%	1	33%	1
Car User Group	2	0	0%	1	50%	1
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	366	277	76%	54	15%	35

- 11.3 Respondents were asked for their ideas over how we could engage with parishes or user groups in order to measure community value. 172 respondents provided 184 comments. One comment was relevant to a different question and has been included elsewhere. Only a small number of ideas over how we could measure community value were received.

Table 12: Summary of comment themes in response to statement 6

Comment theme	Number of comments	Officer response
Consult all possible users	21	The proposal around Community Value makes clear the intention to consult with both local communities and network user groups. Consulting with individual users would be impractical.
Comments to consult more specific groups, individuals and types of network users.	30	
Concern over giving influence to minority voices	3	We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that proves as simple to operate as possible.
Scepticism over giving influence to Parish Councils	18	NY Local Access Forum has supported Parish Council involvement as the first tier of local democracy. We understand that Parish Councils are not generally in a position to undertake any onerous work with their residents on our behalf. We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that proves as simple to operate as possible.
Parish Councils should be encouraged to consult with local residents	4	
Support for Parish Council playing a role	11	
Important to maintain all paths	9	We recognise our statutory duty, and consider that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.

Support for Community Value in principle but too difficult in practice	9	The map-based path characteristics element will be quick, simple and easy to implement once agreed.
Too difficult	9	The general survey response was positive in relation to the principle of community value. However we accept that measuring community value has the potential to be complicated. We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that proves as simple to use as possible.
Bureaucratic – just get on with fixing the paths.	6	We take the view that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a necessary approach given our funding position.
Use volunteers.	4	The Council is working on pilot schemes to develop a working model to allow third party volunteer groups to undertake safe and legal unsupervised maintenance and/or improvement work on parts of the network.
Parish Councils to encourage local people to maintain paths.	2	In addition revised operational processes will provide more opportunities for countryside volunteers to play a key role in support of the service.
Comments that didn't appear relevant to questions.	24	-
Other comment	33	-

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

- 11.4 The survey results are positive overall and many of the supplementary comments are positive about the potential of community engagement in respect of the path network.
- 11.5 We recognise that a number of users are sceptical about Parish Councils or user groups being asked to contribute. The particular concern is how representative these bodies are of either local path users, or of wider network users. However we believe that we will be able to develop a model that strikes a reasonable balance in order to ensure that more valuable paths are given a higher priority.
- 11.6 Sixteen survey respondents gave us their ideas over how to measure community value. Of these ten linked the concept to levels of use and suggested using technology to measure usage levels. Other ideas included developing criteria for parishes and user groups, doing user surveys, and using facebook to allow users to rate paths. We will consider all of these ideas in developing a suggested approach.

12.0 Consultation response: S7:- “I think that the paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority.”

12.1 One of the principles behind the proposals was that paths which are more likely to get more use should be rated in a higher category.

12.2 60% of on-line respondents agreed with the statement, and 25% disagreed. Less than half of walking groups, horse riding groups and trail rider groups agreed.

Table 13: Breakdown of responses to statement 7, by respondent type

Responding as/on behalf of a:	Total	Strongly agree / agree	% agree	Disagree / strongly disagree	% disagree	Neither agree or disagree
An individual	255	149	58%	69	27%	37
A Parish Council	71	55	76%	7	10%	9
Walking Group	26	11	42%	10	38%	5
Equestrian Group	8	2	25%	5	63%	1
Trail Rider Group	3	1	33%	2	67%	0
Car User Group	2	2	100%	0	0%	0
Cycling Group	1	1	100%	0	0%	0
All respondents	366	221	60%	93	25%	52

12.3 No supplementary question was asked. However twenty-two respondents used the general comment space in the survey to suggest that lower used paths were likely to need more maintenance rather than better used paths because they get less ‘natural maintenance’ through being used. The County Council is aware of the potential negative spiral of lack of use leading to neglect leading to paths being more difficult to use. However the path characteristics score avoids the problem of currently neglected paths not being valued. We will need to develop a community value scoring method that ensures that potentially valuable paths can be recognised.

12.4 In general the responses support the principle of focusing resource onto paths of greatest use and value.

Suggested conclusions in response to consultation

12.4 The County Council is aware of the potential negative spiral of lack of use leading to neglect leading to paths being more difficult to use. However the path characteristics score avoids the problem of currently neglected paths not being valued. We will need to develop a community value scoring method that ensures that potentially valuable paths can be recognised.

12.5 In general the responses support the principle of focusing resource onto paths of greatest use and value.

13.0 Further comments.

13.1 Respondents were invited to provide any additional comments about the proposals overall. 223 respondents provided 296 comments. 18 comments were relevant to one of the other questions and have been included under the relevant question. Comments have been organised into the main themes covered in those responses and set out below, along with the service’s response.

Table 14: Summary of comment themes from additional comments.

Comment theme	Number of comments	Service response
Concern over neglect / abandonment of low priority routes	34	We recognise our statutory duty, and consider that prioritising our maintenance and enforcement response is a reasonable approach and is not aimed at ignoring issues on any part of the network.
Statutory duty to enforce / maintain all paths.	29	
Lower used paths likely to need more maintenance	22	
Enforce irrespective of path priority	18	
Concern over approach of landowners to low priority routes	7	
Make use of volunteers	19	The Council is working on pilot schemes around the county to develop a working model to allow third party volunteer groups to undertake safe and legal unsupervised maintenance and/or improvement work on parts of the network. In addition revised operational processes will provide more opportunities for countryside volunteers to play a key role in support of the service.
Encourage Parish Councils and other 3 rd parties to take responsibility for the network	8	
Allow people to do minor works on the network	5	
Supportive	14	Significant balance in support.
Unsupportive	2	
Proposals too complex and costly	10	The map-based path characteristics element will be quick, simple and easy to implement once agreed. The general survey response was positive in relation to the principle of community value. However we accept that measuring community value has the potential to be complicated. We will need to develop a workable method to assess community value that proves as simple to use as possible.
Waste of time – get on and fix paths	5	
Need to recognise the health and economic benefits of PRow network	11	Comments noted, but the Council's funding levels was not a matter for the consultation.
Understand difficult funding levels.	11	
Invest in and improve the network.	5	
Examine ways to lever in third party funding	1	

Need more staff.	1	
Proposals are urban centric	6	<p>Urban paths are a small proportion of the network. The safe routes to school (SRTS) and urban network comes out at a maximum of 8% - with some sections of SRTS in rural settings.</p> <p>We agree with the comments from some respondents that urban paths are unlikely to need as much maintenance as rural paths due to their nature. In practice this is likely to mean that they will make a disproportionately low call on officer time. A greater amount of time would therefore be available to deal with issues on paths outside the urban network.</p> <p>Urban paths are scored as Category A as they are likely to have more users, which is a principle agreed by 60% of respondents (para 12.2)</p>
Publish service standards	5	We intend to publish service standards once we have implemented the categorisation model and new working processes.
Other comments	65	-

14.0 Comments received in writing.

- 14.1 Thirty-one separate written responses were received. The issues raised in these responses are summarised in table 15, with copies of the communications set out in Appendix 4. Almost all of the comments made in the written responses echo the comments made by respondents to the on-line survey, and are therefore covered by the previous service responses.

Table 15: Themes from responses received in writing

	NY Local Access	Open Spaces	Nidderdale	Howardian Hills AONR	Sustrans	14 Parishes	7 Walking Groups	2 Equestrian Groups	3 Individual responses
Model is resource intensive to implement	√								1
Concern over funding levels.	√	√					4	2	1
Statutory duty to enforce / maintain all paths.	√	√				2	3	2	2
Concern over neglect / abandonment of low priority routes.	√	√				1	5	2	3
Enforce landowner responsibilities on all paths.	√	√				1	4		2
Concern that proposals urban centric	√	√				2	2		1

Reminder of importance of network connectivity.	√	√				2	4		
Make use of volunteers	√	√			√	2	3		1
Important to work flexibly	√						1		1
Need to review in future.	√						3		
Economic benefits of the PRoW network		√	√	√					1
Importance of enforcing ploughing and cropping obstructions		√					2		1
Community Value score too difficult to measure			√	√					
AONB paths should be a higher category - as there is external funding available for AONB area.			√	√					
Supportive. Willing to assist					√	7	3		
Unsupportive. Unwilling to assist. Concern about being asked to undertake NYCC responsibilities			√			4			
Importance of long distance paths/ paths promoted by others			√				3		
Challenges idea of public interest in enforcement.								2	1
Challenge principle of prioritising, given statutory duty								2	

14.2 The Country Landowners Association North supported the proposals.

15.0 Discussion of results and suggested conclusions in response to consultation

15.1 The consultation results show a balance of agreement over disagreement in relation to all questions. The balance of support was stronger on in-principle questions, and weaker on questions about the detailed proposals for path characteristics.

15.2 We are confident to recommend that the proposed service statement be agreed without amendment. Fundamental challenges were made to the principle of prioritisation and to the principle of using a public interest test in deciding whether and how to take enforcement action. Officers consider that both are reasonable and necessary parts of the statement of service principles.

15.3 On balance the responses and comments supported the principle of categorising the network using geographical factors largely linked to likely levels of usage, and the idea of engaging with local and user communities aimed at achieving a prioritisation that properly reflects the significance to the user community.

15.4 There was a smaller balance in support of the detailed characteristics and categorisation in table 4. Many comments and suggestions were made on how this could be amended. Consequently we propose to include an additional characteristic of 'higher user status path'. This is technically straightforward and we are confident that it is in line with the general principles behind the proposals. However the aim remains to deliver a categorisation that will allow the service to distinguish between paths operationally. Therefore we are not minded to amend the proposals where amendments would lead to all types of path being a higher category, or where they would increase the complexity of the characteristic table.

- 15.5 A key critical theme expressed by a number of respondents is a perception that no enforcement or maintenance work will be undertaken on Category D paths, and that these paths will therefore effectively be abandoned. Appendix 1, table A2 shows that this will not be the case and that issues on Category D paths will continue to be brought into officer work programmes in a number of instances ahead of issues on higher category paths. Certain types of reported defects and obstructions will be tackled regardless of category. New processes are aimed at the Council being legally complicit across the whole network – prioritisation will not mean that some routes will be ignored or abandoned.
- 15.6 Managing the PRoW network entails managing within a complex stakeholder environment. Many user groups are passionate advocates not only for the network, but for particular areas of the network, or for putting parts of the network to particular types of use. A consistent theme is the lower level of support among user groups than from those responding as individuals. In particular, respondents from equestrian groups did not support the proposals either in principle or in detail – although they did on balance support the idea of further user group engagement. Two equestrian groups (British Horse Society and Byways and Bridleways Trust) put forward written submissions (set out in Appendix 4) which may point to the reasons for the general dissatisfaction of equestrian groups with the set of proposals.
- 15.7 Responses from those answering on behalf of walking groups were more supportive on balance. However less than half of walking group respondents agreed with a number of the statements around the detailed proposals.
- 15.8 We received only a very small number of responses from car user groups or trail rider groups and their responses were balanced question by question. This response may not be surprising as the majority of the network is not available for use by motorised vehicles. These groups did not support the idea of undertaking further engagement.
- 15.9 Officers are aware of the depth of interest in protecting the PRoW network among groups of network users. The principle was to characterise the network based on geographical factors, with types of paths generally likely to receive more use placed in a higher category. However as only a smaller part of the network is available to users such as horse riders, and following feedback, we will amend the proposed characteristic table to ensure that the higher user status paths that are available to greater numbers of potential network users – bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic – will all be placed in Category C or above. We are confident that the proposals, as amended, balance the needs of all types of user. Table 16 is the amended proposed characteristics table. Table 17 shows a breakdown of paths by status and category after this amendment.

Table 16: Proposed path characteristics and scores – amended post consultation.

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. List is available on NY website.	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	633	8	

	centres/large villages. The whole route scores eight.			
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 51.9%
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	
Higher user status routes	Bridleways, restricted byways, and byways open to all traffic (BOATs) that are not included in the other characteristics.	369	6	
Other routes	Paths that don't have any of the other characteristics.	708	4	Cat D 11.6%
Totals:		6,112		100%

Table 17: Breakdown of network by path status and category (kms),
Percentage of each path status by category.

	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C	Cat D	Total
Footpaths	622 13.7%	985 21.6%	2237 49.1%	708 15.6%	4552
Bridleways	289 19.3%	307 20.6%	898 60.1%	0	1494
Restricted byways	6 28.6%	4 19.0%	11 52.3%	0	21
Byways open to all traffic	3 6.7%	13 28.9%	28 62.2%	0	45
All status	921 15.1%	1309 21.4%	3174 51.9%	708 11.6%	6112

15.10 In light of the feedback the service has three options.

15.10.1 We could abandon the proposals. That would leave staff effectively prioritising without the benefit of a transparent and consistent framework. User groups are dissatisfied with the current approach and while having reservations are generally supportive of the idea of officers having a framework to refer to.

15.10.2 We could choose to try to amend the proposals in line with all suggestions made in the feedback. This is unlikely to be practical and there are concerns about the likely effectiveness of some of the suggestions. For example to raise the category score of all types of path, to add further path characteristics with high path scores, and to remove reference to prioritisation or taking public interest into account in enforcement decisions, would dilute the purpose of the proposal and greatly limit the usefulness of the framework in operational terms. A framework where almost all paths were seen as high priority would not provide enough operational guidance for officers regarding what issues and locations to deal with as a priority.

15.10.3 On balance, having considered all representations received, the most appropriate approach is felt to be to proceed by incorporating limited amendments within the original proposals. While inevitably some respondents will have reservations and even disappointment in such an outcome it is hoped that with the County Council having been transparent and inclusive in formulating its proposals, the user community will work with the Council and give a new framework the chance to bed in and operate successfully. Having a framework will provide an identifiable mechanism for officers to work with to ensure a consistent and equitable approach across the network. It will help justify operational decisions that officers need to make every day.

15.11 Many of the comments suggest proposals that the service is engaging in already as part of its normal work, and as part of the review programme set out at paragraph 3.3. For example within the review of processes the service is:

- trying to ensure that we do move more quickly to enforcement across all priority path levels.
- continuing to work flexibly using practical officer experience.
- tackling issues on paths together as a common sense approach.
- improving our customer response within the new processes to give customers more realistic information about when reported issues are likely to be resolved.
- making greater formalised use of countryside volunteers to act as the eyes and ears of the service.

15.12 The service is also undertaking a number of pilot schemes to develop a working model to allow third party volunteer groups to carry out safe and unsupervised maintenance and/or improvement work on parts of the network. It is recognised that developing such an approach could play an important role in maintaining and improving the network in the future.

16.0 Financial Implications

16.1 The proposals are intended to ensure that the service can meet its statutory obligations across the public rights of way network as a whole within its current funding envelope. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

17.0 Equalities Implications

17.1 Officers have considered the potential impacts of the proposed approach to route categorisation on the groups within the protected characteristics. It is the assessment that the proposals if implemented will not have a significant negative impact on how any potential network users within protected characteristic groups are able to enjoy the PRow network. An Initial Equality Impact screening form is included as appendix 2.

18.0 Legal Implications

18.1 In its role as the Local Highway Authority the County Council has to comply with a range of statutory duties in relation to the Public Rights of Way network.

18.2 Categorising the network and prioritising work is a reasonable approach aimed at assisting the Public Rights of Way service to meet the County Councils legal obligations across the whole of the Public Rights of Way network and within budget.

19.0 Recommendations

19.1 The Area Committee is asked to:

19.1.1 Consider the views and the comments of those who responded to the consultation.

19.1.2 Consider the service's response to the themes from supplementary comments as set out in tables 6,8,10,12 and 14.

19.1.3 Consider and comment on the service's suggested response to the consultation, as set out in paragraphs 6.4 to 6.6, 8.4 and 8.5, 9.5 and 9.6, 10.5, 11.4 to 11.6, 12.4 and 12.5, and in section 15.

DAVID BOWE
Corporate Direct Business and Environmental Services.

Author of Report: Ian Kelly

Background Documents:
Report to NY Local Access Forum 4 February 2016.
Report to BES Executive Members 22 April 2016

Issue prioritisation (taken from consultation paperwork)

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 A1 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 A1: 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 A2 and A3 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 A2: 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 bypass – 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 bypass
C at 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
C at 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
C at 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
C at 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 A3: 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

<p>Initial equality impact assessment screening form (As of October 2015 this form replaces 'Record of decision not to carry out an EIA')</p> <p>This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.</p>	
Directorate	Business and Environmental Services
Service area	Countryside Access Service
Proposal being screened	Changes to the Public Right of Way (PRoW) route categorisation model.
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Ian Kelly, Countryside Access Manager Mike Douglas, Project Manager Level 2 (BES)
What are you proposing to do?	<p>The North Yorkshire PRoW network extends to approximately 6110k. NYCC's responsibility is to ensure that the network is reasonably accessible and safe to use.</p> <p>Staff and maintenance budgets were reduced during 2015. In response the service is proposing to introduce a new service statement, and a new model to categorise the network into 4 categories of path based jointly on (a) geographical characteristics and (b) an assessment of how local and user communities value paths on the network.</p> <p>The route categorisation will impact in three ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will help NYCC to focus proactive maintenance work. Over time, proactive maintenance programmes are more likely to focus onto higher category routes. • It will be a factor in operational prioritisation of defects reported to the CAS team. In general defects on higher category routes will be addressed before those on lower category routes. • It will impact on how NYCC attempts to resolve issues that are reported to us. For example within the services' detailed work processes, we may choose to offer more financial support to landowners who have higher category paths crossing their land.
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	<p>To agree a public service statement.</p> <p>To agree and publish a transparent route category map.</p> <p>To ensure that the service responds to issues reported to it in a consistent manner, taking decisions around issue prioritisation that are transparent to members of the public and other stakeholders.</p> <p>To allow the service to develop and publish clear service standards.</p>

Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	No. The proposals are resource neutral.		
<p>Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC's additional agreed characteristic</p> <p>As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? <p>If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be a significant adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate.</p>			
Protected characteristic	Yes	No	Don't know/No info available
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Sex (Gender)		X	
Race		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage or civil partnership		X	
NYCC additional characteristic			
People in rural areas		X	
People on a low income		X	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		X	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (e.g. disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	<p>The approach will mean the service seeks to work more closely with Parish Councils and User groups that have an interest in different types of network users (walkers, equestrian network users, trail riders, cyclists, off-road network users)</p> <p>These stakeholder groups don't have a strong cross-over with people with protected characteristics.</p>		
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	X	Continue to full EIA:
Reason for decision	The proposals will deliver a more transparent approach to how the service prioritises its work across the network.		

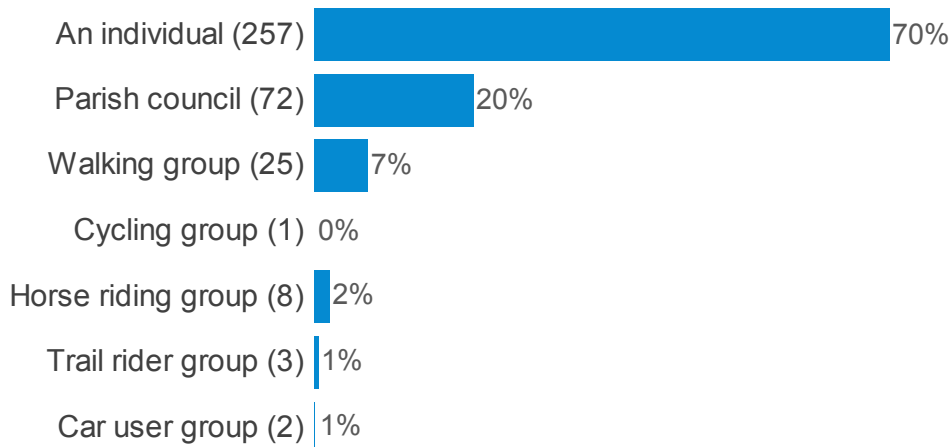
	<p>The proposal will ensure that maintenance work (proactive and reactive) is prioritised onto higher category routes. Higher category routes are those which are likely to have more users, and those that are of value to local communities and network user communities.</p> <p>While the proposal is likely to subtly alter the pattern of routes on which the service prioritises maintenance activity, there is no reason to suggest that this will significantly negatively impact on any groups of people with protected characteristics. It is likely that people with access difficulties are more likely to use urban routes, national trails, multi-user trails and promoted routes. These paths will have surfaces that are more likely to be level and where path furniture takes the form of gates instead of stiles. All of these types of path score highly within the proposed model.</p> <p>The proposals will not alter our approach to improving the network. We will continue to encourage landowners to improve the accessibility of the network – eg replacing stiles with gates where practical.</p> <p>One theme from the public consultation exercise carried out during February and March 2017, was that the proposals favoured urban over rural routes. Urban routes are Category A paths within the proposed model. This is because they are likely to have more users. However the urban PROW network is small compared to the rural network and officer experience suggests that urban routes need less maintenance and management. A longer length of route in rural areas will also fall within Categories A, B and C and will be prioritised by the service. Therefore we consider that the model will not disadvantage people living in rural areas.</p> <p>The proposed approach will lead to more engagement with local communities, at which point paths that have particular value to local people will be able to be adjusted within the categorisation model. We consider that this is a reasonable safety net for communities to ensure that paths they particularly value for whatever reason (including accessibility) are prioritised by the service.</p> <p>For these reasons we conclude that a full EIA is not required on this proposal.</p>
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Ian Fielding
Date	18 May 2017

Public rights of way consultation

This report was generated on 05/04/17. Overall 370 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes.

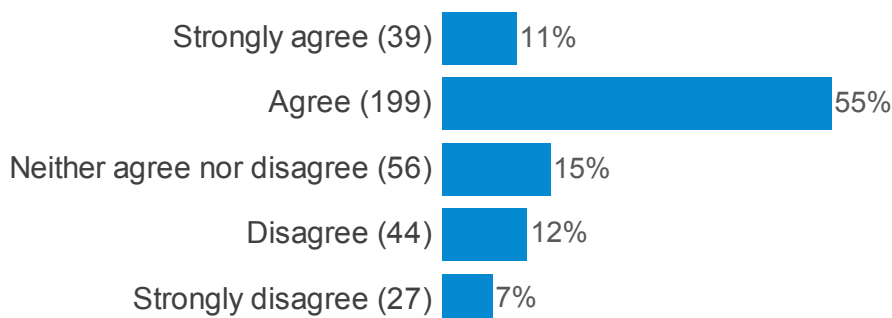
I am responding on behalf of:



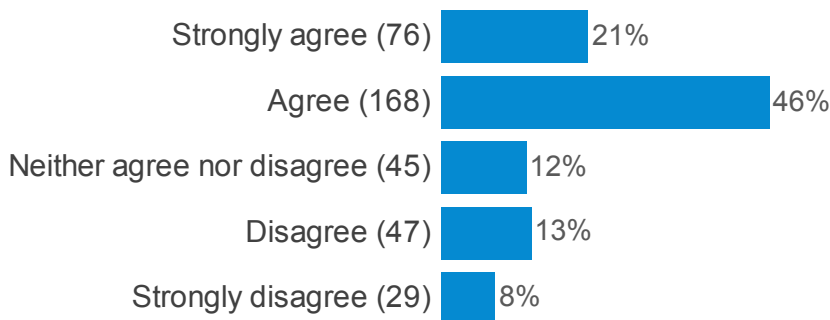
I understand that the council has put forward this proposal because of the need to manage the public rights of way network with reduced funding.



I agree with the proposed statement of service delivery principles Please see page two of the full document.



**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.**



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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

community value appears complicated

I agree with the comments in your report about the difficulty in measuring community value objectively. I suspect it will be a wasted effort as the interests of one 'community' will be diametrically opposed to those of another community. I propose focussing on path characteristics and spending the effort released on taking action rather than further analysis

It all depends on what you call community value. All RoW have community value. From my experience NYCC only do what the majority see and not what the law says. Millions of pounds are brought into our county by visitors who walk and use the RoW network. We have a great diversity of landscapes and visitors come from all over the world to see and walk amongst them. The paths themselves do not create any money but the use of them does. This is the problem with the people at the top of NYCC they don't see the pounds shillings and pence which these paths bring in so they want to write them all off. They can't see that their wages depend on these visitors using these paths. Every path earns it 's keep many times over.but it doesn't show on a balance sheet. The answer to the labour problem, as paths do take labour to maintain them, is volunteers. NYCC have never understood this whereas NYMNP are brilliant at it. People love to volunteer but you need someone to organize them and NYCC hasn't a

This categorising process wastes officer time, even this consultation wastes officer time. Instead of all this re-organising, staff should be working to fix the paths. And the walker with an OS map won't know which path is clear to use, so it doesn't help.

It is imperative that NO rights of way are lost. In your question and answer section, the question was asked but NOT answered. Concerned this may be a slippery slope!

Low priority PROW's will not be looked at. Use a random selection of some of these problem paths each year.

I didn't see any weight given to footpaths that join villages and service villages.

No mention of bridle paths most of which are in dire need of repair

I am only too aware of the back log of DMMO's waiting to be started, having had my application at the top of the points system for 3 years before it was started (autumn 16), I believe that it is much more important to use your limited resourses to work on and resolve the back log of DMMO's rather than making more work for this department.

Important to consult user groups. Bear in mind that most of the paths are FOOTpaths so walking groups must have major impact

I feel that the balance between characteristic and community value is about right. Many communities will be unaware of the paths within their parish and be able to contribute towards any categorisation

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

In the statement of Principles it should be that enforcement action is "always taken if a route is illegally obstructed", anything else would be an invitation for obstructions with no deterrent and the practice would spread - the wording "where appropriate" should be removed "when unresolved" - it is a legal requirement for such an illegal activity to be challenged by the council. Horse riders cannot get around locked gates or immovable barriers and these should over-ride the route prioritisation system. The categorisation score disadvantages routes with higher user status because these are often further away from centres of population, but they form only 30% of the network and so are more heavily used than FPs and better value for money, BWs and above need a higher category score allocated to them automatically. Looking at your category map it is obvious that most bridleways have only achieved a category score of D, yet these bridleways are well used by horse riders.

there is more to ROWs than the immediate community, this involves the public from outside the area, adhering to community may bias against outsiders who use the network. There is no mention of fords in the table they should be included surely. Way marking is essential so that people don't stray of the ROW , this work could well be delegated to interested groups e.g Ramblers and Bridleways groups ,saving money.

it seems to me that there is a danger that routes not currently correctly recorded or which have been unusable for a long time already will be categorised as of little value to the community whereas in fact, if they were usable they would be used and they need properly maintaining.

Although someone asked if there would be any paths closed they did not give an answer. it seems that due to having different classes ther is a good chance of some routes being closed or inaccessible.

I think bridleways should be given a high priority as they can also be used by walkers and cyclists. There are not enough bridleways and more are needed to get horse riders off increasingly busy (i.e. dangerous) roads. Many footpaths could be reclassified as part of this review in order to make them permissible for riders.

NYCC needs to publish details of the Local Access Forum wher Communities can form a good working relationship with all stakeholders

I have some concern that less used footpaths could suffer and decline through neglect and at some time future developments would favour their use again as pressure is put on outdoor recreational spaces. It might then be difficult to persuade the council to improve such footpaths. I feel that as the number of footpath users will rise with population growth and housing developements, every effort should be made to keep all our public rights of way in use, and Parish Councils encouraged to support this through communication with the community. I commend the councils efforts to prioritize in this way as funding is increasingly difficult.

There seems to be a bias towards urban paths which doesn't take account of the fact that many visitors and urban residents flock to rural paths in holidays and leisure time. I would like to see rural paths given greater recognition. Also there is no reference to scarcity of rights of way. For some areas where there is a lot of private land the right of way is the ONLY option of avoiding a dangerous country road and there may be few in some areas and many in other areas. This should be a factor.

It makes sense to have some community input as to the prioritisation of work. We have had lots of new finger posts erected around Healey, which looks good, but I know that many of the paths being signposted are overgrown, broken down and not used - so the finger post looks good from the road, but in reality the money could have been better spent.

It is good to see that the NCN routes and the well-used cycle paths around the urban area of Harrogate and Knaresborough will warrant a high category. These are important for commuting and leisure and should provide an increasing role in reducing traffic congestion. A defect not addressed is the safety issue for cyclists of paths being heavily covered in wet slippery leaves. A small amount is inevitable and acceptable but the quantities we have seen this Autumn and Winter have presented a real safety hazard for cyclists. This should be rated as a serious defect warranting urgent attention.

Sounds fine in principle but both of these categories are difficult to define and will involve subjective definition. Also, how do you combine the two categories meaningfully?

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

The proposed categorisation of routes will not improve the NYCC's protection of PROWs. It merely provides a justification for the status quo whereby a large proportion of PROWs are deemed medium or low grade category and effectively never get addressed. We need proposals that give ALL PROWs a chance of being protected (e.g. a random choice element or parish minimum). A reduction in resources for the Paths Team does not mean a reduction in the Council's statutory responsibilities. These proposals neither acknowledges this nor offers any means by which the path network as a whole can be protected.

The approach seems to offer a valid means of "scoring" paths across the wide range of factors that different users would value. For example, as a recreational walker I greatly appreciate the rural paths network, and my use of them is influenced most strongly by the attractiveness of the countryside traversed, and the ability to construct circular or linear routes of maximum enjoyment. However, I live on the outskirts of York, on a large housing estate, and here I value the public path network for different reasons - for example, convenience and directness, separation from traffic, better standard of surface etc. The proposed system would appear to accommodate both user situations

The most utilised routes should be prioritised first to get them to a usable state then work on others and and when possible.

The characteristics prioritisation should simply distinguish between National trails and other prow's. The community value should have an equivalent weighted score and should not include economic contribution.

These proposals are about improving the lot of the NYCC path team and not about improving paths. The categorisation of paths is a very bad idea. Landowners will see that their paths are low grade and therefore they will be able to shut them down with impunity. So these proposals will reduce the size of the path network, which I suspect is NYCC's aim behind the proposals.

Simplify the document, the text is too wordy and complicated, and show a working example of how a route has been graded, from start to finish.

Measuring the value that different communities place on different routes as a criteria to categorize paths is I think a flawed proposal, as local communities might not be the prime users of paths and therefore best placed to judge and prioritise. People from outside the area are more likely to use the paths, such as ramblers, tourists etc... and therefore their views should be considered. Consultation with Rambling Associations and Walking Groups in North yorkshire in particular should be considered.

Please also consider tourist interest ie long distance walkers and holidaymakers.

I do not agree with the proposed approach as it is over complicated and will lead to neglect of many established PROW. I believe that the policy should be that all current PROW should be maintained, not improved, as becomes necessary, at a level which keeps them fit for their established purpose. This means to keep them safe and navigable for the established users. Further, there should be no adoption of as yet unregistered footpaths as PROW. It is important to differentiate between cost reduction and spending reduction.

The one thing that bothers me is what happens when a r.o.w is given a low score by local residents, but which is well-used by walkers/cyclists/equestrians from outside the immediate locality. Is the scoring scheme sufficiently flexible to pick this up?

Greater priority should be given to rural pathways

I think communities and parish councils will need some support and guidance in determining Community Value so there's consistency on how this process is undertaken

I am concerned about how "community value" is defined.

As long as the parish councils and user groups are consulted and their feedback is taking into account.

It is vital to ensure all parishes use a standard template in assessing community value to avoid subjective self-interest. Assume you will provide that? How will you deal with a PROW crossing 2 or more parishes where the community value rating is significantly different by the parishes involved?

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

Categorising by use is difficult as many of the routes are so badly maintained at the moment they are only accessible in the winter and then only if there hasn't been heavy rain - other times of the year they are so overgrown it is impossible to use them - the danger is more routes will become unusable if they are further down the priority list and will be completely lost.

This is essential both for safety and for the upkeep of our community

We see very little in the way of managing our rights of way and whilst I agree that funding reductions impact of many of our day today facilities and services, I suggest that this initiative is in itself an waste of management/staff time and the costs could be better used to actually maintain the footpaths as deemed necessary from time to time.

It's disappointing that through current lack of funding we risk losing existing rights of way through lack of maintenance and oversight.

We feel that community characteristics should be included in categorisation from the outset.

Many of the RoWs are within the National Park, which, by definition, caters for the Nation. Giving undue weight to local communities allows easy opportunities for people to pursue parochial limitations and pedantic nimbyism, which will discriminate against the very many non-local users and visitors.

This approach, as currently set out, gives too much priority to urban areas over rural areas and also relies on the Parish Council reflecting the wishes of the local community, which is not always the case, especially where Councillors are land owners with PROWs over their land.

We disagree on the fact that how are you going to get a fair community input as not all users will know about this survey. Therefore people will be unable to comment and give a community value score. We, as North Hambleton Bridleways Group we unaware of this and only found out though a friend.

How are you able to obtain a fair community input because not all Users will know about it. So people will be unable to comment on their use. C

purely consulting with Parish Councils and individual groups will not reach the majority of users

Community value needs to include cases where the path is part of a long distance walking route . For instance the coast to coast route which passes through Danby Wiske.

It appears that a path with poor characteristics but huge community value would score much less than a little / never used path with good characteristics. This weighting seems unfair.

PROWs are an integral part of the countryside and often have historic significance, being routes used over decades and centuries. Many paths have had poor maintenance for years and may not be well used or apparently valued by communities simply because they are in such poor condition that it is difficult to use them particularly with children. All footpaths and bridleways are important and should be maintained to a standard so that they can be used by residents and visitors to the area alike.

We understand the problems of NYCC ,but feel a representative of NYCC should meet with the Parish council for more a more in depth analysis of our local routes.

Yes in principle although you state that you will give precedence to your pre-determined path characteristics and there should be more flexibility than that if you do want to respond appropriately to community value.

How has the attached map been categorised? "Prioritising routes". How can these be changed in the future. ? Paths that get most use should have the most priority, How would you know which they are? "We want to work with parishes and user groups"Have you considered what percentage other users may make up, I think it will be considerably more than 50%. What is stopping the use of volunteers other than for clearance work. Can you comment on the pilot scheme

Any method of categorisation is OK, providing the "service delivery principles" are still complied with and the exercise is not used as an excuse for inaction, when paths are considered to be of low priority

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

The long-distance footpaths that criss-cross the county (and are not National Trails) eg Foss Walk, Ebor Way etc seem to have been omitted from the characterisation, as surely they are of a high category.

We could include the community value in our Neighborhood plan, but we cannot see a fair and reproducible way to assess the value of each path to all our parish residents. Every path will be important to someone, even a category D path that a few people use for daily recreation. The categorization already makes an assessment based on likely volume of use and value to the young and old for service access.

Do not forget that if prows are inaccessible then they won't be used at all. This means that they will become even lower priority!!! There are footpaths within my parish that have not been accessible for 20 years or more.

Thornton-le-Moor and Thornton-le-Street Parish Council are concerned that smaller village paths have a lower priority than urban areas, representing further reduction in services to rural areas. We do not believe that it is possible to approve the proposed categorisation without understanding how community value will be assessed, particularly as a higher percentage of rural populations use the paths, often through necessity.

I live in a community where the locals do NOT use the local PROW. However the tourists and walkers use them intensively. Our tourist traffic exists solidly because of the PROWs. In some cases the PROW link to other LDP's. If your criteria do not take into account the wider implications then we are back to the times when land-owners neglected and even closed paths.

Paths are a facility that allows people from outside the local area to move from place to place as well as simply a local resource

Agree basically. Available funding should also be given to checking/maintaining lesser paths periodically should they be reported frequently as suffering total lack of maintenance. As I experienced this when a member of the N.Y. moors volunteers and over long periods reported items which were noted but even after long periods nothing was seen to, which resulted in my resignation some two years ago,

A distance of 1km from village centres is totally insufficient. Distance should be from the village boundary and needs to be larger due to the average distances villagers regularly walk. Also does not reflect use by Horse riders.

As the consultation document states, there is no available measure of 'community value'. Even if there were such a measure its focus would be local, failing to account for the extensive network of through-routes on which local communities find themselves. North Yorkshire includes part or all of some of the most heavily used through-routes in the country.

At a time when people are advised to walk to increase health all footpaths should be a priority regardless of location. The council has a duty to maintain the paths and I am sure that a more proactive, we will have the best paths and will recruit more volunteers etc would be more effective. The result of this policy will be paths falling into disrepair, which will then not be used, and the decision will be justified as the paths are no longer used. Already bridges have not been replaced and stiles are in a dangerous state.

Community value, as you have said, is a difficult concept. Communities and user groups must be consulted on RoW issues but how will that translate into a categorisation?

The Parish Council are not optimistic that the community value given to their footpaths will be taken any notice of if it means upgrading the County Councils grading

There should be no categorisation of rights of way that have been blocked by landowners through lack of maintenance or deliberate obstruction or blocked by lack of maintenance of the surface of the right of way by the County Council.

I hope there will be some element of personal and professional assessment and that the scores will not be followed slavishly

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

This policy will ensure that remote footpaths become increasingly neglected. I would suggest that in many areas the local community do not value the local paths because it is not them who use them. I live in Helmsley and whilst the footpaths between villages and onto the moors are well used, you seldom meet a fellow resident when out walking.

I hope that the Community Value categorisation is not forgotten, and that it is followed up by NYCC to allow that aspect to be fully brought into account in the final determination of priorities.

Path characteristics should be continuous, ie should not change from Bridleway to Footpath (often when crossing Parish boundaries) Sizes of villages that would be classified as such must be defined (Kilburn vs Bagby)

You are concentrating on too wide a net work of paths instead of making "useful" paths your priority. I know of countless paths that serve no purpose and are just hang overs from old paths that connected homesteads together. There was a net work of paths that ran from the back of a property to the back of a neighbours property that you have now extend onto the main road. Many of these could be closed without the loss of amenity value.

I think there is a lot of overlap between groups a b and c, parts of a national cycle network may be visited no more than a walk down a canal bank for example, how are you getting information on how many users each path has?

I consider that this is a wholly inappropriate system for a Highway Authority to adopt. Your duty is to assert and protect public rights over the public rights of way network - it is not to invent approaches which enable you to abandon your duty over large sections of that network.

I feel this will appeal to many landowners through which public rights of way pass who blatantly make no attempt to keep paths open.

Most public rights of way (PROW) are across open countryside so would score nothing from a schools route safe access perspective. Likewise, most PROW's in the countryside are not used by the local community but by walkers for leisure purposes. This appears to score nothing on your matrix either.....so the vast majority of PROW's will be classed as "low priority" and any work required with probably go onto an ever increasing "to do when funding permits". Whereas urban routes will automatically take priority as they will be near scolls or communities.

The Right of Way network should be safeguarded for all to use; there is a risk that some rural rights of way will become unusable due to poor maintenance. There is already a problem with many rural Rights of Way in North Yorkshire, particularly in the Vales of York and Mowbray. As you know, PROW are highways that we all have a right to use, and as such must be maintained. Perhaps you should look more towards other means of funding maintenance, such as sponsorship, local community groups, volunteers etc. There is an epidemic of inactivity and obesity in the UK, and reducing access to free forms exercise (which our Right of Way network represents) is unacceptable.

Categorisation based on what amounts to popular demand leaves lesser used but still important routes open to neglect and possibly eventual loss of use.

Who will you contact within communities with regard to assigning local community value other than parish councils? How will enough community members know about this proposed categorisation for their local areas? I found out about it on Facebook via a third party. many do not use Facebook for example.

I am a member of the NYCC LAF, we discussed this briefly (it is to be discussed further at the next meeting) but most of us have concerns about community value & how it is measured. The village I live in [South Kilvington] has many paths within a mile radius, apart from a couple of dog walkers I do not know of any path users in the village. Therefore how is this measured, the parish council is impotent and would have no knowledgeable input, how do you assess community value - who do you ask?

seems logical!

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

Your questionnaire is coached to enforce an outcome of your choosing. We pay our taxes you provide the service that we pay for. How about cutting back on your office staff, wage bills and bonus' s, as in any other organisation those are the first to go when the business is failing to deliver, not the services.

Unfortunately some paths which could be of great community value have been blocked etc that they are not currently of value.

Caution needs to be taken when applying two very different factors - path characteristics and community value. The former is easy based on facts but the latter needs a sound methodology to ensure it isnt abused.

It will mean paths of a lower category may be lost for ever

It's the community value piece that is most difficult. Relying on Parish Councils alone for this input in the Pateley Bridge area will produce strange results. Local groups (AONB, Pateley Bridge Walking Festival, Pateley Bridge Walkers are Welcome, Pateley Walkers, Fell and Dale, etc) MUST be involved in this and allowed significant input.

The process described should only provide the broad outline of priorities - a lower score should not preclude maintenance if there are factors not directly covered by your categories.

The PROW's are used by people other than from the local community; I understand that cul-de sac ROW's are of limited vale but I cannot see how others can be categorised (with the exceptions of National Trails).EG a broken stile that cannot be by-passed is a potential nuisance wherever it occurs. Whereas a (non reinstated) ploughed field is not really an issue wherever it is and would always be low priority.

How are you going to know how valuable a PROW is when people are too apathetic to respond until things disappear.

The bridleway from Folkton to Fordon. The old Fordon Road is an example of a route that could fall into a lower category and therefore not be maintained due to its characteristics. the community value to the many horse riders in the area is massive. Being our only route away from the busy main road. I do not believe horse riders are being represented sufficiently in this categorisation process and fear that the Bridleways will become unusable if they are not maintained.

It should not be used as an excuse to completely abandon interest in lower category routes. I know the documentation refutes this, but I also know how these things often creep far beyond the intentions of those who devised the documentation.

Whilst I fully understand the necessity, this should not be the solution. Better ways forward need to come from the government perhaps linked to post Brexit agricultural funding. Would this approach be acceptable for roads?

Looks ok

More weight should be given to the importance of PROW in areas where there are very few other local amenities such as parks

all paths should be treated the same, we should be encouraging people to use more of the paths to be healthy

Any user of a footpath should be able to challenge the rating allotted .

North Yorkshire has many historic paths used by riders, walkers, cyclists. It is our heritage so please can we keep them passable. Your categories are correct but worrying, many paths are damaged by motor cyclists and off road cars and quad bikes. I work closely with the access officer of NYMNP and I know they are doing their very best to conserve historic paths but they have no control over "green lanes". Many are damaged by traffic that are unsuitable for these lanes.

The path characterisation should also consider availability of PRoW s in an area. For example in the rural village of Alne, there are only 2 paths, one connects to a neighbouring village, and the other is in a very poor state in parts due to non-compliance of conditions by the landfill-site management. Yet people want to walk! And there is little choice without having to get into the car.

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

a sensible approach but rather than leave those routes with a low score to a much lower level of maintenance, the council should look at ways of coopting other organisations and schemes to help maintain them, i.e. Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, community payback, regional walking groups, increasing the volunteer core and working with Ramblers National. Also, landowners are crucial, can the council compensate/support land owners for helping to maintain footpaths across their land. In some areas keeping lesser known footpaths open provides a boost to the local economy, surely it is not in the vested interest of local business to also help in this task of maintaining footpaths.

Community value seems an important way to categorise a path but also seems very subjective. I suspect the vast majority of path users will not know about the process.

I think that paths within 1km of a village should be in the same category (B) as paths within 1km of the urban fringe, and not in a lower category as presently proposed.

I think that while there is an argument for scoring PROWs with Community benefit, we must ensure that currently underused byways are not lost and neglected for good. It is important to maintain a network of PROWs such that they can be also used when repairs or closure happens to other routes

Would it be fair to say that these paths go through farmers' land. Seeing that these ways are used as an excuse to gain access to the land, so that people can leave litter, leave gates open and allow their pets to chase live stock. Then seeing that the money isn't there anymore. Then maybe just maybe you should ask the farmers, and see what they think. Maybe they are seen as second class people, but they do put food on your plate, at the moment.

Paths which are not or badly signed will not have community value because they are difficult to use. Particularly in areas like Bedale, where bad signage does not encourage people to try the few walks that there are in the area.

Community value should be given more importance

Being mindful that these routes are invaluable to residents who have no footpaths alongside busy roads.

This is logical, reasonably objective and will assist in making priority decisions

The score should be weighted toward a Community Value score where there is evidence of community value such as the presence of a local and thriving walking group and/or published walks such as in Huby.

The Council have been the means of preserving footpaths for many years, sometimes overcoming intentions of landowners who use whatever means to prevent people from using these. This reduction of service would effectively allow these people to block their use

Some parish councils are unaware of this consultation - ours is one in point. Others will be heavily weighted by Parish councillors who are landowners and who are likely to have a negative view on public rights of way in general. Responses will be patchy and not too much weight should be given to responses. Responses by users should be given 70/30 weighting.

I think the intention is good, but strongly disagree with the weighting given in Table 1 (page 5) of your document.

All paths should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure they have not been blocked. If this needs to be done on a voluntary basis, could the council perhaps coordinate and send information on those that will be excluded from this proposal so that the other rights of way are not lost?

Paths in Rural areas need to be longer than the 1KM proposed, as in a rural situation people use paths further from their homes than this. The footpath shown on the map Cat D Bramton Hall to Mulwith 15.74/3/1 should be a Cat C as this connects with a permitted footpath allowing a local walk called the 'Dog Kennel Lane' walk to be completed. The footpath 15.74/1/1 is a road, not a footpath and should be maintained to highways standard.

The more I think about these proposals the more I am against them. Don't waste time and money prioritising, get on and fix the problems.

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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The WHOLE of the footpath network is IMPORTANT. I have no objection in principle to the idea of prioritisation, but the DANGER of that approach is that those on low priority may receive little or late attention with the further DANGER of a closure notice simply because of lack of maintenance. Whilst local community input is important, I know of at least two footpaths in villages where the locals would PREFER FOR CLOSURE even though they are well used, some local residents would have more privacy if they were not used - possibly leading to the community giving a LOW priority rating. I do fully realise that budgets have been cut, but the footpath budgets have been cut over the years to a GREATER degree than other services, and as the council admits there is already a reliance on voluntary helpers. I do strongly feel that the greatest danger of prioritisation is that some paths which someone has identified of less importance will simply be left to "die".

"Community" - is this to be taken to mean that residents of the CP in which the path is situated will be able to veto the views of "secondary community" outsiders (eg walkers from nearby areas) who use these paths on a regular(ish) basis? I live in Ripon, but walk in the area around Pateley Bridge at least once a month, and the wider Yoredale/Wharfedale/Swaledale area about the same. I would strongly object to seeing "real" paths of proper scenic or historical worth neglected in favour of short "dog walks" adjacent to towns and villages.

All public footpaths and bridleways need to be cared for.

The countryside is not just for ramblers, they don't own it & they should be told they don't.

In principle, this would appear to be a reasonable approach to managing public rights of way. However, the categorisation process is at best complicated and subjective, and could result in un-intended consequences and the loss of rights of ways.

Footpaths allow people to go from a to b, anywhere in N Yorks, irrespective of extent of use or location. Footpaths in AONBs should not have priority over other areas as these footpaths may not be the most used.

As with all matters of this nature it's very difficult to satisfy everyone without making it too complicated as I think you have done here.

I agree with the idea in principle however, the scoring system is heavily weighted towards characteristic value as opposed to community value. This surely can not be right as to a country village local paths, bridleways etc can be extremely important even if not highly placed on the characteristic category. I feel the weighting should be more 50/50

Approach appears satisfactory in theory - unable to comment on effective it is until put into action.

There are probably many opinions on how to determine community value!

The importance of leisure and tourism on the accessibility seems to be excluded. These rights of way are not exclusively for local communities

your proposals are too complicated and onerous to carry out efficiently

needs to be reasonably sustainable i.e. minimum maintenance. I don't agree that paths which are rarely used should have the least maintenance. I firmly believe that a path is unused or little used because there are too many problems with it. Very often these will be difficult gates/boggy ground/overgrowth and or upgrowth/ and in the main horses or other challenging animals i.e. bullocks grazing.

When assessing community value, I think it is important to include the views of walking groups and local naturalist and environmental groups as well as parish councils.

I am very sceptical about relying on information from or the views of parish councils, having had experience of Hunton PC refusing to recognise that certain problems even existed. I note the absence of any reference to intimidating landowners!

I agree with reservations as in all likelihood low priority routes will get neglected.

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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We believe that the community value is very important. We feel each parish needs encouraging to engage in the process. It is probable that many paths that are currently under used are under used because of their poor condition. As a community group we are keen to be involved in helping to create connecting or circular routes that the public can be encouraged to use

This consultation asks whether respondents agree with this approach in principle. Kirkbymoorside Town Council agrees with the proposed approach to categorising the public rights of way network for future maintenance and management of the networks in principle. The importance of retaining all PRow's, was agreed as these are essential for both residents and visitors. Any restriction of the PRow network would be to great detriment. It is hoped that as a result of the proposed approach a fully facilitated Right to Roam is retained. However, this consultation presents the opportunity to raise concerns about the present state of the PRow's in Kirkbymoorside and the surrounding areas. The proposed approach will prioritise routine maintenance in areas where paths are agreed as being more important or better used. This raises concerns that those PRow's that have been neglected and are presently difficult to navigate will deteriorate further.

Experience with NYCC's prioritisation of the road network in which 'B' roads consistently receive nil to very little maintenance suggests the same will happen to characterisation of PRow's. This exercise is purely about saving money, something that communities have not voted for. Walking is officially the most common recreational sport in the Country and North Yorkshire is a particularly attractive place for visitors as well as locals to walk and exercise - so why attempt to reduce the standard of access and ignore/defer meeting statutory obligations through path categorisation. NYCC should try diverting some of the vast amounts of money currently spent on creating and maintaining cycle ways

Path characteristics are an important part of the community, said characteristics will have been formed over a period of time and would possibly come under heritage.

There should be no categorisation. NYCC has a duty to maintain all rights of way. Also they provide value not always appreciated by small communities, such as providing linking routes and attracting visitors who bring revenue to North Yorkshire businesses. Visitors often take their information from maps, particularly Ordnance Survey and guide books which give no indication of the "grade" of path. What seems like a good walk could be ruined.

See final comments

This exercise to date must have taken a lot of time, and will continue to do so to fully implement. At a time of budget cuts, the expense of this must be considerable. I doubt many will have the will to fully read, consider, and come to any other conclusion than it being too bureaucratic and will never get different interest groups agreeing. Far better to abandon the plan entirely before any more money is thrown at it, and continue as before, even with, if necessary, reduced funding. How about charging landowners who fail to maintain the areas they are responsible for? Has there been any demand from the public for this exercise to be carried out?

Although we agree with the proposed categorisation, we disagree with the proposed weighting towards the 'characteristic' value against the 'community' value. We feel it should be an even weighting of 50/50. A small village may use a path or right of way that they feel is very important to their community however, with the weighting that you propose, it favours 'characteristic' values.

Community value should only be applied to paths around settlements. The vast majority of paths in our county are away from settlements and are very important for health, recreation and tourism.

I think that Public Bridleways should be maintain as a priority because they are available for use by walker, horse riders and cyclists. Bridleways are 'Best Value'! Horse riders & perhaps to a lesser degree cyclists are vulnerable road users. There are miles fewer Bridleways for horse riders than there are footpaths for Walkers. WE know that a great many footpaths were wrongfully recorded in the 50s when the 'definitive map' process was first set up. Horse riders need Bridleways.

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I could not understand any of it! So I disagree. You are not talking to the people. Its a detailed proposal that I looked at for 20 mins and was baffled. Talk to the people and give us something we can understand. Not CA and 4b and try and put it together. I want a map that says where you can give support and where you cant. Know that funding is short! Just put it on a map! And where is the ask for volunteers? I may in my local area but you have NOT bought me on board with this.

I think that funding to maintain ROW should be increased not decreased. I appreciate that NYCC has an overall reduced funding however while ROW should be increased, other services such as education, should be decreased to make up for this. ROW are a major contributor to health and wellbeing for many people

Yes this seems to be a sensible approach overall, however, it is essential that landowner and business interests are considered in the mix also. Rights of way have different impacts on landowners and businesses in the vicinity of the routes themselves, both in terms of maintenance and upgrading of sections of the path, the economic impact of rights of way (benefitting the visitor economy as rights of way users draw upon services provided by local businesses in the area), and the value that local residents using them place on them.

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Determining Community Vale will add further complexity to already over complex proposal. A simple alternative is to give Field Officers to review the category of any path (upwards or downwards) to reflect individual circumstances. This enables account to be taken of community value - whatever that means

The map showing the proposed categorisation is in very early stages of preparation. In many of the areas I have looked at what are obviously through routes have different levels of categorisation. It is not just the simple classification that must be looked at but the overall length of the route and where it actually goes ie a route between two local villages should have the same categorisation throughout at the highest level with extra protection because it is a through route and might well extend further or be a link into a neighbouring county. A 'link' is generally too short a length to provide a overall picture of its use.

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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Paths should be seen as route to somewhere whether around a village or connecting two villages and this should be taken into account when classifying them. eg a route between two communities should have a higher categorisation to take that into account. Paths can be seen as long distance routes from the map whereas looking at the separate links would not give this impression.

I understand why NYCC is having to make cuts to services but I fear that the proposed categorisation will give incentive to less conscientious landowners to make even less effort to contributing to maintaining our rights of way if they know that paths on their land have been assigned a low priority category. I can see why paths in and around towns and villages have been given a high priority, to enable people to get around their locality, but it ignores the large numbers of leisure walkers like myself, who walk longer distances in many different areas. I accept that parish councils are the primary community, but there needs to be more publicity to engage the secondary community user groups like my own, which is an informal collection of people.

This is agreed by everyone but page 6 states 'to introduce a measure of community value into this model AT A LATER DATE ' ??? - what does that mean as it contradicts the above statement

Once again NYCC has used public resources in the form of officer time, to come up with a highly complex system. How many hours of officer time and over what period has this taken so far? An easier broader brush with less discrimination against riders would have been to in principle deal immediately with obstructions, and favour multi user routes over just footpaths which only cater for walkers and nobody else.

Paths should be kept open even if not popular at the moment as future generations of the public may wish to use them to a greater degree. Once lost it is very difficult to reopen them.

We have some concerns. For instance, the Harrogate ringway is not regarded as a major footpath. We find this strange.

Path Characteristics: the value should change from 1km to 4km into the rural area from an urban area

I think it is essential to include an element of community value when prioritising upkeep and maintenance of footpaths. In many respects it is more important than the characteristics approach - but a combination of the two is very sensible.

Community views should have more weight added in the scoring process

This is an amazing piece of work and can fulfill the mantra that "when in doubt, reprioritise." It will take a considerable number of resources to categorise the characteristics and value of each PROW, according to the proposed document, which is, in my opinion subjective. A cyclist, horse rider, and walker will have differing understanding of the terms likely, almost certainly, and inconvenient when referring to the usability of a PROW and, depending on the cycle, horse and clothing, would also be in disagreement as to the possibility of injury. NYCC staff who are categorising these PROW's may fall into any of these three types of users or worse, they may not belong to any of the group and have a totally different understanding.

The grading was a map exercise and assume that routes have not been inspected Settle Town Paths are very important for avoiding traffic and should be given a high priority. Paths cross Parish boundaries and both take people out or in into other Counties. Circular and connecting paths are of importance. Access issues also should have priority level and no stiles etc

all the time will be used to input the computer instead of getting out and doing something,Ridiculous

I am not in agreement with the low value given to the following categories: AONB - these should be 10 Routes avoiding roads - 10 onto access land - 10 multi user trails - 10

Very important to include community value and village character

I think categorising for maintenance should be biased towards maintaining a route "commensurate with it's use". i.e. if a larger number of vehicles is deemed to be using a particular route, it would be maintained in such a way that temporary closure orders due to "damage by motor vehicles" become a thing of the past.

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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Overall it's way too complicated: - RoWs with higher rights (e.g. bridleways) should have their own category and high priority because that benefits the greatest range of users for the same amount of resource put in. The emphasis on surfaced routes is not right - most problems are on unsurfaced routes. Our group is not sure about the community input part. It's right that communities and user groups should be consulted on RoW issues. But in practice they could only give a view on different route priorities within their area, not overall. Some parishes might get no resource. Some might be nimbys and not want routes opened up. The question about paths with greatest use being prioritised is problematic. It's more dangerous etc to encounter problems in remote areas so the effect on the user is greater, despite there being fewer users. The number of users is not a relevant criterion for importance - there is a statutory duty to maintain all rights of way on the Definitive Map.

The use of paths is twofold. One is for the purpose of travel between points [villages etc.] and two the enjoyment of a walk in the countryside. Most of the paths outside conurbations seem to fall in the low category [i.e. the path between Melsonby and Barton {nearest Post Office} obstructed and signs removed and Melsonby and Gilling West {blocked at Thorndale} medium priority 3 years ago. Not a good omen

All paths are important and should carry the same categorisation as the countryside is a big pull for tourists in particular walkers and riders. If their route is impassable they will not come to that part again. There is nothing more frustrating than planning a route to discover half way that it is impassable and then have to retrace one's steps

All footpaths should be maintained to the same standard, even if that standard has to be reduced due to funding issues. Users need a consistent approach throughout the county. Access and the thrill of exploring the network of footpaths in North Yorkshire is being underestimated by assuming some paths are more worthy than others

The focus of NYCC's proposed cuts to Rights of Way maintenance is on 'community needs' and usefulness at the local level. Though this includes such things as safe use by school pupils and short-distance access on community path networks, it does not emphasize *actual* usage on, for example, through-routes (LDPs, named, funded or otherwise) and challenge routes. This is ironic since NYCC's boundaries include two of most heavily used routes in the UK, namely Wainwright's Coast to Coast and the Three Yorkshire Peaks. NYCC also includes some of England's most well-known LDPs including the Pennine Way, Pennine Bridleway, Dales Way, Ribble Way and Cleveland Way.

The cost of conducting this exercise is not included in any part of this consultation, monies which would have been better assigned to the footpath team. The cost of running the "Characteristics" exercise, assuming it was agreed, would also drain money away from monies which should be allocated (prioritised) to footpaths, as would any future ongoing exercise of re prioritising footpaths. "Community value" is far too flimsy, many people who use the footpaths do not reside in North Yorkshire, tourists for example, tourism is an extremely valuable part of income for NYCC and businesses who operate in this area. To narrow down the "consultation" in this way does not serve all footpath users.

The Trans Pennine Trail partnership welcomes the opportunity to include community value. The monetary value of volunteer work in North Yorkshire is shared with our TPT Contact Officer in North Yorkshire on a quarterly basis.

I understand you have to do a large amount of work with a decreasing amount of money but I fear you will be so busy categorising and prioritising that you will not have time to do the job. Your legal responsibilities apply to all ROW not just popular ones.

there are popular paths that are today underused solely due to the poor condition and maintenance and these paths must remain in the top category

Our village is not well known (Low Worsall) and as such some of our footpaths and bridlepaths are not widely used except for villagers so may be seen as having little value for the wider community, yet they are well used and extremely well valued by us.

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 believe that the public rights of way network is a historic inheritance for which the County Council has legal responsibility. This inheritance should be safeguarded in its entirety for the benefit of this and future generations

I think a higher weighting in the scoring system should be given to the community value rather than the characteristics of the path. The scoring should reflect the value of the path to the local community.

As long as the importance of walkers visiting the area to the local economy is recognised

I have read your comments on the difficulty of assessing community value, but feel it is not up to Parish Councils to take over the role of managing this system.

The Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership has a series of 'promoted routes', which are listed with walk downloads/leaflets on Partnership website www.forestofbowland.com. The AONB Unit works with local volunteers to prioritise these promoted routes for any monitoring and maintenance efforts within the AONB. The AONB Unit would welcome the opportunity to input this information on promoted routes to this proposed categorisation of PRoW in North Yorkshire. Please contact Elliott Lorimer on 01200 448000 or elliott.lorimer@lancashire.gov.uk

The methodology is sound but there should be provision to increase the weighting given to community value in exceptional, and agreed, cases.

We think that there should be an additional category based on the number of reported defects on a PROW called 'Number Reported Defects' and an appropriate additional score assigned which moves the score upward for each time the defect is reported otherwise some paths will never get repaired. See comments on Community Value later in the questionnaire.

It would be useful to know what strategies are in place for Parish Councils and user groups before the mapped category bandings are published on the website. Furthermore, if or when a banding is set for a PROW, how can it be challenged or reviewed? Also, how often would the banding database be updated?

There are popular PRW that are underused due to poor maintenance, these must be kept open as a top priority.

Although I agree to categorisation as necessary, I fear that some less used paths may be overlooked and not maintained. This is already happening in some areas with ploughing across routes. At least now any obstructions can be reported and acted upon, whereas if a route falls in an unimportant category nothing might be done. This will affect walking groups and individuals.

1. "A number of routes promoted by NYCC". This means "not all". I think "All routes promoted by NYCC should score 8. 2. The phrase "The whole length of the route..." is used several times. Does this mean, eg, "The whole length of the route within 1km of villages centres"? If so this will tend to break the network and the links between villages. Please clarify. 3. Routes described in popular guide books should have a higher score than 4.

I found no mention of the possibility of promoting local business eg tourism. Better paths draw in walking groups. MTB trails cyclists etc. A long term overview which includes the possibility of developing in an area rather than just a settlement might be worthwhile particularly in more isolated or remote hamlets with poor road access. Eg a thriving café in Feizor (near Settle) which is accessed by footpath and bridleways more than by road.

it is very important to get the views of the community, particularly if the community (like ours) has so few public rights of way

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

I disagree with the last two bullet points in the statement of service delivery principles because you have not taken account of requests made by the LAF at its meeting on 4 February 2016, to add specific reference to land managers in the penultimate bullet point and for an alternative wording to "a timely way" in the last bullet point. On the latter, I think that there should be some reference as to how NYCC is going to achieve the target of reducing the backlog of DMMO and PPO applications which it set itself in the report on Amendments to the Constitution, made to the Executive on 29 April 2014. I strongly disagree with the inclusion of community value in the categorisation for the following reasons: Parish Councils can respond on their view of the value of specific paths in this consultation (as Burton-in-Lonsdale PC has done). The categorisation project has already been delayed - the policy statement is a year late - including community value will delay it further.

We strongly agree with the comment (p30 of the consultation) on the achievement of operational efficiency by dealing with issues using the criteria only as a guide We remain concerned that NYCC staff spend too much time recording and planning the remedy of issues reported to them and too little time actually doing the required work.

I think that the community value should be given greater weight, given local knowledge of footpath usage

The consequence of the approach advocated by the consultation will be a lower standard of rights of way management. This is not acceptable in view of substantial and robust evidence about the value of the network to North Yorkshire's tourism economy and its importance in helping the County's residents to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Parts of the network defined as lower priority in the proposed scoring system include Rights of Way in the Nidderdale AONB that will suffer disproportionately. This is inconsistent with the statement of service delivery principles set out in the consultation document. It is also inconsistent with the County Council's formal endorsement in April 2009 of the AONB's current Management Plan that contains objectives intended to improve the accessibility of rights of way network.

The present system does not work and I cannot see that your proposed system will for paths in categories C & D either. Many paths would possibly be walked and higher community values if they were more accessible and not blocked or not respected by some farmers who clearly do not want walkers on their land. No enforcement action appears to be taken in these cases when clearly it should, so what will change ? I see no value in categorising some paths in category D as they will NEVER receive any attention, they should therefore be combined with category C paths to enable them to have at least some chance of receiving attention ! Community value needs to assessed on paths that could be used if they were properly maintained, many are not used because of problems !

Categorisation appears OK, but the Definitive Map needs expanding to include paved pedestrian routes, especially in market towns throughout the County. The public footpath between Wensleydale Avenue, Skipton BD23 2TS and Otley Road A6069 to the north of Middle Laithe BD23 6DR is shown as Category A. This route, at the northern edge of the Elsey Croft housing development is included on the Definitive Map. It has now been block paved by the developer and included in the landscaping. I assume the review will NOT downgrade this route!

Route categorisation should not initially be used if the Issue raised is the responsibility of the Landowner or Tenant. I await further details re Community Value. I do not think you have given sufficient weight to path users.

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

Please provide any comments on the proposed approach of c...

1) Ideally, PROWs should be maintained to a consistently high standard. The statement of principles does not refer to your statutory duty and it sounds like you will not be meeting your statutory duty as a result of these proposals. However, we understand you are not responsible for the budgetary constraints forced upon you, so we feel we have little choice other than to accept the approach in practice. 2) We feel that the community score should have equal weighting to the characteristic score. The community are the main users of the footpaths, and increasingly it appears we are likely to be called upon to help maintain them, so our views should be given at least equal weight. 3) You say on page 4 that you may decide to make a larger financial contribution to the maintenance of furniture on higher category paths. We do not agree. If your budget is short you should focus on things only you can do, not on propping up landowners to deliver their end of the bargain.

Whilst it is desirable for local voices to be heard it is unfair to individuals in those areas where the community voice is ineffectively coordinated through the Parish Council.

I live in North Cowton. There are many walkers and dog walkers and very few footpaths we can use because of obstruction or being ploughed out. I am worried that because our footpaths already require a high degree of determination to use to overcome the obstacles they will end up being a low category. There is a lovely path from North Cowton to Croft circuit and the pathway is difficult from the Moulton lane footpath sign. Last year the crops were allowed to obscure it - and now there is a fence at the top of the hill blocking the original marked path and the gap through the hedge is impossible. The footbridge on the footpath close to the Blacksmith's pub is not there (my daughter fell in the stream trying to cross) and the horse in the field was so skittish we turned back. The footpath from Moulton station across the field is ploughed out and then becomes unidentifiable. Moving this path to the track would allow a circular walk - invaluable for the local community and improving health.

We think there is a wider group of individuals who should be consulted. Many walk widely in the countryside without reference to a particular community.

The proposals appear to show changes in category along the paths. If so, it suggests that there will be uneven treatment. Better, surely to have paths classified in a manner analogous to roads.

You should also take in to account individual's views. These are the people who use the rural footpath network.

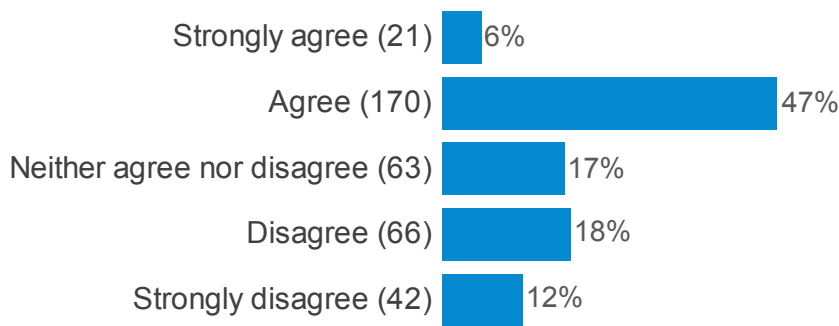
In my opinion the proposed approach is entirely at odds with your statutory duty to assert and protect public rights over the public rights of way network. For good reason this duty is not selective the protection covering the whole network equally and so to propose the adoption of policies that weaken the protection is to me unacceptable.

There are popular PRWs that are currently under used solely due to poor maintenance and these must be kept open as top priority

Would like to see the scoring for community value to be given equal weight as the path characteristics

In our opinion 'Routes within urban areas' should have the same characteristic score as 'Routes within 1km of Urban fringe' and 'Routes within 1km of village centres'

**I agree with the different categories for proposed path characteristics
Please see table on page five of the full document**



Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

Sorry but this is just a get out to do nothing. Sustrands is a complete waste of time. They only have one ambition and that is to cover the whole rural landscape with tarmac. Tarmac is Sustrands second name. As I said before learn from the National Parks. NYCC are so tied up with Motorways and silly High speed rail lines which nobody wants. Its time they started to understand what our countryside is about, I served on the NYCC LAF for some time and what a waste of time that was. You had women who's only interest was horse riding and that was it. Absolutly nothing ever got done. Prioritizing is just an excuse to do nothing and we all know it. I came across a stile which was made up of barbed wire, When I complained how dangerous it was they said it was low priority!. Which shows the intelligence of people making those decisions.

Because catagorising takes up staff time that should be used to get paths fixed.

usage and location must also be a consideration and the precept of the local Parish Council. Small precept leaves little spare cash for rural footpath upkeep

BRIDLEPATHS????????????

BWs and those with higher user status should automatically be in a higher category (unless really over riding factors such as dead end), they represent better value for money as multi user paths

this categorisation appears to disadvantage unsurfaced routes that still need to be maintained. Routes avoiding A or B class roads should be classified higher as they are of most use to horse riders, cyclists and walkers who want to keep of roads.

All paths are inportant for access for different people.

It is not helpful to categorise PROWs in this way. They have no basis in law and they merely serve to excuse the NYCC team for inaction in regard to a large number of PROWs. It would be more helpful to put forward proposals to increase efficiencies in path protection so that the standard of PROWs can be improved beyond historical levels.

Equine used routes off the main roads should be a separate heading.

PROW.,s were created originally to give access to the countryside. The original act of parliament implies the escape of urban environments. The proposed path characteristics are significantly biased towards urban environments.

See earlier comment

Equal priority for rural pathways

I think avoiding A and B roads should have a higher score 10. There is no mention of unsurfaced (i.e. untarmaked) multi user routes e.g. bridleways - this should be a category with a score of 8. How is a category to be changed? e.g. a new livery yard set up which would see much increased use of a previously low score route.

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

Rural pathways are not necessarily used less than those on the edge of urban areas; they should be given the same priority.

As these footpaths and rights of way have been in use for many years, without any apparent risk or danger to others, surely this categorisation is unnecessary. Check your spelling please on this question !

The qualification given to Multi-user trails does not recognise that some are 'byways open to all traffic' and that some users will be on or in motor vehicles.

The majority of the network is in category C or D and I see nothing in the document which guarantees that works on such PROWs will ever rise to the top of the priority list as there is no accounting for the length of time for which a problem has been outstanding.

We believe and strongly feel that multi user routes (whether surfaced or not) should score 10 and not 8

I think that multi user routes e.g. Bridleway should have a higher score eg 10 as they can be used by more users/groups.

Multiuser paths e.g. Bridleways whether surfaced or not should be given a 10

As explained in response to the previous question, even paths which do not have the characteristics listed in the table are important and should be maintained to an adequate standard. There's an argument that there will be other sources of funding for maintenance of nationally important routes and that our local authority should give priority to local routes which would not have access to other potential sources of funding.

Routes within 1km of village centres - would like to see this designated 8 rather than 6

Please see earlier note about apparent omission of long-distance footpaths (which are not national trails)

Small village and rural paths are severely disadvantaged by these proposals, further alienating rural communities by reducing the services provided to them. It is not possible to fully understand the impact of these categories until community value is brought into the equation, such paths are inevitably more important to rural communities who may not benefit from parks or tarmac paths available to users within towns.

It's an oversimplification that will lead to a degradation in paths that may have a use not easily defined using the parameters

Take no account of actual usage, whether individually or part of a through-route. 'National Trails', at least, can offer some usage data (they have one or more website(s), support, and voluntary group(s)).

At a time when people are advised to walk to increase health all footpaths should be a priority regardless of location. The council has a duty to maintain the paths and I am sure that a more proactive, we will have the best paths and will recruit more volunteers etc would be more effective. The result of this policy will be paths falling into disrepair, which will then not be used, and the decision will be justified as the paths are no longer used. Already bridges have not been replaced and stiles are in a dangerous state,

There is no mention of the value of RoWs with higher rights, in that more types of user benefit from a single item of public expenditure. These should have a category and high value. The emphasis on surfaced routes is misplaced - most problems are on unsurfaced routes. The approach of giving low/no priority to some routes means they will fall into disuse and never be repaired. That is poor practice and gives the wrong signal to landowners. There is no allowance for the sensible practice of looking at surrounding routes when a ranger goes to an area: this is more efficient working.

Public footpaths around villages are very important to the local community, yet often neglected because they are overlooked in favour of urban areas when those inhabiting villages do so because they want to get out into the open air, are more likely to own a dog to walk, pedal cycle or horse to ride etc

Every public right of way is a right of way and one should be able to pass over it without difficulty.

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

I believe any footpath should be protected and maintained. If a grading system exists, it will be another excuse for unscrupulous land owners to restrict access through poor maintenance and lack of signage.

Account should also be taken of the impact of the maintenance issue. The one dimensional model proposed by NYCC would fund minor problems in high priority areas before potentially dangerous problems or complete blockages elsewhere. NYCC would presumably remain legally liable for public safety in abrogating its statutory responsibilities for highways and rights of way.

Too much overlap in their benefits to their users.

The proposed system of categorization and character scoring enables you to place nearly 2/3 of our public rights of way network in the 2 bottom categories. You provide no indication of the action you take when complaints are received about such paths but I conclude on the basis of your past record it will be minimal - and in the case of cat. D non existent. This gives a clear message to landowners and others who seek to deny public rights that they can do so with impunity. This is a disgraceful message for a Highway Authority to give out and I know of no other Authority which would consider it acceptable.

see previous comments

All PROW are important, and provide opportunities for recreation, exercise and accessing green space. They are part of our heritage and must be maintained.

It seems possible that land owners are taking advantage of this situation and influencing a decision which will benefit them in the long term, either by offsetting costs to the tax payers which should be legally met by them (the land owners) and / or allowing or encouraging the neglect and future disintegration of the public footpath network.

You have not justified why our right of ways are being impacted, you simply couch it under budget constraints. Loose bonus' s pay rises for poor performance and move to cheaper offices. That's what the private sector does

For Cat C routes, the distance from the village centre should be increased to 3 miles

I design my walking routes by drawing them out on an Ordinance Survey map. Currently all PROW are of equal value and it is most likely that there will not a a problem with a route. Under the new categorisations I would need to know which paths are low priority and therefore would have a greater chance of finding a problem

Bridleways taking vulnerable horse riders away from main roads should be in the highest category.

The paths in urban areas as so well used that it is likely they will not have major problems. The rural areas need more protection and action

I think it is vital to protect all PROWs and even look toward establishing new ones

Routes providing an alternative to a and B roads should be rated more highly

Footpaths and public rights of way can sometimes be the only asset villages have, and have a range of users; they link villages allowing communities to enjoy the countryside, as well as being used by walkers to make longer routes, dog walkers for daily exercise, local children for recreation away from busy roads.

1 Km in rural situations is too short.

It wastes resources to prioritise. And sends out the wrong message to farmers.

The path values assigned are already strongly biased towards "town" and "establishment." Where are the Class 8 and 10 - valued routes recommended by -eg - the RA? This organisation at least cares about the provision and maintenance of RsoW and puts in the volunteer person-hours to prove it. Where is the invited input from other walking groups?

These rights of way should be open to everyone

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.**Please provide more information to help us understand why...**

The proposals would appear to give undue priority to paths close to urban areas. These paths are mostly heavily used by dog walkers and so are generally in a usable state. Most people wanting to explore and enjoy the countryside of North Yorkshire will, instead, wish to use those paths further from settlements and main roads.

Paths that don't have the characteristics of cat A,B & C paths are "dumped" in cat D "routes that don't have any other characteristics" and allocated a low priority score, when these may have special characteristics which might justify a higher priority. For example, I note that there is a stretch of the coastal path between Reighton Gap and Hunmanby Gap shown as cat D which is close to the edge of boulder clay cliffs which are eroding; also part of the path descends steeply and is shuttered - unfortunately the clay erodes and the aggregate used to top up the steps to the top of the risers also gets washed away and there is a trip hazard. This stretch has a low priority partly because it is some distance from Reighton Village, which is only a small village. However, it is far more heavily used than the other paths in the village (which are correctly classified as cat C) because tourists and walkers use it, especially the summer visitors to the local holiday villages.

Footpaths have different characteristics depending on the Geodiversity of the location, everywhere is different and some fps will be more difficult to maintain if the geology comprises friable rocks where as if the rocks are competent.

The footpath network of the UK is a unique asset and a relatively cheap way to give access to the countryside to everybody on an equal basis. In our society we are rapidly becoming sedentary and obesity levels are soaring, we should be doing our utmost to encourage walking and using these assets to the full. Your proposal will lead to paths categorised as D and C rapidly becoming impassable and lost to all. A friend of mine wrote the following lines: Rough Guide to North Yorkshire, 2025 edition, extract: "There used to be more than a thousand miles of signed and maintained paths, but stray out of the national parks and you'll become an explorer rather than a walker. Most have been unused for years, so you won't be expected, hence the barbed wire you'll have to struggle over." This sadly will be the legacy of your proposals.

Paths that lie within a radius of 1km from a village centre will be given a characteristic score of 6. There are some paths that enable users to avoid dangerous roads on the outskirts of villages. These should be given a higher characteristic score where there is a high risk of injury. Even paths avoiding A and B roads, which can also be dangerous, are only given a score of 6.

The low characteristic score proposed for "Other routes" would imply that, with funding cuts, these routes will be neglected whereas giving them a higher score would end up enhancing leisure and tourism opportunities.

your proposals are too complicated and onerous to carry out efficiently

Footpaths being promoted from the Ryedale towns by Ryedale District Council should receive the same weighting as NYCC promoted routes. RDC is also working on routes between the market towns and these should also be scored like NYCC promoted routes. These routes are not mentioned. The Ebor Way and Centenary Way should receive the same score as a long distance footpath. These routes are important to local people and visitors alike and help to promote healthy and social activity. Low scoring paths which link to more highly scored routes to form a circular walk should receive a priority scoring. The former will be low priority if there is an obstruction or problem on route and the community will lose a circular route.

PROW's should be categorised in terms of when action is required due for example to blocked path's, fallen bridges, poor way marking etc. and NOT because it has been simply designated a low priority status. Even if some paths are less popular than others, this is not an excuse to avoid ensuring proper and timely maintenance, particularly with regard to safety aspects, is carried out with the same priority as all other paths. Many people prefer to walk on less used paths which often offer better views, are less noisy, and less disturbing enabling the full beauty and sounds of the wild to be heard and seen.

All rights of way should be maintained.

See final comments

See previous comments

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

The approach itself is logical and supported. There are, however, 2 omissions that result in some perverse results: 1. The path categorisation appears to fail to recognise the presence of village centres that are just inside the North York Moors National Park (eg. Battersby Junction) as such some routes within 1 km of the village are classed as category D rather than C. 2. Parishes that straddle the NYMNP boundary (such as Ingleby Greenhow Parish) are key access routes into the Park's paths network. The categorisation could be improved if it was able to recognise the role of some paths in connecting to such neighbouring areas.

NYCC should impose Traffic Regulation Orders on all unsurfaced ROW and keep them only for non-motor users. Recreational motors (4x4s and off-road motorbikes) do hugely disproportionate amounts of damage and excluding them would more than make up the funding gap that NYCC needs to find. Allowing 4x4s and motorbikes onto green lanes because of the lanes horse-and-cart historical use is plainly crazy.

National Trails should include the Coast to Coast Walk - the most used long distance trail. All dead end and dangerous paths should, regardless of other characteristics be given a score of 4. This includes paths ending in an unbridged river, an unmanned railway crossing, a trunk road with no crossing or requiring walking on a narrow verge to reach the link path or simply "just ending in the middle of no where". A walking network between villages needs to be protected by proving at least one path linking the villages with a score of 6 (or more)

Further to my previous answer, I cannot understand the logic of different sections of the same path being assigned different categories, which can be as wide apart as A and D in some cases. To my mind, this lowers the classification of the whole path to D, because if the D section is allowed to fall into disuse, the A section will go the same way. It worries me when I look at the map of my own area (Kellington, Selby District) and see the great majority of the paths given C and D priority. The nearest Category B path is one that I have had reason to report previously, as being deliberately flooded and /or ploughed up and not reinstated. I do appreciate that the footpaths officers are doing their best in difficult circumstances, but I fear that the huge benefits of leisure walking could be curtailed, from maintenance of good health to spending by visitors around the county.

The path characteristics are very top heavy towards urban areas e.g. Routes within 1km of urban fringe (8points) gets 2 points over 1km of village centres (6points)

There is no network for higher rights users, so those routes which are used a lot if obstructed will be self selecting as to being reported (those that are not used much will not have complaints reported as much).

we are concerned about the categorisation and need some clarification on the thinking. For instance, "Routes within 1km of village centres" - "Paths that lie within a radius of 1km from a village centre" contains some 2200 km of paths which is 1/3 of the total. In our parish, this represents most of the footpaths that we need and use. It seems that there is a definite attempt to categorise so as to save money on easily maintainable community amenities - styles, gates and occasionally bridges.

whats the point if nothing is going to be done anyway on the ground!!!!

There is a relatively high percentage of paths 'with no particular characteristics' as described with the perceived lowest priority. Does this threaten their future as rights of way, as neglect could be a cause for even less use, and subsequent reason for their withdrawal as rights of way. There are also a significant section of paths 'promoted by NYCC'. Is this likely to continue? If not what impact does it have on their scores? What impact does development have on any of categories of rights of way?

Route characteristic score – routes avoiding A and B roads should be much higher probably 10. There should be a category for multi user unsurfaced routes and have a score of 8

No allowance appears to have been made for those wishing to enjoy walking in the countryside such as walking groups

We don't think it is as easy as that to define which is important and which is not. It depends on your lifestyle, means of exercise, disabilities and your objectives

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

Those paths low on the list , could if a land owner wanted become impassable and not be able to be used at all

See previous answer

The prioritisation of footpaths is far too complex, maintaining or adjusting prioritisation will drain money away from the footpaths. There is no mechanism allocated for challenging future or current prioritisation.

Path characteristics are considered unnecessarily complex.....as the proposal can result in a single path having 2 or more characteristics eg a footpath becoming a bridleway part way along its length

Please see my previous comments plus concentrating resources on ROW perceived to be of a high category could prevent other potentially useful ROW not being used.

I think that rural paths should have higher priority than that proposed, in particular those in the AONBs and giving access to access land should be the highest priority. If necessary replacing the urban ones which will surely be cleared by regular local users.

The 1km limit should be 3 as that is a reasonable walk. This should apply to all villages, not just service centres/large villages.

Categorisation of the rights of way network will inevitably result in the continuing neglect of many paths. Farmers quickly know which paths on their land will receive little or no attention and will undertake willful obstructions and not perform their legal maintenance responsibilities. The history of our land will be illegally re-written to the impoverishment of our communities.

I would request that 'Routes within AONBs' are scored at least 8. There does also seem to be a bias of the scoring in favour of more urban PRoWs. Whilst it is accepted that these PRoWs are those closest to large centres of population, routes in rural areas are often popular for visitors to the countryside.

Routes within 1Km is much to short. Riders and walkers come mostly from further afield and links between villages must be maintained. The distance would be better set at 3Km

I think that routes in the AONBs should be in category A or B because they are more likely to be used than PRoW outside protected landscapes.

The application of the criteria an o created an urbanised solution with virtually all paths beyond , say 2 miles from towns and villages falling in the lowest priority making it potentially impossible to enjoy a country walk and so failing to promote walking as a healthy recreation. We are also concerned about the complexity of the process and how the plans for maintenance of "low priority paths " squares " with your statutory responsibilities.

Nidderdale AONB contains the highest density of rights of way in North Yorkshire outside the two National Parks and apparently has the highest recorded number of unresolved complaints about network condition. Nidderdale attracted over 1 452 000 visitors in 2012 who contributed an estimated £61.8 million to the rural economy in the same year, and we have evidence to suggest that a very large number of these visitors use public rights of way. The designated area contains a section of the Dales Way, a section of the National Byway, most of the Nidderdale Way and most of the Six Dales Trail as well as popular and well-used local routes like the Ripon Rowel. Management of these routes in the past has failed to overcome obstructions or to resolve long-standing definitive map anomalies. The condition of signposting, stiles and gates is at best uneven. The proposed scoring system, which places the AONB ninth in a hierarchy of 13 priorities will exacerbate problems on these rights of way. And

See previous question & answer.

Routes promoted other than by NYCC should be given 8. This should include routes in guide books, local leaflets & internet sites. Should ALL routes within an AONB be given 6. Some C class roads are dangerous for pedestrians and routes avoiding these should be given 6. Other routes should not be ignored if the problem is caused by the landowner or tenant.

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

1) The paths in our parish will fall into Cat C/D. 'Routes within 1km of a village centre' needs clarification. Does that mean the start of the route has to be within 1km of a village centre as the crow flies? How is the village centre defined? How is 'the whole route' defined? 2) In category C/D routes linking villages/towns should be given higher priority than those which don't. They serve a useful purpose to get from A to B and also provide links and points of contact between people in different and sometimes otherwise isolated communities. Equally paths which link the National Park PROW network to villages just outside the park should also have higher priority. 3) The consultation doesn't say where the 'cut off' is likely to be. Namely which categories are likely to get little or no money spent on them except in near death circumstances!. Your experience must be able to give you an indication of this and this information should have been provided in the consultation.

What is the definition of a small village. Population? From your table all footpaths in a small village will not be regarded as high priority - in fact they will all be category C or lower. There should be at least 2 to 3 footpaths of a minimum of category B for every community. Walking has to be encouraged. Despite at least 5 potential good walking footpaths in North Cowton - people end up walking a circuit on the road rather than attempt to stagger over a potentially leg breaking recently ploughed field right to the hedges completely removing all evidence of the previous footpath.

Riverside and canalside paths to have higher categorisation i.e. 8 as provide strong links between villages and towns Rural paths 1km from vilgaaes to have equal categorisation as within 1km of urban fringe - need to provide evidence of comparative usage

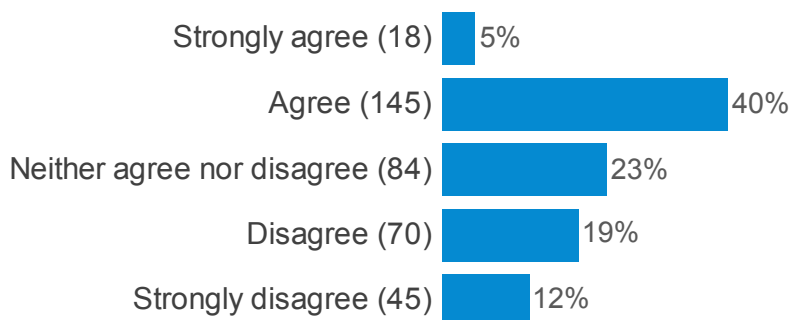
Footpaths which are within 1km of rural centres should have an 8 score like urban areas. Why should not village dwellers have equally good footpaths.

Rural footpaths should have a higher priority. They are ones where ordinary local residents are able to walk from their front door and get valuable exercise. Yet most of these are in the C and D category. Why should boring urban routes and mass participation routes get such priority treatment? That will only increase the divide between the two.

This table lacks a great deal of information and consequently is unhelpful. For example about 66% of the network falls into category C & D - what are the actual consequences with respect to the proposed characteristic score? In the Q/A document you state that you are unable to set public service standards but aim to set them before the summer of 2018! In my opinion it is unreasonable to ask people for an opinion without giving a firm timed commitment of the corrective action you will initiate following complaints etc. It is hard to avoid the inference in your document, being presented to owners of land to which the public have legitimate access, that in many cases action by NYCC following complaints will simply not be followed up.

Routes within 1km is much too short as rides and walks are mostly further afield and links to neighbouring villages must be maintained. Distance should be 3km

I think that route types in the path characteristic table are prioritised appropriately. Please see page five of the full document.



Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

The more routes and paths and ways which are looked after the more they will be used NYCC have been falling behind with their legal obligations for years. You have only to see the damage trail bikes do every week and NYCC do absolutely nothing about them. How many patrols do you send out every week to catch them and the answer is none. When you do you do it all wrong like Seggimire Lane which is a good example of how not to do it. I remember when the plans were sent to me the Grid Refs were in completely the wrong place. Perhaps we should put more money into who we employ.

I am concerned that routes within urban areas are given a much higher score (10) than those near villages (6). Whilst I realise that there are far more rural paths than there are urban and therefore more costly to maintain, I think this undervalues the importance of local walks for many (often elderly) people living in villages who already have far fewer leisure opportunities than people living in towns.

Because staff time spent on path characteristic tables is time that could and should be spent on fixing the paths.

Again, no mention of bridlepaths and the roads are dangerous. There are few enough bridle ways without losing more

Higher user status paths should have a higher characteristic score

you fail to mention promoted routes. Ride Yorkshire does pleasure routes and there are routes that are promoted by Bridleway groups. Where do these stand in terms of priorities. I am currently write a guide book for horse riders in and around the Nork Moors and many rides of a circular nature, many in the North York Moors but there are also going to be routes out of the Park if these are promoted then they need to be in good condition! Remember a walker and cyclists don't have the problems horse riders do, a horse can't climb a fence, if a BW is blocked then diverting on a horse is much harder than on a cycle or on foot. This means that BW are of the highest priority when it comes to Access.

see previous comment

because some routes are important to large numbers some routes to smaller all are important to someone.

See previous comment re urban bias

They are irrelevant because the whole process of prioritising routes is unhelpful and unnecessary. The best performing path protection authorities do not adopt this practice.

Cyclist routes are too high should be dropped a lot, they can go on the road network, and multi user should be much higher, if you are trying to give more benefit to more people then obviously the most used should be much higher. AONB routes should be higher, people use them more

Apart from the priorities being urban-centric the methodology is flawed. The process of taking original gradings and converting them to categories ABCD, exaggerates significantly the urban - rural disparity.(I know an additional community factor may be required in the future) For example compared with an urban route which qualifies as a 10, most paths from my village would rate a 6, a factor of 1.66. Currently, converted to ABCD scale they now rate 5 and 1 respectively, a factor of 5.

See earlier comment

As stated

see previous comment

There does not appear to be a recognition of the value of routes which link to others and so provide a longer and more contiguous overall route.

Far too much emphasis on urban PROWs - this will damage tourism which is a major source of income for North Yorkshire.

We believe and strongly feel that multi user routes, e.g. Bridleways, whether surfaced or not, should be scored a 10.

Multi user routes e.g. Bridleways, whether surfaced or not should score 10.

as above multiuser routes e.g. bridleways whether surfaced or not

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

See response to previous question - as an example I received the following comment from a local resident when I canvassed opinion about this consultation: "Some rights of way may appear to be little used, but this is often because of poor maintenance, resulting in them being very difficult to use. The bridge across the large ditch on the path from near Cote House across towards the top of the Coach road definitely needs replacing - at the moment this path is closed, I think, and when Nicky checked it out to see if the Cubs could still use it, she said it would be very tricky to cross the ditch and if it rained, it would actually have been dangerous so we could not use it even though we wanted to. It's not okay for the council to allow rights of way to fall into disrepair when they are traditional and have been used for possibly hundreds of years."

No reference to local use by residents and our visitors.

Routes avoiding A and B class roads - this should score more highly for rural areas

See earlier note

We are concerned that paths in urban areas have a far higher score 10 than those near villages 6 and feel they should be scored equally. Whilst there are far more rural paths than urban paths and therefore more costly to maintain they are very important to many village residents (often elderly) who already have far fewer leisure opportunities than people living in towns.

Category C, particularly around villages, is too large. This means that there is little scope for prioritisation within this category.

Paths utilisation is a function of path usage. If the path links to others, for recreational purposes, then that must be taken into account.

See previous answer

The differing categories of collapsed bridges? They seem to run from A -B-C- D ? Now how are those assessed: deep-water to very-shallow-narrow water, I hope so? Otherwise a "bridge" (or at least two railway sleepers) is an essential minimum for deep crossings.

The reduced priority of paths in the vicinity of villages shows the misconception that villages have a good access to rights of way which is incorrect.

'National Trail (NT)' is too narrow a characteristic for a walkers' through-route, and the stated 88km length is way too low even for NYCC's own NTs or part-NTs. 'Multi-user trails' is better but the emphasis should not be on 'linking communities' but *usage*.

The paths should not be categorised. They are all important. This is abdicating responsibility.

Unsurfaced routes with higher rights (eg bridleways) should be prioritised.

see comment on previous page

Routes within 50m of an A or B class road that run parallel and offer an alternative route. As a horse rider and cyclist these routes should get a high priority as they help keep people safe and avoid accidents.

You should begin by stating the minimum acceptable standards which will be applied to all public rights of way. The route types you prioritise largely favour national trails, strategic multi user trails, promoted routes and routes in areas assessed as being of high landscape value. This does not reflect the interests of most NYCC residents who wish for a local network of paths which are signed, open and available. The interests of rural residents such as ourselves are largely ignored at present and your proposed system will entrench this situation.

see previous comments

All Rights of Way are important to the health of this nation

As stated previously I disagree with the proposal completely

Bridleways taking vulnerable horse riders away from main roads should be in the highest category.

See previous comment re urban paths which should have a lower priority

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

I think that paths within 1km of a village should be in the same category (B) as paths within 1km of the urban fringe, and not in a lower category as presently proposed.

Multi-user trails apparently include bridleways, but this is unclear from the unusual terminology as 'trails' is not a word regularly used. 'Multi-user routes' would have been much better and many people may be misled by this which is unfortunate.

See previously

They do not take account of local routes which are promoted for tourism, health and recreation walks

All paths should be open.

Too much bias towards "urban" - where roadworks etc. are often funded by Highways dept. anyway. Fixation on short distances. Not enough emphasis on getting out and (far) about.

Paths will be financed by local council tax payers. Although national cycle network is important for tourism in the wider context I believe SRTS should score higher. Either score SRTS as a 12 or drop national cycle network to an 8. Understand this point may well end up being covered by the community value component

Bridleways should be prioritised in areas where there are particularly high numbers of horses as this would provide greater safety for all road users if horses could access well maintained bridle paths.

They should be everyone's right of way

See answer to previous question.

See answer to previous question

ROUTES NEARER VILLAGE CENTRES AND AONBS SHOULD BE GIVEN GREATER WEIGHT

I believe this whole exercise will result in the diminution of the footpath network and is a retrograde step. You should be thinking more creatively and engaging local champions to ensure paths are kept clear and landowners legal obligations are fulfilled.

Paths that avoid dangerous roads or lanes where there is a high risk of injury because of a lack of footpath should be included and given a high score.

your proposals are too complicated and onerous to carry out efficiently

Some paths in rural areas away from villages are really important links when planning satisfactory circular routes. Your priorities are almost all linear. Some paths give legal access to important wildlife watching sites. Could paths going to or near SSSI's be prioritised?

Response from previous page repeated: Footpaths being promoted from the Ryedale towns by Ryedale District Council should receive the same weighting as NYCC promoted routes. RDC is also working on routes between the market towns and these should also be scored like NYCC promoted routes. These routes are not mentioned. The Ebor Way and Centenary Way should receive the same score as a long distance footpath. These routes are important to local people and visitors alike and help to promote healthy and social activity. Low scoring paths which link to more highly scored routes to form a circular walk should receive a priority scoring. The former will be low priority if there is an obstruction or problem on route and the community will lose a circular route.

Over time the popularity of paths can change, particularly in context of the major house building projects which are currently planned and their affect on North Yorkshire villages where beautiful landscapes become no longer visible. A PROW is a PROW and should not be grouped into any other route types than that. They should all be treated the same and money found as required.

As someone who has a right of way I am always disappointed that there is no communication with the owner over any issue. Where do we stand over any nuisance that may occur. If there was anywhere of getting rid of it I would. It is totally unnecessary to have the ROW on our property.

Again, all route types should be protected and maintained

See final comments

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

See previous comments

In respect of Path Number 30.8/11/1 this starts as a category C and then runs to category D. The D part is the worst part of the whole path as it runs along the cliff top which is eroding rapidly then descends steeply towards Hunmanby Gap in shuttered steps built into the boulder clay, which weathers rapidly, washing away the aggregate behind the step risers presenting a very obvious trip hazard

I disagree on 2 points: 1. In making a distinction in the categorisation between routes based on urban (scores 10), within 1km of the urban fringe (scores 8) and within 1 km of village centres (scores 6). Prioritisation in this way could result in a serious deterioration in quality of the very paths that are most highly valued by the whole of society. Do we really want to confine everyone to walking only in urban areas (which are already well served with paths)? 2. routes in AONB and along rivers and canals should be given greater weighting (suggest 8 points, not 6) in recognition of the greater value that people place on such landscapes.

NYCC should impose Traffic Regulation Orders on all unsurfaced ROW and keep them only for non-motor users. Recreational motors (4x4s and off-road motorbikes) do hugely disproportionate amounts of damage and excluding them would more than make up the funding gap that NYCC needs to find. Allowing 4x4s and motorbikes onto green lanes because of the lanes horse-and-cart historical use is plainly crazy.

See response to previous question Also issues of the criteria not been applied correctly eg the 5 "Walks around Northallerton " have not been given the score 8 as NYCC Promoted trails - indeed parts of these routes have been given a score of 4

Again it worries me that 63.5% of the paths are in the lowest 2 categories. It appears that the only factors that would get a Category D path priority attention are damaged bridges, dangerous animals or wire across the path. Being heavily overgrown and difficult to bypass is nearly half way down the list.

This too is very bias to urban routes eg 1 km urban fringe is Cat B 1km routes from village centre is Cat C

Since riders do not have a choice of routes, it is imperative for their safety to have any obstructions removed as soon as possible. They have to use dangerous roads as an alternative endangering their lives. Maintenance of surface is usually not so critical.

We'd like to see at the very least "Routes within 1km of village centres" in Category B if not A.

routes near villages given too high a priority

hours to decide what priority while the path becomes unwalkable, marvellous

aonb, avoiding roads, multi user trails onto access land are scored to low - these should be 10 to allow access to countryside (possibly at expense of urban routes)

it would apper that routes which fall into the category of "other routes" score the lowest.

I think RoWs with higher rights (e.g. bridleways) should have their own category and high priority because you benefit the greatest range of users for the same amount of resource put in - The emphasis on surfaced routes is not right - most problems are on unsurfaced routes, they should have their own category and higher priority. There is a crying need to get horses and riders off the roads used by mechanically propelled vehicles.

Many of the rural communities are part of the ramblers or a local walking group and like to find wild areas to explore and venture into different parts of the moors etc.

If it is true that walking is the country's most popular outdoor activity, and that (unattributed quote recently encountered) 38 per cent of the population 'used a long distance trail' in the cited year (2007, 'most recent figures'), then it follows that *actual* usage and not 'community need' (however defined) would be a better basis by which to prioritise repairs and maintenance

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

The proposed system is too complex, running the scheme (if approved) would cost monies which should be allocated to footpaths. Rural footpaths have been allocated a blanket low priority status. All footpaths have the same status, It should be already within the remit of those currently running the footpath maintenance exercise.

see previous answer. Access to access land and AONBs should have the highest priority as these are where countryside users who want to use the whole network wish to walk, but not necessarily to use the same path repeatedly.

Routes within "1km" of both any village, but "properly 3km" as above, should be category score 8

Prioritising paths in this way will inevitably result in low priority paths becoming largely unusable to the particular detriment of rural residents. Unusual countryside rights of way can be particularly interesting and inviting. The public should be encouraged to make greater use of them rather than receiving the message that they are unnecessary.

See previous answer.

It is not clear from Table 5 how some Prow's have been selected for the various categories, for example I cannot believe that there are only 4 km of routes that run parallel to A & B class roads or perhaps the definition of 50m from a road is far too low and should be set higher at say 250m ? Do you actually need 4 categories, would 3 suffice ? We would say that 'Routes within 1 km of Village Centres' should be assigned into Category B as they are actually more important now with the declining public transport system in village areas and then just classify the remainder as Category C.

Routes within 3Km of village centre should be the same as urban fringe and should be given a characteristic score of 8

I think that routes in the AONBs should be in category A or B because they are more likely to be used than PROW outside protected landscapes.

Walkers , such as Rambling Groups walk on routes , typically circular , usually between villages which , in virtually every case have been given the lowest priority score outside the (relatively very small) urban parts of the county One solution would be to give a higher score to an least two paths between all towns and villages. Ramblers will be happy to assist in reviewing the application of this suggestion in Hambleton and Richmondshire Surely the Coast to Coast Path should be treated as if it were a national trail Unfortunately there are a number of "dead end" paths in the county such as paths ending , but not crossing a major road . Surely these paths must be treated as low priority Further checking is needed as , for example , the correct score has not been given to all the "Walks round Northallerton " Unfortunately there are a number of "dead end" paths in the county such as paths ending , but not crossing a major road . Surely these paths must be treated as low priority

Nidderdale AONB contains the highest density of rights of way in North Yorkshire outside the two National Parks and apparently has the highest recorded number of unresolved complaints about network condition. Nidderdale attracted over 1 452 000 visitors in 2012 who contributed an estimated £61.8 million to the rural economy in the same year, and we have evidence to suggest that a very large number of these visitors use public rights of way. The designated area contains a section of the Dales Way, a section of the National Byway, most of the Nidderdale Way and most of the Six Dales Trail as well as popular and well-used local routes like the Ripon Rowel. Management of these routes in the past has failed to overcome obstructions or to resolve long-standing definitive map anomalies. The condition of signposting, stiles and gates is at best uneven. The proposed scoring system, which places the AONB ninth in a hierarchy of 13 priorities will exacerbate problems on these rights of way. And

I am not confident that the information provided on page 5 is accurate and no further detail is available for the public to access to confirm this. Also Village Routes are just as important as Urban Routes aren't they ?

Please provide more information to help us understand why you disagree.

Please provide more information to help us understand why...

Routes within urban areas should not need much maintenance from the PROW budget, as often surfaced. Routes promoted other than by NYCC should be given 8. This should include routes in guide books, local leaflets & internet sites. Should ALL routes within an AONB be given 6. Should you use 10,9,8,7, instead of 10,8,6,4. Some C class roads are dangerous for pedestrians and routes avoiding these should be given 6. Other routes should not be ignored if the problem is caused by the landowner or tenant.

Routes within 1km of villages are often used as much as those near the towns by both local people and visitors from elsewhere. Being in an AONB should have a higher characteristic score

1) Will low priority jobs sit forever on the waiting list, or will the list be wiped clean at the end of each financial year? At present, it could be that they are not addressed within any given financial year, if at all. To prevent this, the priority score of deferred works should be adjusted to raise their priority. 2) In cases where paths are unusable because of the deliberate actions of landowners, then a timely response is required, irrespective of route category. In our experience ploughing can easily render a path unusable, so we do not favour you using this example as something of lower priority. 3) The document recognises the effects of positive feedback on the reporting of defects, and this could be a role easily performed by volunteers if some structure were provided.

The prioritisation is inconsistent in the wider Ripon area where the network supports the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site and associated visitor attractions (e.g. Hackfall, Markenfield Hall) and is disconnected at key points.

I think every community should have at least one high priority footpath

See my earlier point about uneven treatment.

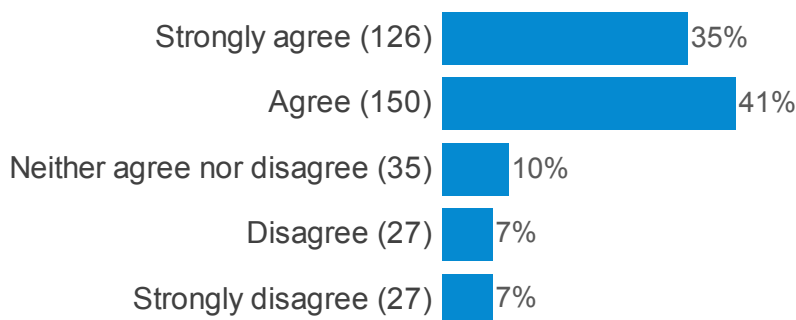
Raise the priority of ordinary rural footpaths.

Looking at the path characteristic column it is evident that National trails, Multi-user trails etc. are to be given priority. Whilst such paths/trails must be properly cared for this approach, however hard it is argued on resource grounds, should be strongly resisted. The importance of keeping all public paths available for use even if that use is infrequent (which may well be because they are poorly maintained) should be an unshakeable goal for NYCC. In the Q/A a question queries whether your proposal will mean some paths will not be maintained and will be lost. The fact that your answer fails completely to address this issue is deeply troubling

Routes within 3km of village centres should be same as urban fringe and should be characteristic score 8

We would like to see 'Routes within urban areas', 'Routes within 1km of Urban Fringe' and 'Routes within 1km of village centres treated the same.

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



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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

Amount of usage Current condition

There is only a small section of each community that has any interest in PROW so views expressed will come from this vociferous minority. e.g. militant members of Ramblers Association who resent the "loss" of any footpath however irrelevant it may be in modern life

At last we are getting a sensible question. Of course you should, I am a member of both. Its the people on the ground who have the answers. But will you take any notice?. I doubt it very much. You have your instructions from London and you have to follow. The great thing of the NPs is that they are none political and that makes all the difference. Local people for local decisions is what we all should be aiming for.

Please refer to previous comment. As a parish councillor I believe the views of PCs are most important but they should be encouraged to take reasonably objective views by eg consulting local people especially those living on or near paths on usage and patterns of use etc.

All this measuring is time spent NOT fixing the path problems. As a parish councillor myself I do not think time spent working with parish councils is a good use of NYCC staff time. Get on and fix the paths.

It is imperative that NO rights of way are lost. In your question and answer section, the question was asked but NOT answered. Concerned this may be a slippery slope!

basically by the amount of use and the historical value of ancient footpaths

Parish councils are important but local walking groups and equestrian centers should also be consulted.

Most of the network is FOOTpaths so important to involve walkers groups Bear in mind that NTCC paths are used by walkers and walking groups from outside NYCC and particularly from West Yorkshire.

Many communities have local walking groups who will be familiar with the quality of accessibility of footpaths in their areas eg U3A walking groups. Not sure what is meant by how it should be measured. I thought the qualities of the footpaths had already been defined and given a score

This needs to be handled carefully as often PC are dominated by local landowners and represent their own interests above the public rights

Groups that use the network, but community value I am not so sure, It would strongly depend on the community, are they walkers, landowners, cyclists, horse riders and recreational off roaders ?this is hard to define and quantify. I think that community value is suspect as many people outside the community use these routes , there is no mention of visitors, walking groups outside the community. Visiting horse riding lead rides surely these are important

you only refer to footpaths. horse riders and cyclists may be fewer in number but are equally important users. Pleased to read that different types of user groups from outside individual parishes will be taken into consideration. We like to go off to areas not visited before and ride there.

Community value will be contentious (some for -some against PROW next to their property) and therefore ther must be some historical useage and legal framework available to the public

I think Parish Councils should be asked to encourage their community to have walks round all the footpaths in their area, making it an initiative to specify days for the walking community to go out together with tools to help keep footpaths open where foliage overgrowth is a problem. Parish Footpath officers should be asked by the Local Council to promote this and report any problems so helping to so save the Council money.

Through the Parish Council we have good access to all interested residents.

The community value should be assessed by a range of groups. Using one source for assessment can lead to bias for/against particular groups.

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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

As usual with these things, whoever shouts the loudest and most often will be listened to eg well-organised cycling groups.

I am concerned that the priority given to parish councils over user groups will bias the process against certain types of PROW. Specifically, there is sometimes local opposition to the use of BOATs by trail bikers and recreational motor vehicle users. Local objectors could use the consultation process to try to unfairly restrict users.

The resources needed to do this in a valid and reliable way exceed the benefits and will only reduce resources spending for path protection still further. Offer strategies to give all PROWs an opportunity of being protected so that your main statutory responsibility is fulfilled.

Community value should definitely be taken into account, and working with parish councils and user groups seems to offer an appropriate approach. The devil will be in the detail. I can see circumstances in rural villages where for example the village dog walkers and pub/shop owner might attach considerable value to the public footpath network, but where the local shooting estate and farmers might like nothing better than to see the paths less used.

Involve town and parish councils more in the prioritisation of the work required on the PROW network.

Roads and highways are the infrastructure necessary to support business. The economic benefit of the proW network should not be a factor that forms part of the priority formulae when dealing with community value. Urban areas by definition have greater economic or business value and it is simply biasing the formulae towards urban environments even further.

All communities will try to maximise the community value from a subjective rather than objective POV. however, weighting should increase where routes cut through villages or small communities where the added income generation to the local businesses from tourism or organised events, would significantly support their livelihood. Conversely, communities that show voluntary support to maintain such routes should be rewarded with higher priority

Groups who use the network should be the prime consultees. Working for a Parish Council myself, from experience I don't think Parish Councils have a particular expertise or knowledge of which paths are more used, unless they are users themselves.

Consult with walking and rambling groups etc.

How will Community value be assessed in areas where there is no Parish Council or representative organisation?

To echo my former point, might there be cases where a parish council is either indifferent, or even hostile to the maintenance of a ROW within its parish, but wider walking/cycling/equestrian groups value the ROW highly? If so, can the proposed scheme reconcile the difference of view?

Timescales need to be realistic but fixed to ensure engagement with parish councils. Who to ask where no parish council exists will need looking into.

Parish Councils are to have too much influence; they may have a disproportionate number of one group e.g. landowners. Some may not want "outsiders". I am concerned that not enough consideration will be given to users who most likely will live outside the parish. Not all will be part of a "group" This is v.difficult to measure - will you formally consult on what is meant by "community"? How would you change "community score" . This needs a lot of thought.

This is essential to maintain engagement with local knowledge , experience and opinion via parish councils which have not been adequately consulted previously .

It is not simply about footfall, it is about what those people bring to an area; do they use the local shop[s], cafe's pubs etc or are they simply using it as a shortcut?

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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Where a landowner has altered the footpath and created a new problem for walkers. E.g. where a fence has been put in to keep in livestock and then no maintenance work is carried out on the newly created "footpath" and it becomes unusable in winter due to excessive use and water from rain having no where to run off.

We feel it is very important to incorporate community value into the categorisation of public rights of way. Please let us know if you have any ideas of how you are able to measure community value and what the parameters are when we make our suggestions.

The comments on Page 6, described under the heading "The challenges we face...", show how nebulous and difficult to define the notion of 'community value' is. It is not clear how you will avoid parochial and pedantic agendas being pursued by local communities and councils to the detriment of users and visitors from outside.

In this day and age it would be trivially simple and cost effective to add an online survey option to compliment consultation with the Parish Councils and groups.

Please ensure dog walkers are included

We agree in principle with this statement, but wonder how you are going to implement this as we as a Bridleway group were not informed. How will the everyday person know about this community value score and be able to have their say.

I agree in principle but how do you intend to contact all user groups eg. Our local bridleway group were not notified until I forwarded details to them. How will the ordinary person/ user know about this community value score and have their say?

How will you reach all users and user groups?? riding groups I am involved in have not been notified, not everyone utilises their Parish council

It is essential that the prime source of information is parish councils

Detailed study of how local paths are used. Frequency. Ask PC's to feedback (but give them support)

Why not get more parishes to do do more clearance. [dog walking routes)

Consult with the various "user groups" eg ramblers, horseriders, cyclists etc.

Having previously taken part in condition surveys of local PROWs, it was often the case that paths within "dog walking" distance of the parish centre were maintained in better condition than more distant paths, in most cases because problems there affected local people and were reported to the Parish Council. Paths further afield, although key paths from a regional point of view, and much used by walkers from outside the Parish, suffered because their condition was not always reported to the PC. Therefore, I would suggest that when consulting Parish Councils re the "value" of local paths, representatives of interest groups (such as the Ramblers Association) are invited to join the meeting.

We could include the community value in our Neighborhood plan, but we cannot see a fair and reproducible way to assess the value of each path to all our parish residents. Every path will be important to someone, even a category D path that a few people use for daily recreation. The categorization already makes an assessment based on likely volume of use and value to the young and old for service access.

This is essential in order to know exactly how footpaths are used by each community. We are disappointed that insufficient time has been given for Crayke Parish Council to consider your proposals

We believe the views of PCs are most important but they should be encouraged to take reasonably objective views by eg consulting local people especially those living on or near paths on usage and patterns of use etc.

Although I agree that Parish Councils should represent primary communities this should be done in parallel with, or before categorisation.

You need to take into account national bodies with a specific interest in public rights of way

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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

Remember Foot and Mouth several years ago. Visiting friends remarked on the fall off of maintainance after this period.

A problem is that a lot of routes cross parish boundaries and although one parish may feel it is important the other parishes may not feel it benefits them

'Community value' is the wrong focus for through-routes. A better measure would be actual usage. In North Yorkshire, the Three (Yorkshire) Peaks challenge walk, and (Wainwright's) Coast to Coast have the highest usage of any long-distance trails in the country.

What about tourist value? It is simple the council has a duty to maintain the paths. This should happen. I understand funding cuts. But increased community involvement, community fundraising, crowdfunding can be used, rather than this proposal which will result in unmaintained paths.

Although I agree in principle I think this will be difficult to implement. I assume from the proposal that the intention is to factor in parish council views in terms of which routes within a parish are the most/least important. But this would have no bearing on which routes overall were prioritised. How would parish councils react? Also the top priority is 'national routes' where most users are visitors.

Please see previous comment - this Parish Council are not optimistic that their community value will be considered if it mean changing the priority of the path to a higher grade

This may work in some parishes and town councils but many councillors are not proactive. They hold the title and do little work on this type of issue. Many would not be interested in the issue of public paths so nothing would be done to help the county council in some parishes.

Community value should not be a measure of a paths value.

As previously commented...."I hope that the Community Value categorisation is not forgotten, and that it is followed up by NYCC to allow that aspect to be fully brought into account in the final determination of priorities...." The Council's concern is that there is, at present, no defined arrangements for assessing the Community Value of footpaths, yet this vital aspect needs to be taken into consideration, especially to develop the 'local' dimension that could so easily be overlooked in the drive for an overall apparent efficiency, and effectiveness in the management of PROW.

Parish Councils MUST evidence that they have consulted their respective residents/user groups

These can easily be hijacked by rambling Nazi's. While parish councils can be helpful walking groups have an agenda.

I feel rather like you are attempting to pass the responsibility, this is very unfair. Also, as someone who is unemployed right now I would love to take part in a scheme of maintainance work to keep out rights of way clear and clean. Why not start something?

I consider that this is pointless exercise - there are a great many ways in which individuals make use of the path network and historically this has always been the case. Parish Councils and Groups have no exclusive insight into this use - and cannot be expected to gain such insight. Your focus should be on ensuring the network is open to a minimum standard - and then ensuring that all complaints you receive whether from Councils, Groups or individuals receive attention within a reasonable timescale.

I certainly feel all stakeholders should be involved, especially landowners and parish councils.

The PROW network needs maintenance for ALL routes otherwise a proportion of routes will fall into disrepair and will become unusable.

Agree, but without the biased influence of private landowners.

Ensure as many local community groups are made aware of the proposals as possible in order to disseminate the information to local residents, through newspapers and presentations available for view in local halls. EG. public footpaths in Bedale and Aiskew are heavily used continuously, but many using them will not be aware of your proposals.

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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

As already pointed out, in a large percentage of cases parish councils will have NO worthwhile input, and who do you approach as a user 'group'? I have walked and cycled for sixty years but I am not a member of a 'group' as such. I think this whole section needs addressing further.

My experience of working ass a Public Rights of Way Officer with Parish and Town councils was that they were only interested in or really aware of paths within 0.5 mile or so of village/town centres, and had no interest whatsoever when the routes were several miles away.

Again I don't agree in cutting public services.

The alternative to considering community value is to not bother but to simply rely on the skills and experience of NY's rights of way officers

See previous comments.

Parish Councils are a good starting point but County walking/riding/cycling groups should also be consulted.

measurement should be by popularity of the route

Parish Councils may not be aware how their PROW's link with those of others to produce a good, long walk - which might be linear

This may mean that groups e.g. cyclists end up taking over all the paths and resources due to popularity. Walkers may not get the same consideration. I don't want the footpaths to be paved and stoned.

In Folkton we have fought long and hard to keep our Bridleway. Community value needs to have a strong influence on prioritisation of rights of way. It is an important indicator of the value and use of the route. Smaller communities are in danger of loosing their access to rights of way which may not have the kudos of a national trail but have high importance and benefit to the local community.

Parish councils are not always PROW minded or even care and often conflict with other priorities, many walkers come from elsewhere.

Nycc needs to have parish co on side

Local consultation is essential

Within my area I suggest a public consultation as many individuals who use the network are not in touch with their parish council or involved in a group.

Best measured by contacting the relevant parish council, which can provide local knowledge.

Don't agree that working with Parish Council will enable unbiased judgement of community value, due to age bias in terms of representative make-up of parish council members. Also important to equally reflect all users views, as some categories of users are more hard to reach such as the groups are informal, such as the large number of local mountain bikers that live in the local area and the rights of way. Access to these groups could be facilitated by local independent bike shops for example or social media..

Parish councils do not always have the detailed knowledge nor the ability to consult with those most affected.

I have had to tick the agree section above just to send my comment. Would it be fair to say that these paths cross through farm land. Seeing that the ways are used by the public as an excuse to leave litter, leave gates open, and allow their pets to chase livestock. Then seeing that the money is running out . Then maybe you should ask the farmers.

Agree with the concept of community value, just not sure parish councils understand it.

Make sure all categories of user are included - e.g. Horse riders

In my experience parish councillors do not use PROWS. The community value should be measured by consulting residents

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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

I really do not know how you will ensure that this reflects the potential needs of members of communities who have yet to value the potential benefits of PROWs. The benefit of the current arrangements is that all paths are protected, whether that is just for now, or for the future. There is a risk that some communities will effectively deny themselves equal access through being less well informed than some other more articulate communities.

Huby Parish Council would welcome the opportunity to work with NYCC on incorporating community value categorisation.

However, this will not catch the views or need of those that visit North Yorkshire and use its footpaths and bridleways that are widely advertised. The County economy benefits greatly from its tourism trade and there needs to be a contingency to ensure this is not compromised

The County Councillor for that area should spend time in it to monitor usage over a period of time and consult with residents nearest to the area

This could smack of disproportionate management target-seeking instead of getting on with the job, if much effort is going into the defining value element. This consultation is aimed - so it says - on saving costs and being more efficient in delivering the service to where it is needed. However, I strongly approve of involving groups of locals and local users to achieve improvements, but the wording isn't clear.

Sounds potentially expensive and long-winded...

You should consult with Parish Councils on the routes within their boundaries or cross their boundaries providing through paths. You should talk to local walking groups on their view to the paths in particular areas.

This would waste more time!

I have already commented on the danger of local comment but do realise that it should be introduced. Whilst also consulting groups is very important, it should not be forgotten that paths are also used by individuals - both local and those on holiday - and walking in connection with tourism in the county is VERY IMPORTANT.

Just make sure that "groups who use the network" means ALL such groups, not just those likely to agree with the local landowner's association

Do you realise that North Yorkshire has the potential to be a major walking centre in England? If the paths are not fully cared for this potential will not be reached.

Yes, should pick up local nuances and always local input from those who pay and actually live in vicinity and use paths daily.

Community must include users of all modes of transport from foot, to cycle to horses.

All rights of way should be open to all who wish to use them.

Post up information of the right of way routes signposts about their proposed categories, and a short link / barcode to a section for that particular path. Make reporting defects much easier with something similar to "fix my street", so issues can be caught sooner before they deteriorate

Will the voice of minority user groups be heard above the clamour of the vociferous?

A difficult one, depends on how keen the parish council concerned is to respond to your survey and answers are bound to be subjective. Perhaps you need to produce a matrix of characteristics (eg mainly recreational, used by dog-walkers, heavy summer use by people having caravanning holidays at the holiday park, essential route to local amenities without safe alternative etc), then ask for details of hazards in terms of terrain etc.

PROW are for everyone and have high community value wherever they are.

Get the Parish Council's to give their views and I'll ask mine on Thursday. At the end of the day when the money runs out the repairs will have to stop.

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.

Please provide any comments on the proposal to incorporat...

I do not believe you should be abdicating your legal responsibility to maintain the network and should not be asking local groups to back you in this approach. If you are actively soliciting support for maintaining the network as a whole I think it would be beneficial.

Parish Councils can liaise with walking groups and local stables to assess importance - numerical value can be agreed for each right of way.

We need to be sure that walking groups and local people can get about the country side

Please ensure that parish councils ARE asked for their input AND listened to.

A lot of work is still needed, with regards to access and erosion / damage caused by off road vehicles (other farm traffic) .

Particularly would welcome working with recreational groups...Ramblers, walking groups.....as well as somehow including off-road motor-cycling groups to ensure their use of lawful routes only

your proposals are too complicated and onerous to carry out efficiently

Good to consult the communities, but proactive contacting of user groups such as walking groups and valuing their opinion on a par with parish councils would be helpful.

Please see previous comment on parish councils.

Use of Facebook for comments on paths. Publicise the debate on the routes by way of quality notices so that the users and public gets a chance to respond.

This is vital as it is likely to incorporate usage levels

We feel that the only way to measure the level of priority felt by a community is to encourage each parish council to ask their citizens by way of public meetings, questionnaires and feed back. Local walking groups and other similar groups should also be encouraged to participate.

Hopefully the U3A walking groups in Easingwold will be consulted

Use information gathered at Parish Meetings.

In the interest of providing a 'Primary Community' response to the value that different communities place on different routes to ensure that resources and efforts are focused onto paths that benefit users and local communities most, please refer to the NYCC leaflet 'Walks around Kirkbymoorside and Kirkdale' produced some years ago but accurately highlights a number of routes that remain of particular significance. Additionally in May 2017 the Long Distance Walkers Association will embark upon the Hundred Route which traverses 100 miles of footpaths throughout Ryedale and the North York Moors. This route demonstrates the importance of paths on a broader scale.

It is right that agreement should be reached with parish councils and user groups regarding community values, however, NYCC should not forced decisions upon them or use finance as the driver. The whole process should not have to happen at all.

This could be measured by way of, face to face speaking with residents, feedback from village meeting. Community value is what is important to residents, the landscape and sense of belonging.

The concept of "network users" is very poorly defined, and local parish councils often have no appreciation of the tourist assets in their parish

You are not defining this well enough to combat apathy and misunderstanding

See final comments

As before, this will take a lot of time, effort and money, and is unlikely to achieve any benefits.

Although we agree with the proposed categorisation, we disagree with the proposed weighting towards the 'characteristic' value against the 'community' value. We feel it should be an even weighting of 50/50. A small village may use a path or right of way that they feel is very important to their community however, with the weighting that you propose, it favours

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Community use of paths may be a reflection of dog walkers chosen routes. Other members of the community may have different preferences.

Aside from resident usage of the paths around Reighton and Speeton, the community value does not appear to have taken into consideration the popularity of the paths by tourists, walkers and visitors based at the Reighton Sands and Primrose Valley Holiday Parks.

NYCC should impose Traffic Regulation Orders on all unsurfaced ROW and keep them only for non-motor users. Recreational motors (4x4s and off-road motorbikes) do hugely disproportionate amounts of damage and excluding them would more than make up the funding gap that NYCC needs to find. Allowing 4x4s and motorbikes onto green lanes because of the lanes horse-and-cart historical use is plainly crazy.

See earlier comment of giving discretion to NYCC staff

Community value includes links with neighbouring villages as well as the local community.

Parish Council are mainly concerned with their local area. Users groups will be concerned with larger areas and have a greater knowledge of this area. Routes are not just a community asset they have a wider importance as well. See earlier comments on through routes.

I support the involvement of parish councils and user groups. However the council needs to publicise what it is doing in order to get people involved - I only found out about this consultation from a walking group contact outside the county. By the nature of leisure walking, people will be out in many different communities, but publicity will be further beneficial in that those like myself would be prepared to volunteer to help out hard pressed staff in maintaining our footpath network.

The landowner should be considered first together with the parish council, it should be measured from the feedback from both parties. They don't need fancy scoring systems - common sense should tell you whether it is high priority or not.

User groups tend to know what is required. Parish Councils are very variable and tend to only think about walkers. And in some instances tend to favour their landowning parishioners over the users, despite the law.

Devise a numerical score sheet and invite all interested parties to grade accordingly'

IT is essential to work with Parish Councils and other interested groups such as the Ramblers and local walking groups.

Great idea but difficult to achieve. Some communities are much more vocal than others.

Use a reporting system like street lighting on NYCC website Consult local walking groups from each area We emailed Settle Harriers Craven Ramblers Settle District U3A Friends of Dales Rail North Craven Strollers who use the paths regularly Liaise with Parish Councils to have a link on their parish council website or have a button pressing device or app or geocache with smiley faces or not smiley faces (like at airports) on footpath posts.

how long will it take to do something

Working with Parish Councils and village character documents.

Currently I have been in correspondence with NYCC regarding obstructions to public highways and hve been extremely disappointed by their officers' responses

I think it is a distraction. Community value is important, but not the raison d'etre.

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The great concern is the effect of community scoring which will inevitably lead to urban areas having more importance than rural ones. So many of our routes are accessed by small numbers of cyclists, walkers, riders, that it is not possible to assess how much use they have. All rights of way are equally important and the council has a legal duty to maintain them. The number of people using a route should not be a criterion of their importance.. Real concern about how they are going to define "communities". Many people come into the area but do not live in the parishes. Far too much power to the Parish Councils who may not want "outsiders". Looks like they are not going to consult formally on that. Far too subjective. How is a "score" going to be challenged or changed? e.g. a BW that hasn't been used for years and then someone comes in and wants to use it etc.

Providing due consideration is given to walking groups, including those outside National organisations

Walking on footpaths is enjoyed by a very wide range of people , how would you consult with a wide range of users - many are visitors to the area , a vital part of the rural economy.

Would it not be better to discuss the details with National Groups i.e Ramblers and Long Distance Walkers Association

from page 6 "We will define the secondary community as other network users who benefit from and have an interest in the PROW network" It appears as though this has been passed already with the word "will" in the sentence - a fait accompli. "Community value" could depend on many factors, not least the time of year, the weather etc all of which have a strong bearing on footpath use. To run such a proposed scheme with, one must assume, constant updating, in short adjusting priorities would cost far too much.

The Trans Pennine Trail undertakes a visitor survey bi-annually (copy of 2015 report if needed). This survey indicates that user types, reason for journey, demographics and visitor spend for each user type (walker,cyclist, horse rider). The Trans Pennine Trail also has visitor monitoring devices at strategic locations across the Trail. The North Yorkshire devices count the number of walkers and cyclists only - there are no equestrian devices located in North Yorkshire. The visitor numbers are then correlated with the visitor spend figures from the bi-annual survey noted above. This provides a profile of visitor numbers and visitor spend. This information is sent to our TPT Contact Officer in North Yorkshire. Appendix C profiles the latest information for North Yorkshire.

It is extremely important that community value forms the key part of the assessment because local residents will know how used the PROW are and how valuable to their way of life.

The number of people currently using the ROW. The number of potential users if the ROW was in good condition. How a ROW in good condition to help people leave their cars at home.

agree very important to incorporate community value but important too to actually listen to the views of the community the consultation will be useless if parish councils put forward their views but the final classifications don't change.

The characteristic score and the Community value must have equal weight.

A small, little known village on the edges of the county boundary will,by its nature, have paths which are not well known or well used by other user groups. This does not alter or diminish the importance of these paths to those who do use and enjoy them regularly

As I do not believe you should be using this 'community value' construction to justify neglect of major parts of the network I do not wish to make further comment.

There are many footpaths in any one given area some are used a lot and others hardly ever. Resources need to be targeted to the well used paths and keep them well maintained at the expense of others, this may mean a look at the footpath network and decide whether we need to or can afford to keep them all open.

Parish councils are fairly clueless regarding community value, as they are typically made up of individuals who do use many of the rights of way and therefore have little appreciation of the current levels of usage, users, or state of them.

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Scorton Parish Council would like to see support from the NYCC if communication with landowners is required.

As our parish is in a holiday area, there is an economic value to the footpaths in this parish and surrounding parishes as they form a large part of the attraction to this area. This covers both the primary and the secondary communities as defined in the document. They are also important to the health and well being of our residents.

Other stakeholders such as National Parks (where routes link into the NP) and AONB Partnerships involved in monitoring and maintaining PRow should be involved in help define community value of routes.

Parish Councillors felt that the footpath from A1039, West Street, Muston, through the fields to Carr Lane, and also the footpath from Carr Lane, Muston to Gristhorpe are well used by walkers and should be a high priority. In addition the Wolds Way runs through Muston to Filey, and the Centenary Way goes from Muston to Hunmanby, both of which are national footpaths and therefore should have a high priority.

This is essential. Flexibility should be built in to the method to allow, in exceptional cases, to add additional weighting to local community value.

Measuring Community Value - as you say a difficult one - in the days of modern technology there must be some very low cost devices available now that can measure footfall on a route. An alternative idea would be to get user groups to list, date & number of walkers the Prow's that have been used on walks, I know this might seem an onerous task to some people but how else is the information going to be provided ? It is easy to obtain the PRow numbers from the Prow map online. I think you would have to put this suggestion to the user groups, they use the routes and if they wish the routes to be maintained they need to co-operate.

I think we need more details of how community values are to be allocated following the consultation. We need to have some idea of the when and how the new banding will become operational and on the website. We also need information on the what the procedures will be and the timelines for reviewing and challenging the banding decisions.

The community value score should be assessed by the Parish Council . It may be best to have a Parish survey asking questions on usage and perceived value to the community. The community value score should have equal weight to the categorisation score.

Parish Councils should work together to ensure that paths linking towns and villages are maintained and on a high category. Local walking groups like Ramblers and Northallerton Striders should also be consulted.

I strongly disagree because I think that the proposed project to define community value will be a waste of officers' time, when they should be developing service standards and implementing the new priorities in their day-to-day work. If you do go ahead with this proposal, motorbikers and 4x4 users should have very little or no input as they are able to use only a very small proportion of the PRow network (only 7 km of the over 6,000 km are BOATs). Parish Councils have powers (including spending) to improve public paths (Blue Book section 11.9), so they can prioritise their own improvements to their PRow.

We understand the reason for this approach but consider it is unworkable .The overall approach is already very complex – note our concerns regarding the time involved in administering the process even without endless debates on community scores. We suggest NYCC field officers exercise discretion on special issues as and when they arise.

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Consultation with local people as a means of prioritising the allocation of resources for the management of rights of way is unlikely to be successful for several reasons: • The social and demographic characteristics of local communities are dynamic and decisions that may affect the management of the network in the long-term based on the outcome of a consultation at a fixed point in time will not be durable; • The results could distort an assessment of the value of the network for visitors whose use of public rights of way is often different from local people; • Local communities may not agree about the value of the network and it will be impossible to arbitrate;

I am not sure Parish Councils are the best people to ask in respect of Community Value as they generally do not tend to consult the general public and most of them are not walkers ! User groups and individuals who walk are the best people to ask as they actually use the paths ! Ask the people who use the paths

I suspect the community value will only be receive a positive response from interest groups, who represent a very small proportion of the population!

Difficult to categorise relevant weight to Users and Parishes. Some rural Parishes would no doubt put a value of 1 on all their paths. You would obviously get more weight from users of Bridleways. Perhaps this is where books of walks, local leaflets & internet guides could increase the community value.

Parishes will need a mechanism to input to the scoring of the paths that sit in neighbouring parishes which boundary their own. We agree you will need to give parishes a guideline % of paths they can score highly, otherwise they will all just score all paths as high priority. Ideas for factors for community scoring: (a) Frequency of use (or would like to be used, as lack of use may be a product of poor maintenance rather than lack of need by the community) by local residents. (b) Degree to which links to a wider path network (i.e.National Park), or is a circular route. c) Aesthetic quality d) Paths that link together villages and provide an alternative to walking on roads should automatically be high scoring. e) Accessibility for elderly and dogs f) degree to which there is a viable similar path/route. We agree the tourist view will also be important given the level of tourism in our area.

In principle this approach has to be right but it runs the risk of those communities with an effective voice shouting out those where arrangements are less coordinated.

Yes I agree you need to define community value - but the footpaths locally may not be used because the landowners have already made them difficult to use - so that needs sorting first. I have talked to fellow walkers who are fed up with difficult access. Also how are you going to identify the groups who use the network. There are more walkers locally than there are people on the parish council and they are probably not the same people! We also have bike riders and horses using the bridleway from the road between North Cowton and Moulton Station. That is the most accessible footpath here - and there is a potential to create a great circular walk if the unidentifiable footpath from Moulton station is moved to the farm track around the field it goes through.

But put heavy emphasis on groups who USE footpaths; Parish Councils may not know.

But Parish Councils are not always fully informed of resident views. Add in more from individuals and outdoor groups.

Parish Councils and groups who use the network may well have an opinion on the value of public rights of way but they are not and should not be the only spokespersons in this particular regard. The path network is there for everyone and that should be one of your guiding principles rather than trying to establish new and arbitrary values to footpaths based on a myriad of impossible comparisons compiled from the opinions of Parish Councils etc. however well meaning they may be.

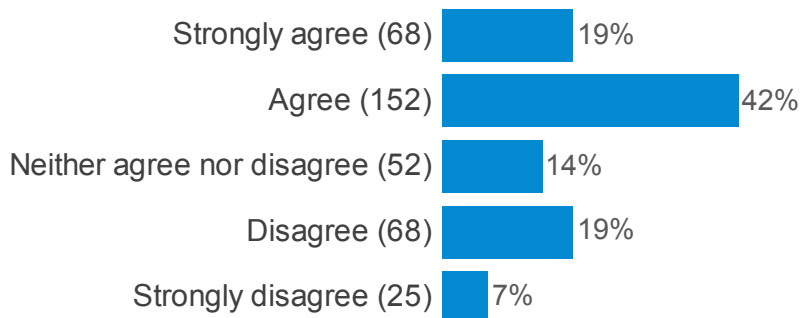
Community value should be assessed by parish council based on there having been a survey of electors including questions on useage -frequency (if maintained or not) - pedestrian and/or horse riders - perceived value to community. The community value score should have equal weight to the categorisation score.

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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Consulting with Parish Councils and user groups should give an accurate community value to the PROWs that are used the most.

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



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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

There is a danger that you repeat the errors made by Beeching, when closing branch lines reduced traffic on associated main lines. Looking at the map, some high scoring routes go nowhere significant by themselves, the path suddenly changes to a lower score midway, not a logical arrival or departure point.

I hope this exercise is not used to divert scarce resources away from the resolution of notified problems, into an endless review of reviews of processes to review reviews of the problem as seems to happen in so much of the public sector

These proposals are just a way for NYCC to do nothing . There is no doubt that the RoW department at Northallerton has been decimated to such an extent that they are polarised. and they can't see a way forward. I talk to many people and when people are down the secrets and fears come out. You are looking for a way to justify doing as little as possible, this is not the way. We are still waiting for someone to do something about the Definitive map for Scarborough Its on a list but that's all. NYVV are brilliant at making lists. But what about action ? Perhaps you are all stalling for 2026 when I am sure you will just give up on everything. My problem is I may not live that long and I don't want the children of the future saying I didn't try.

Perhaps consideration should be given to appointing volunteer guardians who can keep an eye on things and report problems maybe as a category within your existing volunteers.

I suggest you abandon this whole set of proposals sooner rather than later. Get on with the job of fixing paths.

thanks for such a good report

Very frustrating and potentially dangerous to be well along a path, maybe a low priority one and then find your route blocked.

I believe the questionnaire is a good idea but the low priority paths should not be forgotten.

Paths that are well used are to an extent kept in good order because of their use however the network can soon be lost when there is low footfall.

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

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Bridleways never seem protected and we are losing many routes due to neglect either by landowners or authorities. Footpaths always seem to be first on any list and I have had many abusive complaints directed to me as a rider for using bridlepaths in muddy conditions but there are no alternatives and it seems local people would rather that we rode on the road which is extremely dangerous.

a) P9,10 Obstruction by Crops needs specifying separately (vegetation not sufficient!). Crops important cause of obstruction in summer when paths most used. b) Paths linking villages need higher priority. Many walkers and walking groups do circular routes across country. NYCC paths in easy reach of Leeds are quite heavily used, esp. in Lower Wharfedale. Nidderdale AONB paths used by walkers from further afield (tourism factors) I fear for the "Other routes" (P5) - What happens when they become heavily overgrown? Some parishes may wish to take substantial responsibility for their paths - means of encouraging and facilitating this should be built into the policy. More use of volunteers for waymarking and small scale clearing of vegetation should also be included There should be a commitment to review the "new approach" after 3 years.

Many footpaths would be used more if they were accessible eg the footpath between Well and Snape is often overgrown and ploughed in places

I have covered this previously, but the path categorisation discriminates against bridleways and routes with higher user status because they are generally further away from centres of population, but they represent better value for money in terms of use because more users can use them but they are only 30% of the network. All illegal obstructions must be given highest priority, and enforcement action should always be taken if they cannot be resolved by other means. Anything else is inviting illegal obstructions to become common place

These proposal are very complicated to the ordinary person, it has to be remembered that NYCC has a statutory duty regarding PROW and this should not be a get out charter. Every routes must be looked at on its merits, but this can mean different things for different users groups. A useable FORD is important to horse riders, but to walkers they need a footbridge or stepping stones. A regards way markers money could be saved by getting local volenteers to do this work as could some simple garden of the routes. Obviously bridges are correctly placed as high points items as river crossing are very important. But as stated earlier Bridleways need to be clear because horses can divert as easily as walkers and cyclists. Good gates are essential as older riders has difficulty dismounting and remounting to open awkward gates. Good waymarking is essential particularly on BWs as reading a map on horse back is much harder than on foot and we don't want to antagonise landowners by trespassing.

it surely the right of an idividual to have access to all rights of way.

I agree with the proposals, but if paths with less use fall into more disrepair then as such they will be used less and therefore maintained less.

Paths that have been neglected may become more necessary as developments change the previously accepted access.

The paths that are most used will be well managed because there will be lots of users who complain. I am concerned that the less-popular 'minor' paths, which are already poorly maintained by landowners, will get even worse. Landowners will know they can plough right to the edge of fields because even if someone complains, it will be low priority and ignored.

Do not use lack of maintenance as a reason to close routes. If safety is an overriding concern, then unsafe routes should be prioritised for repairs rather than closed. Specifically, it would be very unfair if BOATs were closed due to the lack of priority given to maintaining them

To be honest, if asked, I would have assumed that a system of prioritisation already had to be in existence. As a frequent walker in the countryside I am frequently impressed at the continuing standard of maintenance and renewal of things like finger posts and foot bridges, even in pretty remote locations. Some walks are better than others of course, but in the last 5 years, I can only remember abandoning an intended path once due to access issues.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Would help if issues reported on the PROW network were identified on the interactive map, to help users and those reporting issues, with activity timeline of when work can be completed.

I know there are views with regards to reclaiming the old Railway lines as bridle paths, these should be given priority over all. but also they should be Multi user for pedestrians, Horses, and cyclists, not just for this years Cyclist fad.

I am a member of a walking group whose average age is 63. We walk "locally" on footpaths and bridleways which are predominantly rated 0 or 1 on the character scale. We cope with ploughed out paths, missing/broken stiles, missing waymarks etc, I may report the odd issue but we don't expect everything to be perfect. In future things will remain much the same, with these routes remaining lowest priority and I guess they could get a bit worse. The only difference is that the ploughed out paths, missing/broken stiles, missing waymarks etc will now be official ploughed out paths, missing/broken stiles etc..Whatever the status of a particular path NYCC are still legally responsible for its upkeep whether on a National Trail or (say) around my village with paths rated 0.To a reasonable man this suggests no priority and no programmed maintenance. I understand the risk assessment "override" but an injury could occur before an issue is reported, with NYCC relying heavily on the public to report.

See earlier comment

One area that should be explored is linking in with the NY Youth Justice Service. Young people who are on Referral orders, would benefit from serving some or all of their reparation volunteering to work on the repair and upkeep of some routes. The positive from this is that the young person is exposed to a good work ethic, outdoors and healthy activities, as well as having the opportunity to pay back directly into the community. The YJS have more options available when looking at reparation. The community benefit from additional support in maintenance of routes. Those who volunteer as Reparation Supervisors (NYCC staff, volunteers, etc) pass on their knowledge and experience which can have a positive legacy effect on the community. The framework is already in place, and many of the people already volunteering and working on routes hold DBS or EDBS, and have suitable training in place, minimising the training burden to uplift to the role of Reparation Supervisor.

Unemployed, probation and prison people should be made of use to do this work.

There should be some agreement that people could correct minor defects themselves if willing to do so (ie using secateurs on brambles or sawing up a fallen branch) and if the landowner agrees

Rural paths may be used by less number of people than in urban areas but percentage wise numbers may be higher

As a horse rider in an area where most bridleways are currently impassable, I think it is important to recognise that they are not used because of this - if they were cleared and properly waymarked they would be used much more.

Factoring in other known issues in close proximity would allow time to be used more efficiently - the proposals do not seem to allow for a number of low priority issues on the same footpath to be combined, to be dealt with in one visit.

I can see the logic of making parish councils a focus of the scheme, but I am not entirely convinced that they should be the arbiters of maintenance needs. If you counted the number of users of an attractive ROW on a Sunday, what proportion of those users would be from the parish through which the route runs, and what proportion would have come from outside the parish - maybe from a considerable distance? Might not the visitors deserve a greater say in the fate of the route than the locals?

Previously you used to look at all problems, regardless of severity, when in an area - this is a v.good idea - will you continue to do this? Taking enforcement action re reinstatement. I donot agree with your idea to put priority on higher category paths. They should be treated equally - it is not fair on a landowner who has lots of higher category paths on his land. This would encourage other landowners who have lower category score paths to ignore the law. The comment boxes are not large enough.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Whilst some paths may be used more than others and hence receive higher priority, there are those that have amenity value and accessibility issues for a smaller number of people but actually give greater benefit in terms of wellbeing to the users

Still concerned that low/lower priority routes may eventually disappear due to inaccessibility issues i.e. blockage , damage , lack of any maintenance , etc , etc .

Within the NYMNP where I live the responsibility for FPs & Bridleways lay with the Park Authority. But not BOATS or Unclassified Routes of which there are number. These are almost always unmarked. At least two in the Esk valley are totally impassible by foot and even off roaders cannot access them because there is no bridge or the route is blocked by barbed wire. I've raised this matter with NYCC highways dept. and have been told simply there is no money allocated for these routes. Does your survey include BOAT and Unclassified roads?

The scoring means quite simply that category C and below are unlikely to get attention until something disastrous happens

Greater publicity so that walkers know where to report poorly maintained paths and rights of way.

I agree that where paths are busy there should be a focus on maintaining these due to wear and tear , however these are the paths that are likely to stay open and obstacles get moved or trampled down. It's the more rural paths where obstacles appear, hedges are left and signs removed or hidden that i fear will be used less and disappear or become impossible to navigate.

We would like to be fully informed about the progress of this consultation and play a full part in the community value assessments.

That the bridleway from Copt Hewick to Sharow be re-categorised to A as it is the only pedestrian route for children in Copt Hewick to get to Sharow Primary school.

There is a real danger that a relatively simple and pragmatic approach to RoW maintenance is being ignored in favour of something, which has all the hallmarks of becoming a typical local authority industry which creates the inevitable mass of parochial and pedantic detail and promotes private agendas.

It would be helpful to know how much money (in pounds, not as a percentage) is going to be saved by implementing this proposal (allowing for the cost of implementation too). Is the Council shifting more money into admin and bureaucracy and spending less on actual works?

It is not necessarily the most used that should be priority. There are many routes that due to poor condition are impassable and will now go lower down the priority list. E.g. Sexhow bridleway

I do not believe it's the routes that are most used which are highest priority- what about routes that have been on a 'waiting list for maintenance for years and are grossly underused because people or horses cannot get along them in reasonable safety for years

Multiuser routes should be given highest priority as can be used by everyone

Prows are increasingly being diverted due to developments encroaching onto their historic routes. Can anything be added in this consultation to help protect the routes and therefore reduce the cost to the council in construction and signage associated with prows re routing.

I looked at the online maps (pdf) showing the new categorisations, and it shows paths outside the parks. what happens to categorisation of paths inside the parks e.g. YDNP?

Paths that are not often used are often blocked or altered by some landowners in an effort to erase them fully

In our area of Danby Wiske a collapsed bridge on a path has already led to serious injury for which the council could have been liable. This has been reported but no action has been taken.

I agree that the more popular routes should have a priority but not at the cost of losing less frequently used routes.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

There needs to be a stronger case put forward for adequate funding for footpath maintenance. Being able to use local paths is vital for people's wellbeing and health as well as being a strong part of the attraction to the area for visitors which is an important part of North Yorkshire's economy. Asking local communities to agree to proposals which will inevitably lead to many paths being inadequately maintained is not good enough.

I do not believe that you have sufficient resources to fulfill your statutory obligations to maintain the present network of footpaths.

In view of your reduced resources we fully understand your dilemma, but do not believe you have quite got the priority of routes right for individual parishes.

Please do take into account the views of local residents. If you decide to stop giving priority to a particular path and PC's still have pressure from residents then it will be very difficult to manage that locally. Could PC's enter into cutting back on paths? Cost would be prohibitive and issues of safety etc.

That any consultations include district cycle groups who have good local knowledge and who can guide as to where improvements can be made to make walking and cycling accessible using off road routes. The health benefits of making more routes accessible are well documented.

I'm worried that the exercise is mainly to be used to identify routes that will get NYCC a bad press if problems are not deal with, and that other less well used routes will receive even less attention than they do at present.

1. We remain concerned that some paths will never reach the threshold for repair. There will need to be a safeguards to ensure that the footpath network (an asset we have inherited and need to preserve for those that follow us) is maintained and ideally grows. No path should be allowed to fall into such a state of poor repair that it no longer is viable to re-instate. 2. Over the last few years the response by NYCC for requests for repair of parish paths has been slow, inconsistent and at time unacceptable. This proposal must be aligned with agreed, transparent standard for NYCC's response to requests for repairs. The community must be able to hold NYCC to account for failure to adequately maintain the footpath network.

I find your proposals over complicated. Also I feel a weakness of your plan is that a low scoring right of way will always have a low priority and through neglect will be less used and slip further down the list ie surely over time priorities will change.

Lack of proper consultation with Parish Councils

Footpaths in rural areas are very unlikely to be used as frequently as those in urban areas but for the reasons expressed earlier, they should not be neglected because of this. We are very concerned about the extremely poor quality of footpaths in our parishes several of which have been badly damaged by careless and excessive use by very large farm vehicles

How many km of prow could have been improved if the money had been spent on them rather than this consultation? How much money do you spend on administration as opposed to actual work on the prow? Do you intend to let landowners continue to fail to reinstate prow? Or will you take them to court after ONE warning thereby saving admin and improving the network?

Although the Parish Council are happy to work with officers regarding community value we would strongly object to any responsibility for management of paths to be devolved to Parish Councils or other parties. Although some groups may show an interest such enthusiasm is often held by individuals who inevitably move on, leaving a void in services. Parish Councils do not have the knowledge, skills or resources to manage such paths. Moving the responsibility to Parish Councils will lead to poor and inconsistent standards and loss of efficiency. The financial burden will stay within the community, simply moved down the chain.

Back to the drawing board. I accept that priorities need to be set but it is short-sighted to jsut be involving local interests in such an important subject

See previous remarks

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Given the cutbacks to NYCC, and the income the walkers, ramblers and cyclist bring to these rural community business' outside the Nat Parks. It would be a pity for these rural communities. if all such sport activities were driven out (due to poor access) to the better maintained Nat Pks and AONB.

These proposals do not help with improving the poor state of many rights of way which is the reason many are little used in the first place.

The Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA) database (https://www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/ldp_members_home.php) offers information and data on Long Distance Paths (LDPs) (including National Trails) in or through North Yorkshire (current total approx. 20).

ENNSURE THAT WEBSITE INFORMATION IS CLEAR AND UP-TO-DATE

Walking on prows is a healthy activity (thereby saving the NHS on having a healthier population), is environmentally friendly (sometimes reducing car use) and has great value in social and cultural spheres to the nation, such as understanding the history of an area, understanding the environment, appreciating natural beauty. Ultimately, prows have a great overall value and significance and deserve full funding.

At a time when people are advised to walk to increase health all footpaths should be a priority regardless of location. The council has a duty to maintain the paths and I am sure that a more proactive, we will have the best paths and will recruit more volunteers etc would be more effective. The result of this policy will be paths falling into disrepair, which will then not be used, and the decision will be justified as the paths are no longer used. Already bridges have not been replaced and stiles are in a dangerous state,

The last question about prioritising paths with greatest use seems sensible on the face of it. But in reality it is more dangerous, alarming, and problematic when obstructions, unopenable gates etc are encountered in remote places. In other words, these routes may have fewer users but the effect on that user can be more serious. This is a factor that needs to be considered.

Should there be a building development in the Parish there may be a need to re catagorise some paths - this Parish is not confident that if we requested this that it would be done as there is an obvious reluctance to enhance anything in the rural community - we can suffer from depravation as much as urban areas.

Paths that are allowed to fall into disrepair by their very nature get less use so it becomes a self fulfilling cycle

More funding should be given now not less to a service that has already been cut to the bone. How further cuts to PRoW work can be envisaged is beyond me. You need more rights of way officers in the field ensuring all rights of way are passable and less officers behind desks. Blatant obstructions by landowners have not been challenged now for several years and it takes years for NYCC to process definitive map modification orders.

It is not necessarily considered that Rights of Way in rural areas should be given less weighting than those in urban areas.

This consultation is significant more what it omits than what it includes. NYCC proposes disregarding statutory responsibilities under the Highways Act without any information on the legal consequences. What are its liabilities in law, including for public safety? What risk assessments have been carried out? It is impossible to judge the impact of the proposed prioritisation model without financial information, by category, on recent expenditure, current maintenance backlog and future plans. It can be assumed that the NYCC proposal will lead to the effective abandonment of significant numbers of footpaths, many in key tourist areas. The consultation is also overtly silent on future service standards, a key factor in judging any proposals. Nor is there anything about future reporting on the impact of any prioritisation model adopted or on the state of the footpaths etc that will remain NYCC's statutory responsibility. Any volunteers will need to be supported and resourced.

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

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Villages (for 1km radius needs defining. Definitive Map should be reviewed at the same point to ensure logical "links" Clarification is needed as to how these proposals link to National Parks

I suspect 10% of presently open paths serve no purpose, rarely get used and would not negatively effect the amenity value of the area. Many of the historic footpaths were used by children going to school, post men and neighbours. The influx of so many visitors, often poorly control dogs, causes a nuisance to many land owners. What is also apparent, is the total ignorance of many visitors, who read "National Park" and don't understand this land is owned by individual land owners, who are trying to make their living here. Some visitor think they are in a theme park and this allows them to wander off the path at their whim.

Paths may seem to get more use because they are clear and more accessible, if badly maintained routes got cared for more people would use them.

with regard to your last question you should not be able to continue using the excuse that you consider a path to have little potential for future use to justify toleration of illegal obstruction. I oppose the whole basis of this proposed approach. Your starting point should be how you can discharge your statutory responsibilities with regard to the entire rights of way network. If resources are a limiting factor then you should look to changing your working practices to accommodate those limitations. An obvious first step is to ensure that those who own and manage land do not act illegally in denying public rights and do discharge their own management responsibilities.

My experience suggests a more robust approach toward landowners who year on year make the network almost a no-go experience for walkers. As a consequence many paths become underused and 'will' move down the council's priority listing.

As traffic becomes busier in the area, greater effort should be made to create useable cycle routes, free of traffic for both road cycling, mountain biking and recreational cyclists

Look at other ways to fund maintenance of our PROW network. Our paths, bridleways and byways are part of our heritage and must be protected. They provide opportunities for exercise, relaxation, freedom, fresh air, views, thoughts, reflection, social interaction and escapism.

Cutbacks are continually being made in the wrong places. Whilst our rural public transport services, education, health services etc are being savaged, one cannot really expect the county council will adequately protect our rights of way, but it would be appropriate if similar cuts were made to councillors expenses, civic events, and general county council bureaucracy and wastefulness. I won't hold my breath.

Should higher priority be given to pathways with heavier traffic? Their maintenance will be more of an on-going process. Less used pathways are more remote and without alternative by-passing in case of a problem, which results in a major retracing or detour, yet solving the problem on a less used pathway may be quicker, cheaper and easier, and only a seldom occurrence, therefore should be prioritised on the basis of an 'easy fix' perhaps.

I have always been concerned that public money is wasted on all public rights of way that DO NOT get justifiable use, there are footpaths I walk on once in a decade and there is no evidence of anyone ever using them, this is a complete waste of money (it was even before budgets became so tight!) but I totally disagree that they should lose their legal status or be removed from the definitive map.

The paths from Spennithorne towards the River Ure and west towards the Middleham Road are well used .

I would have liked to have heard of what (if any) proposals there are for extending the network and filling in missing links.

seems inevitable after the public spending cuts....

It depends on the requirements - if a path needs maintenance then the more frequently used would require priority, however if a less frequently used path becomes impassable for whatever reason should then become a priority as it becomes out of use.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Our group has in the past reported footpath problems but Walk Leaders become frustrated at the apparent lack of remedial action. We are aware that NYCC has a prioritisation system for remedial works and we envisage that your proposals will support an improved mechanism for providing those people or groups who report problems, with early feedback on where the problems sit in your priority programme. Where practical, our walk leaders do clear away overgrown vegetation where this is blocking a route but the frustrations mentioned earlier are particularly aimed at such as broken bridges and damaged/dangerous stiles.

Targetting resource is great in order to be proactive with higher use (risk) routes however the lowest hierarchies must still be safe to use and have appropriate service levels

we love it so don't change it too much please.

More use should be made of volunteers for path upkeep. I've been a NY Countryside Volunteer for over 5 years and recently our help has been used less. (Something to do with no supervision available). I am quite willing to help keep the local paths in order - even the less used ones. I always have a pair of secateurs in my rucksack which I use (unofficially) when needed whilst out walking. I would imagine there are others who would be like minded.

The whole prioritisation exercise will produce a result which ends up with least used paths falling into decrepitude and playing into the hands of some who would rather not have paths on their land. It would be better to engage with local walking groups and train them to route mark, report problems, commit to regularly walk paths, maybe even fix some issues themselves. Main problem will be illegal closures and re-routes where more authority will be needed to deal with recalcitrant landowners.

The Parish Council feels that all public rights of way should be maintained to an acceptable level which allows them to be used for the purpose they were designed for.

All paths should be covered irrespective of their use

Paths that are not often used are more than likely poorly used because of poor maintenance, being overgrown, not clearly defined etc. The assessment should bear in mind why a path is seldom used.

Landowners should take more responsibility, enforced by NYCC, in keeping paths clear of vegetation and more keep walkers safe from cattle stock by the use of fencing. Many paths are unusable because of these issues.

Whilst I agree more popular paths should have a higher priority this needs to be balanced with level of problem. A damaged stile on a lesser used route is a bigger problem than a ploughed field on a more popular route. Muddy boots is less of a problem than potential injury

If only the most used paths are maintained then we may as well walk round the town, as these paths will end up being paved or surfaced in some other way ruining the experience of walking.

The categorisation as it stands does not give high enough priority to rural local paths which could end up becoming unusable by the local community in favour of national trails and urban areas. The impact of the problem / obstruction on the route should be assessed and dealt with accordingly, otherwise the paths in local small communities and country areas will become lost.

consultation should be made with the Parish Councils in regard to the categorization of paths

I'm concerned that paths adjoining rivers and canals have a low characteristic score, likewise paths within 1 km of a village centre. These are significant leisure amenities and, in the case of canals, potential cycle commuter routes. The canal between Kildwick and Skipton would be an ideal cycle commuter route if the Kildwick end of it wasn't in such poor condition; it's currently impassable for my road bike. Recent improvements (Skipton to Bradley) show what it should be right through.

Don't give up on the future of PROW maintenance in a better world.

More action should be taken to identify landowners who make PROW difficult to access and provide them with more education about their responsibilities

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

There are several paths around me which have been agreed by NYCC for decades should be extinguished (eg35.29/10/1) - for example due to lack of use, changes in topography like being underwater, and/or inaccuracies such as having been drawn going through a private garden rather than the adjacent path, etc - but haven't been. As this is purely an administrative task, it would be very helpful for these to be brought up to date please.

Whilst heavily used footpaths (definition of heavily used ?) should have some priority nevertheless a lesser used footpath in a dangerous condition should also have some priority e.g. footpath through Raygill Fisheries , Lothersdale which has been in a dreadful condition and often impassable , despite being reported more than once , for a considerable length of time .

Generally our paths are a wonderful resource, and we appreciate all those who maintain them.

How do you know which paths are of high priority? Not rights of way have been listed?

I think most paths need to be looked after, in order to allow them to be used in the future, if only those which are currently in use are looked after, then this would eventually reduce the network. I would contact local parish councils to see if one couldn't work together to look after paths, together with neighbouring councils as well as NYCC

Footpaths are likely to be used more, if they are usable. The argument of only maintaining those footpaths that are likely to be used more is a spurious one. All the footpath need to be maintained, it is just a question of how it's done. The scoring system is fine, but maybe NYCC should take priority for 10's and 8's and a mixture of organisation and the council should maintain all the others - suggestions I've indicated earlier.

The consultation document fudges the issue that some paths will be 'lost'. It is a difficult decision if funding is not available. Perhaps you could publish a list of very low use paths and ask local communities to adopt them?

Path usage is heavily influenced by path condition. Paths which are badly overgrown, obstructed or poorly marked need the most maintenance but will be poorly used. Well used paths tend to stay clearer as the users tend to deal with vegetation and obstructions.

We need to also protect PROWs from encroachment or damage by developers and building schemes

Ban these paths

Good signage should be a higher priority, particularly away from the popular routes where it is easy to see the way forward. According to your last strategy document, Bedale has the worst provision of off road circular paths in the county and those that there are not properly signed, so if you cannot read a map you cannot walk around here - which is bad for health of the locals and for tourists.

You should take into account use of PROWS by dog owners. A damaged gate or stile may be low priority to some but if you have dogs it may make the path impassable

I think these are sad times

I agree with the principal, subject to appropriate weighting given to Community Value.

Perhaps the Council should have an initiative to encourage communities as a whole should help in taking responsibility for its footpaths including their maintenance with an effective penalty strategy for landowners that don't. Perhaps a Community ranger scheme or making use of community resolution using people that have been convicted of offences

The County Council should make it clear through different modes of publicity - press releases as well as internet etc. - on the part landowners should be playing in the maintenance of their paths, thus allowing efforts by NYCC to concentrate on their core statutory role. They should also re-examine the way they use volunteers, currently beset by too much restrictive red tape and training, and see if they cannot allow them a wider responsibility to ease officer time.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

For the community engagement, would it not be better to help empower local communities to care and repair their footpaths? Many villages survive on the community providing for themselves, have walking groups and individuals who may be interested and able to take on tasks if given the materials and the set standards for each type of repair.

Seldom used paths should also be checked at least once a year to ensure that they are not blocked or ploughed through as has happened in the past.

I have put details of two paths in our Parish that have been wrongly designated to which I would like a reply please.

How did the NYCC maintain paths in the past? Where's all the budget gone? Are there "Fat Cats" lurking in the council?

Get on with the job of fixing paths.

Whilst prioritisation MAY have a use, I am VERY doubtful that the whole of the footpath network can be CORRECTLY categorised - as in very many instances it could be the decision of a very small number of people, who may not have all the answers. I would also be very concerned that paths may be CLOSED (on a so called temporary basis) because of a lower priority of maintenance.

NYCC already has a similar system of prioritisation in place (Craven district at least) and it would have worked well if there had ever been the funding to allow the rangers etc. to keep up with the rate of complaints. This was never the case and as a result the backlog grew and grew all the time I was involved as a Rambler's Association Group Footpath Secretary (and volunteer.) Now it is proposed to cut funding further. Why should any of us think that this scheme has any value at all? It seems to be no more than a bureaucratic exercise in management for inevitable failure, and the future of the RoW network - the value of which was proven during the Foot&Mouth disaster - looks more doom-laden than ever.

Paths that are not kept passable will not be used. The County Council has been running down the care of PROW for many years now and are already not fulfilling their statutory requirements in my opinion. I have been a Countryside Volunteer for over ten years and seen the support given to volunteers disappear as people are paid-off. You should charge farmers for replacing gates etc.

Perhaps allow for nature of use as well as level of use. For example, if two local people use a path daily to get to work this should rate higher than twenty hikers/caravans etc using a path on weekends March-October.

Only 15 houses where I live and footpaths around us are not well maintained and in some cases have disappeared due to widening of roads over the years. We are almost marooned by the fact that it is virtually impossible to cross the busy main road to walk into our village of Monk Fryston. The footpath into South Milford has disappeared which means we can only go out in the car and even that is becoming more dangerous as we try to get out if our driveway onto the A162.

Horses must be taken into account no matter what.

The rambles think they own the moors, they dont.

In light of the 'Area 3 Trial', how will this new policy impact on UURs/UCRs being maintained under PROW?

Lesser used paths may then become more neglected. We need to encourage walkers to use low priority routes.

The work done by Sustrans should be encouraged and the same for other similar groups. Volunteers can do a lot

The scoring system is heavily weighted towards characteristic value as opposed to community value. This surely can not be right as to a country village local paths, bridleways etc can be extremely important even if not highly placed on the characteristic category. I feel the weighting should be more 50/50

None at this stage.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Paths that currently aren't used because they are unusable, but would ensure the safety of users if they were used more should get a high priority.

PROW users who do not live in the immediate vicinity of a PROW should be allowed some input, not just locals who do not live very near

All well and good but what level of service will be the likely outcome as resources become constrained through budget cuts. As an individual I am selecting no to the next question due to time limitations but may well assist within my own walking group

your proposals are too complicated and onerous to carry out efficiently. You would be better moving the management of public rights of ways to the Highways Department of the County Council and scrapping the Countryside Services Department. The savings made could then be used to continue to carry out the council's legal obligation to maintain ALL public rights of way in useable condition. I would prioritise signposting as the first priority and I would make diversions and extinguishments my lowest priority. The Countryside Services Department appears to have "Too many chiefs and not enough indians" so the removal of expensive office based staff in favour of rangers out in the country would be another cost saving. However I have no confidence that anyone will take my suggestions seriously, you have clearly spent much time and money dreaming up this scheme, which I think would be disastrous for our countryside and our rights of way.

Paths liaise with local horse riders/users. Contact local BHS volunteers -who are likely to know some of the people who use the route.

I appreciate that funding cuts are inevitable, and I agree that some sort of prioritisation is essential. However, there should be some safety net for paths not prioritised to ensure that they are not lost to us all. Maybe this could take the form of an annual volunteer survey, to identify essential maintenance, such as clearing completely overgrown routes. I like the fact that the criteria will be published and transparent.

It is a scandal that not enough money is available to keep *all* PROWs in usable condition irrespective of the amount of use they get or are likely to get. Many are unused simply because they're unusable.

These proposals seem to put paths which are not used so often at risk of disuse, whether by obstruction, a hazard or by being ploughed out, and eventual disappearance. It already takes a long time to get problems sorted out, with paths being closed for extended periods. The more often walks encounter problems such as trudging across a ploughed field, negotiating wire and electric fences or find a bridge missing, have their plans spoiled, have to turn back or make extensive detours, the less likely they are to venture off the beaten track, leading to a decline in the use of the paths which are not part of named routes.

Wider circulation of this survey should be considered

We do not believe this consultation has been well publicised. It is essential that NYCC works with the public as well as parish councils, volunteer groups and groups that regularly use PROWS, so more publicity is needed as you move forward. It is also essential that if a "dormant" category D path is enhanced and linked to other paths to form a network that proves popular with the public, there is a system in place to upgrade that path

Signage is often knocked over by farmers during hedging operations. I have seen this on a number of occasions, the signs eventually disappearing altogether. There should be a legal obligation for farmers to replace signs destroyed in this way.

Bye ways should be maintained to allow access by motor vehicles to allow shared access of the countryside. Otherwise certain groups, e.g. the less mobile, will be excluded from enjoying the countryside.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Bank Newton Parish Meeting is strongly opposed to the canal towpath along this beautiful length of canal between East Marton and Gargrave being made into a cycle route. It is highly valued and very well used by walkers and canal users and it cannot accommodate pedestrians and cyclists safely. The community highly values the bridle tracks for horse riders, cyclists and walkers. We would certainly score these public rights of way at 5.

The proposed approach raises concerns that those PRowWs that have been neglected and are presently difficult to navigate will deteriorate further. One example in Kirkbymoorside is the PRowW exiting the All Saints churchyard at the north east boundary and passing north along the boundary wall, which is inaccessible and has been neglected for some time resulting in ramblers adopting a more nomadic route in order to get to the next marker. Some routes will already be less well used simply because they have not been well maintained or are blocked. Whilst the proposal addresses future maintenance is there any strategy for bringing the condition of all PRowWs back to standard. The Ryedale Ramblers Association produced a very thorough PRowW Survey Report in 2015, cataloguing the state of PRowWs throughout Ryedale. The findings were presented in a report, "The State of Ryedale's Paths". The report highlights the need for NYCC to be more pro-active in tackling the problems identified in order for vis

Paths which are commonly used are likely to require increased maintenance due to the increased usage but these should not be given any cost/time priority over lesser used paths which typically should require less maintenance. Priority of work should be based on need and not categorisation otherwise like the road network, low category status will mean none/very little maintenance leading to unsafe paths notwithstanding giving land owners greater probability of successfully blocking a PRowW.

We were unable to find in the charts, obstruction difficult to pass. When there are issues with public footpaths whether through private land or not, maybe a flowchart for contacts would be useful including timescales.

your wording is woolly; statements such as 'paths likely to get more use' lead to lack of definition and unsubstantiated assumptions. There must be clear criteria which are justified according to a range of principles such as historic as well as community alone

While understanding the current resource pressures I believe that this whole approach is fundamentally flawed. As a young civil servant in the 1970s I was taught that we must not seek to subvert statute by administrative means. The 1980 Highways Act imposes an absolute duty on authorities that relates to all rights of way, and those rights of way are clearly treated as equal under the law. Therefore any proposal to make some of them more important than others is wrong. Your present policy of prioritising on the basis of the seriousness of the blockage/danger etc is the correct one and should be continued. If resources are insufficient then you should be consulting widely as to how further resources can be provided to allow you properly to undertake your responsibilities. A real partnership approach with other authorities, local groups and landowners might well provide answers given good will and flexibility.

High use paths will quickly have problems reported without any of this bureaucracy. Low use paths, including some in wonderful countryside, will fall behind, as they do now. Thus no need for these changes

Swaledale Outdoor Club is a multi activity club partaking in walking, cycling and mountain biking. We hope that we can have a useful input into your strategy and that the thoughts of mountain bikers will be taken into consideration.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

This survey is far too long and complicated. There is far too much to read and take in for the average person!! Whoever designed it needs telling as much. In my experience 'local Authority Consultations are just a way to keep the public 'quiet' - so that afterwards if anyone complains the Council can say 'we consulted every one about this!'. I know of instances where the council have consulted and then when there is an issue that 'say a cyclist objected to something the 'officer in charge' said well I don't agree with his and the cyclists view/objection was 'kicked into the long grass! Consultations must cost money which would be better spent on the Rights of Way. I have been a 'Bridleway User' for over 40 years and a volunteer for nearly 20 years. I reckon that the Rights of Way [particularly Bridleways] will have slipped back to the mess that they were 20 years ago by the time we are out of this current 'severe shortage of funds'.

We hope the comments we have made will be considered prior to finalization of the categories and the Parish Council look forward to receiving further consultation in the near future.

Just as previous - i could not understand what you put out. MAP NEEDED

NYCC should impose Traffic Regulation Orders on all unsurfaced ROW and keep them only for non-motor users. Recreational motors (4x4s and off-road motorbikes) do hugely disproportionate amounts of damage and excluding them would more than make up the funding gap that NYCC needs to find. Allowing 4x4s and motorbikes onto green lanes because of the lanes horse-and-cart historical use is plainly crazy.

1. The questionnaire would have benefitted from a particular category at point 1 for a) landowners and b) businesses affected along the route, because these groups are interested parties in the rights of way network. We would recommend particularly seeking out feedback from these groups in the future as part of the consultation exercise. 2. We are landowners of a section of Bridleway categorised as 'Category A', known as Trenet Lane. This runs from East Marton to Bank Newton, near Gargrave. It crosses the farmland of Newton Grange Farm. We support the Categorisation of this section as 'Category A'. 3. We benefit from private access along Trenet Lane across which there is a bridleway. The lane is used frequently by ourselves on a daily basis for accessing different parts of the farmland and business properties within it. Maintenance of this track to a standard that facilitates this private vehicular use is of paramount importance to us. 4. To be continued, see next questionnaire entry.

Continued from previous form. 4. As landowners we are happy to maintain our section of the bridleway to the standard we require it for our business needs. As private individuals we are very willing to work with North Yorkshire County Council to assist in the maintenance of this private road through our farm because it is an essential access track for us. 5. Maintaining the access track to a standard that is safe for vehicular users is important. It is also important as an emergency 'exit route' in the event of adverse flooding, which happens from time to time in Bank Newton and can restrict vehicular access from our farm along the road between Bank Newton and Gargrave and Bank Newton and Marton, making those routes impassable. 6. Horse riders, cyclists and walkers also enjoy use of this section bridleway. This section of bridleway forms a circuit on a popular off-road cycling and horse riding route taking in sections which have been categorised differently (at a lower grade), TBC

Continued from point 6 before. but which we believe should be categorised holistically as a single grading for the entire loop. We would fully support this. The "loop" we are describing includes: a. East Marton to Ingthorpe Grange (currently proposed to be "Category C") b. Ingthorpe Grange to Stainton Cotes, Coniston Cold (currently proposed to be "Category D") c. Coniston Cold to Newton Hall, Bank Newton (Currently proposed to be "Category C") d. Newton Hall, Bank Newton via Newton Grange Farm to East Marton (along Trenet Lane) (Currently proposed to be "Category A"). 7. The particular reasons for this are because: a. Our farm tourism business attracts horse riders staying on holiday. We recommend riding routes to them that include this circuit. One of the reasons is that the business Craven Country Ride is based at Coniston Cold, so horse riders can hack across the bridleway to it, to hire the cross country course there. b. Also, there is a Livery Yard at East Marton - TBC

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Continued from before - point 6. (Wilkinson Farms) where horses and riders hack out from. They regularly ride out on these sections of bridleway, as such it would make sense to categorise the entire circuit as the same category – we propose “Category A”. c. Our tourism business also specifically targets both cyclists and walkers. Cyclists enjoy the off-road cycling loop along the bridleway – hence our recommendation for a single categorisation of the entire loop. Walkers enjoy this route, and others interconnecting the Pennine Way and Leeds Liverpool Canal Towpath. The ability to promote these routes and attract visitors to stay based on this strength of the local area is something that we hope to continue to do – and have confidence in the maintenance of the rights of way network in to the future. 8. It is our strong hope that landowner and business considerations are taken in to account in actively planning the future maintenance of the rights of way network and....TBC

Continued from point 8. ...that every opportunity is taken to work constructively and effectively with the landowning community to find opportunities for inward investment to the maintenance of rights of way to benefit both those who own the land, operate businesses along it and those who have a right of way across it. Securing public private partnerships in this regard would be beneficial to taxpayers, enabling additional funding to be introduced from the private sector for maintenance of these routes, in order to assist all those with an interest in the rights of way and improve useability. 9. We also respond to this Consultation as regular walkers and bridleway users of the sections of bridleway from Bank Newton – including the Pennine Way footpath which crosses our farm land. We fully support the categorisation of this route as “Category A” together with the paths that link in to it, namely the routes connecting it to the towpath of the Leeds Liverpool Canal at Bank Newton Locks.

Most countryside paths in Hambleton and Richmondshire have been given the lowest priority jeopardising all walks beyond the few urban areas. - the same path has been given different priorities with virtually all walks between villages having a large part classified as "low priority" -Giving a path low priority does not remove NYCC's statutory duty to keep that path useable -the system is complex meaning too much time will be spent "prioritising " and too little "doing the work: The addition of a community value factor will add to those complexities. - NYCC needs to ensure landowner know and meet their responsibilities - I would be prepared to help to determining a network of link paths between villages

1 Landowners should not only be made aware of their responsibilities for maintaining rights of way but they should be enforced against them equally. It is unfair and inequitable to say we will enforce landowners rights on priority paths but not those with lower categorisation. You may push a 'poor' farmer to remove an obstruction on a high category route but not bother a rich landowner on a low category route. This could be seen as contrary to the Equality Act! 2 I am very concerned about what will happen to low category rural routes in the next 10 years. These are often in the most scenic area but may not have a large footfall but are appreciated by the walkers who take the trouble to use them. They are going to disappear on the ground and natural growth will overtake them. Additionally landowners will have no incentive to ensure they are unobstructed. The result will be that when the financial crisis is over the backlog of work will be even greater. Attach/send fur

Landowners must be treated equally and not only be aware of their legal responsibilities but made to fulfill them. They are equally responsible for all their paths and it is inequitable and unfair to say we will only enforce them to take action if it's a high category path. Probably contrary to the Equality Act! Ploughing and cropping is seen as some of the most off putting obstructions to walkers. The proposals do not give it a high enough priority. Go back to the system of volunteers checking complaints and follow them up with letters and further inspections. We are very concerned about what will happen to low category rural routes in the next 10 years. These are often in the most scenic areas but may not have a large footfall but are appreciated by the walkers who take the trouble to use them. They are going to disappear on the ground and natural growth will overtake them. Additionally landowners will have no incentive to ensure they are unobstructed.

I hope that NYCC will engage with everyone in the county who uses our footpath network. I believe it is crucial to the health of our nation that people are encouraged to walk as much as possible and footpaths are generally much safer than walking on roads.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

These proposals left out the main person the LANDOWNER. why not incorporate them into these proposals as to leaving them out? You would get far more help out of them if they felt included. You cannot say paths that get more use should have priority that should not be the case - all footpaths should be equal. That statement contradicts what you have in your proposed Statement of service. On your questionnaire you should have a box for comments on all questions not on only selective questions.

Obstructions should be dealt with immediately, otherwise the council is sending out signals to the landowning community that they are running an obstructor's charter. So even if a path is only used by a few people it is imperative that the council upholds the law quickly. As to maintenance then prioritising paths which have most use is sensible. But I wish that North Yorkshire would work with the public rather than fighting them to the High Court the whole time. Not asserting the public's rights over the unsurfaced road network, wastes public funds. Other councils work with the public and user groups with very satisfactory outcomes.

Consider rerouting if a path is now incorporated into a building or truncated by a major road hence making it unsuitable for walkers, riders etc.

Batter maintenance may mean higher usage. Need is not always equal to use.

In the previous question - I think that paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority" there was no opportunity to comment. We strongly feel that just concentrating on the well used paths will lead to the demise of other footpaths. Badly maintained footpaths will discourage traffic and the well maintained ones will suffer from extra wear - to the detriment of the whole network of paths across our region.

It is wished to be noted that Featherbed Lane, Sleights is an important historic route

There are some footpaths that form parts of published trails - promoted in tourist information offices. (EG the YoreVision Ure walks in the lower Ure valley). This should perhaps influence their ranking.

This was a severe case of information overload which our Councillors found to be extremely off putting - hence some non committal answers. They really wish that it could have been much simpler.

You could spend the money used on all this consultation on actually doing some maintenance!

By prioritising by number of people using the PROW we penalise rural areas over urban.

I will forward Craven Ramblers comments that Settle Town Council agree with

all defects should be dealt with if they are dangerous

I think that routes for sustainable transport - walking, cycling should have higher priority than vehicular routes and that money should be diverted from road maintenance to path maintenance

We have surveyed the paths residents use in our village

It is apparent that there has been little commitment to maintain highways with vehicle access in the past, and I am concerned that this mindset will continue, since, as a user group, motor vehicles would seem to have the quietest voice.

Some of the routes are inaccurate

It's right and proper a consultation has been awarded for this issue, but I hope it is not the beginning of a vehicle to use in ultimately reducing the network of public rights of way from its present level.

Mention is made of "Operational flexibility and operational efficiencies". Need to emphasise this. In the past the policy was, when in an area look at all the problems in that area regardless of priority. This needs to continue. PROW consultation Q&A first question Taking enforcement action – it's more likely pressure will be put on to reinstate a higher category path. They should be treated equally otherwise it just encourages landowners to ignore the law and it is unfair on a landowner who has higher category paths. PROW consultation Q&A question 6 Statutory duty. "although issues concerning safety will be prioritised regardless of category. Need to make sure that any obstructions are also prioritised regardless of category.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

Paths that are not maintained are less likely to be used due to difficulties and dangers More use should be made of volunteers for this purpose. They are out there and need to be utilized

We fear the loss of our precious rights of way, if they become impassable and unused they will be lost.

Hazards on the route should have a priority , such as stiles and water crossing points - safety not footfall

The reason why we have our extensive Rights of Way network is historical: local and community based (access to and from churches, schools, railway stations, village/town centres). Now, however, usage is mainly (even exclusively) recreational and healthy, including but not limited to through routes and long distance trails.

The prioritisation of footpaths in an effort to "save money" could have been better utilised by making a case to Government for more funding, Tourism is a major part of North Yorkshire's income, to create what is essentially a 'first class system' and a 'second class system' is a step backward.

High priority should be given to safety aspects regardless of characteristic

TPT comments on the following questions :- 1 - This consultation response is on behalf of the Trans Pennine Trail partnership. Unfortunately there is no category to cover such organisations. 6&7 - The categories and characteristics listed do not include the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT). The TPT is a route of national significance and should be noted as such. 8 - The use of volunteers on any public rights of way network is a vital resource and can be evidenced as a tool to improve the physical and mental health of local communities. The Trans Pennine Trail also has a monetary value attached to volunteers (£12.75/ hour) which provides potential in-kind funding. 10 - North Yorkshire county council should be encouraging members of the public to use all paths. Unfortunately the more well maintained may get higher volume of users but could this be used productively to encourage further community engagement with those less maintained/used paths.

I think communities would benefit from a greater understanding of how the PROW are maintained, what landowners are responsible for and what NYCC is responsible for and how matters will be dealt with in terms of any obstruction, cropping etc of a PROW. It was clear from our meeting that both landowners and residents were unclear. This may help streamline when NYCC is contacted if residents and landowners understand the legal responsibilities.

Please make more use of the voluntary sector. There are people experienced in ROW maintenance who have volunteered in the past but are now not allowed to because of NYCC red tape. Cut it out and let people help you get on with the job.

If the most used paths are given highest priority then what will become of our lesser used paths?

The proposed categorisation of paths amp in my local parish are not correct and not in accordance with your draft proposal

I would draw your attention to the walking route the 'Welcome Way', opened in 2016 by Walkers are Welcome towns Otley, Bingley, Baildsdon and Burley in Wharfedale, using rights of way in North Yorkshire from Otley, via Clifton to Denton, then crossing the Wharfe again. These same NY paths are used in the Otley WaW leaflet 'Otley Four More Walks', together with paths for 2 more walks. The leaflet has sold several 100 ex. and is still selling, so these paths seem important and might be categorised as such by you. I will send in a copy of the leaflet.

I would like to comment on the appalling condition of many of our rights of way which reflect existing policies which you are seeking to justify and continue. As a walker my enjoyment has been spoilt on many occasions by this neglect.. Paths have obviously been obstructed by farmers and landowners, many have no signs or waymarks and dangers to the public such as intimidating animals or electric fences are not uncommon. Farmers see the Council doing little and have become bold in their blatant antagonism to walkers. I have been followed, questioned and met with fury when legitimately using public rights of way.

Our walking group often tries to explore the area with lesser used paths, it is very important that some maintenance is applied to all paths, so that none are allowed to fall into disuse

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

I appreciate your need to prioritise rights of way with reduced budgets. I don't think the proposed prioritisation of routes will make much difference to whether you address a maintenance issue or not. For example, take Category A route the Nidderdale Way. It has the highest Issue Prioritisation Score of 31 right now because of a partly collapsed bridge. You have closed the route for 2 or perhaps 3 years now, and in October 2016 closed it for a full year to October 2017 (ORDER 2016 NO 445) with the usual comments that you expect the works to be completely within that time. You've said that a number of times as you keep closing the route. It's a National Trail and the re-routing is not welcome by anyone who uses the route. If you cannot sort it in 2-3 years, I have little faith in your prioritisation proposal as I would expect this closure to already have been addressed as a highest priority.

The use of the footpath will depend on the population of the area. One which gets more use will probably need more attention to keep it servicable, but as in our area, the population is less, but the importance to the community is just as important.

Muston Parish Council wishes to be fully consulted on the final details on all footpaths matters relating to those within the parish boundary.

Local community values must be properly incorporated into the categorisation process. PRow maintenance planning must also accommodate the occasional need for work on sections with a lower categorisation.

Some Prow's currently do not get used because of problems on the route, these may be due to inadequate way marking, broken stiles, overgrown vegetation, route ploughed out etc. This may account for a low usage rate on a route, for example when we are planning walks for our group we have to take into account these problems and thus we have to reconnoitre routes to check for problems and sometimes arrange a different route. I hope you find these comments constructive and look forward to co-operating with you as your plans develop. Very few people will actually report problems to you, so when they do more notice should be taken and the score raised on the PRow to reflect this every time it is reported, in the past some routes have been repeatedly reported with no action taken, raising the score would help identify the problem and enable rectification to take place.

There should be more inspections of footpaths in rural area to make sure they are passable and not restricted - to ensure dogs and owners can use the stiles etc.

What will happen to links that are classed as low priority and never qualify for attention? Will they be, in effect, removed as effective rights of way?

The proposals must recognize that there are many PRW that are not used due to lack of maintenance, initially investment in maintenance is required to make the proposals principles viable. The category map for Worsall and Girsby shows a PRW going from a C down to a D and then up to an A, this can't be correct.

Paths and rights of way that are used occasionally should not be forgotten. Sometimes a walk may use a higher priority route and also add a less used route to add to the interest of the walk. Keeping fit by walking is one of the best forms of exercise and can be done by both young and old. This should be encouraged by the local authorities.

I think that issues that are the responsibility of landowners to remedy (about 37 out of 48 issues in Table 4) should not be subject to any prioritization at all. Since it is purpose of these proposals to save NYCC's money, only activities that are statutory duties need be prioritized. If issues such as ploughed out, heavily overgrown, damaged stile or gate, alignment, on "low priority" routes are not dealt with by the landowner, there is a real possibility that these routes will quickly become impassable by walkers and eventually lost to the network.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

I have only just realised today (18/03/17) that your PROW policy are available for comment and have very little time to either study your document closely or form firm opinions. I am a former Outdoor Pursuits Instructor who ran his own business for 10 years. I still retain a passionate interest in the outdoors. As the use the countryside in my area is to a large extent regulated by the historic walls and footpaths the maintenance of these is of great importance. My earlier comment re businesses was triggered by an outing today which saw the possibility of linking a growing and thriving area used by MTBs (Gisburn Forest) to Settle/Giggleswick by a bridleway which is now impassable even on foot to the average walker. The upgrading of a footpath which has fallen into total disuse because of disruption caused while a pipeline was being laid circa 2009/10 would be an added bonus and fill a growing demand locally.

The highest possible score for a missing signpost or waymark, making navigation difficult, is 12, compared to a maximum possible score of 31 (page 10 of the proposals). I think this should have a higher score as it is a duty and may be a defect which stops people using the PROW (this is why I have not commented on the proposal to prioritise paths on the basis of use). Similarly with ploughed/cropped footpaths and bridleways where NYCC has a duty to enforce compliance and lack of compliance makes people less likely to use the path. Could the LAF help with the remaining work in the reviews of working procedures e.g. by re-establishing its subgroup on standards?

Whilst acknowledging the need for cost reduction it would be neglectful if lesser used paths were allowed to deteriorate to the point they couldn't be used.

Hambleton & Richmond Ramblers are sending a detailed response to Ian Kelly given the restricted space for comment but in summary We strongly agree with the comment (p30 of the consultation) on the achievement of operational efficiency by dealing with issues using the criteria only as a guide We remain concerned that NYCC staff spend too much time recording and planning the remedy of issues reported to them and too little time actually doing the required work. Given the level of staffing this adds to the danger that NYCC cannot meet its statutory responsibilities and we cannot enjoy a walk in the county

Under characteristics score should be included paths which link settlements. I would suggest a score of 8. These are important to local residents and many others who use the network for recreation. Provision of waymarking is important for all routes but probably even more so for lesser used paths. To reduce conflicts between users and land owners/ occupiers this should be maintained as a matter of course, using local volunteers and Parish Councils where appropriate. There is no consideration of the contribution that willing Parish Councils could make to maintaining the PROW. This should be developed further in terms of cooperative working and support. Finally, I think that routes onto access land should be scored more highly.

We disagree that paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority. It will always be necessary to make tactical decisions about priorities regardless of the level of resources available for rights of way maintenance. However, it would be a mistake to create an inflexible and predetermined framework of maintenance priorities based on the intensity of usage for several reasons: • There is no comprehensive or reliable data on the number of people using rights of way, or on frequency of use; • Patterns of use change over time; • Routes that are apparently used only infrequently may nonetheless be vital links in bespoke routes, and neglect could make access to the network more difficult

I think more attention needs to be given to paths which have actually been reported to you as a problem and encourage more people to report the problems in the first place. The majority of the British public are apathetic and will moan as individuals to their friend but nothing about it.. You need to find a better way of getting to report problems in the first place and encourage more willing volunteers to help in rectifying the more of the minor problems on the network like way marking, vegetation clearing, minor repairs to stiles etc. I do not think enough use is made of volunteers, why ?

I am disappointed that these proposals are presented as a cost cutting exercise, where NYCC are replicating government spending policies, rather than making expenditure decisions at a local level.

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

Please let us know any further comments or suggestions yo...

The first point of call with any Issue raised should be who is responsible for the Issue. If it is the Landowner or Tenant it is surely your duty to have the Issue remedied by such persons, whatever the priority score of the path. As an example there is a path near us that was in very poor condition until you 'asked' the farmer to reinstate it. You did this twice and he has continued to keep the path clear. It is now being regularly used. If you do not process issues raised for all paths, THE MAINTENANCE OF WHICH IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY many of your lower priority paths will be lost, in breach of your Statutory Duty.

Looking at the map in the Howardian Hills AONB it seems strange that some paths are characterised C and others B. Why?

1) The consultation is vague on what is being done to encourage volunteering. We would like to know more about NYCC support/advice to allow individuals in our parish to carry out routine maintenance. To some degree this already happens on an informal basis but if it needs to be done to a greater extent some advice and guidance is a minimum requirement. 2) We don't support a future position where there is no NYCC system that can bring landowners to task for neglecting or wilfully obstructing rights of way. This is very hard for communities to address on their own and we need the councils help. 3) The Q&A document indicates that service standards cannot be set at present. We don't really understand why not? It would be useful to know how well standards have been met historically. Have all the defects reported in the past been satisfactorily dealt with in a reasonable timescale?

The network is important to community health and the visitor economy. There are omissions and inconsistencies in the definitive map without any prospect of their correction. NYCC should commit to addressing this in Ripon city centre to assist in vitality and viability and in the wider Ripon area where the World Heritage Site is an international driver of the county's prosperity.

We need to make sure the local footpaths from the village and especially those that go places e.g. to Croft racing circuit or Middleton Tyas church are accessible now - before we say that they are not important because they are not being used. The question should be - why are they not being used - before any assessment as to prioritise them is made. I for one would use all the footpaths and I have tried nearly all the local paths - but have been defeated by dog unfriendly stiles, 5 ft high nettles, a gap in the hedge which is no longer there, 4 foot high broad beans, deep ploughing, crop right to the hedge, aggressive large animals, loose farm dogs, no footbridge, locked gates, missing signs so path unidentifiable because original field boundaries have been removed.

Please be proactive in consulting with local community groups and walking groups.

You do not mention any statistics about use. How have you measured usage?

Some priority is necessary but only if all paths are kept clear on overgrowth.

The divide between heavily used paths and quieter ones will only grow bigger. Work harder to encourage people away from the popular main routes.

In order to reduce the number of 'issues' on the network and in consequence the number of complaints/concerns you receive there should be an emphasis on firmer and speedy enforcement action against those individuals who avoid their responsibilities. Threats of work in default and subsequent recharges tend to concentrate the mind. Such interventions will quickly ripple across to others acting in a similar fashion and maintenance of the network is suddenly and unexpectedly improved. Taking the consultation document as a whole one cannot but be left with the feeling that this is the beginning of an abdication of your responsibilities with respect to public rights of way. This must not be allowed to happen these responsibilities should be zealously guarded now and for future generations. I am very much aware of the cuts that are taking place within local government but the road you are proposing to follow will lead to losses that will prove very difficult, if not impossible, to rectify.

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

These comments constitute formal advice from the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum. North Yorkshire County Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

North Yorkshire County Council – Public Rights of Way public consultation

Comments of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

The North Yorkshire Local Access Forum is pleased to participate in the Public Rights of Way public consultation exercise being conducted by the Countryside Access Service and thanks Ian Kelly, Countryside Access Manager, for attending its meeting on 2 March 2017 to discuss the consultation.

Comments

Whilst recognising that this consultation is aimed at providing a structure against which to prioritise future work, the Local Access Forum is very keen to see that the time spent on the relatively complex administrative processes needed to apply and record the suggested criteria is minimised, in order to maximise the amount of time spent “doing”. In any event, the LAF agrees that the criteria are only a guide in the efficient resolution of issues, as indicated on page 11 of the consultation paper.

Members understand that the driving force behind this exercise is the reduction in available funding. Nevertheless, the LAF feels that the public need explicit reassurance that the County Council does not intend to use this process to avoid fulfilling its statutory duty to maintain the rights of way network.

Concerns were expressed about the fate of routes accorded a low priority in the current exercise, and the possibility of this being perceived as a back door route to these routes disappearing in the future.

Members of the LAF feel that, in order to maximise available resources, the County Council should be shifting the onus back onto landowners to fulfil their responsibilities, and back this up first with a communications strategy and then with enforcement action where required. The Council would then be able to focus more of its limited resources on dealing with those issues for which it is directly responsible.

Following the LAF’s initial comments in February 2016, members remain concerned that the scoring system will lead to urbanisation of the network, in what is largely a rural county. For example, under the proposals, a footpath in a town will automatically be given priority even if it is a dead end.

Members also remain concerned as to whether the proposals will support connectivity between settlements. It was suggested that at least one route between

each town or village should be made a priority in order to maintain a network of good walks.

It was suggested that the form filling required for reporting issues could be simplified.

Despite the concerns expressed, members are very keen to see volunteer skills and resources harnessed to deliver against the model once it is agreed, and as soon as the pilot volunteer scheme is ready to be rolled out following the upcoming review.

As in its previous comments, the LAF supports the need for officers to be able to exercise their professional judgement in delivering the service on the ground.

The Forum welcomes and strongly endorses the commitment to review the scheme after 12-18 months of operation, and would wish to contribute to this review process.

Conclusion

We hope you will find our suggestions constructive which are offered under the LAF's remit to advise section 94(4) bodies. We should also like to engage further on any particular issues arising from this consultation, and look forward to your feedback.

Feedback

The Forum requests feedback on the above advice. Please provide this to the Secretary to the Local Access Forum – kate.arscott@northyorks.gov.uk
14 March 2017

Nidderdale AONB - 19 March 2017

The consequence of the approach advocated by the consultation will be a lower standard of rights of way management. This is not acceptable in view of substantial and robust evidence about the value of the network to North Yorkshire's tourism economy and its importance in helping the County's residents to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Parts of the network defined as lower priority in the proposed scoring system include Rights of Way in the Nidderdale AONB that will suffer disproportionately. This is inconsistent with the statement of service delivery principles set out in the consultation document. It is also inconsistent with the County Council's formal endorsement in April 2009 of the AONB's current Management Plan that contains objectives intended to improve the accessibility of rights of way network.

Nidderdale AONB contains the highest density of rights of way in North Yorkshire outside the two National Parks and apparently has the highest recorded number of unresolved complaints about network condition. Nidderdale attracted over 1 452 000 visitors in 2012 who contributed an estimated £61.8 million to the rural economy in the same year, and we have evidence to suggest that a very large number of these visitors use public rights of way. The designated area contains a section of the Dales Way, a section of the National Byway, most of the Nidderdale Way and most of the Six Dales Trail as well as popular and well-used local routes like the Ripon Rowel. Management of these routes in the past has failed to overcome obstructions or to resolve long-standing definitive map anomalies. The condition of signposting, stiles and gates is at best uneven. The proposed scoring system, which places the AONB ninth in a hierarchy of 13 priorities will exacerbate problems on these rights of way.

Consultation with local people as a means of prioritising the allocation of resources for the management of rights of way is unlikely to be successful for several reasons:

- The social and demographic characteristics of local communities are dynamic and decisions that may affect the management of the network in the long-term based on the outcome of a consultation at a fixed point in time will not be durable;
- The results could distort an assessment of the value of the network for visitors whose use of public rights of way is often different from local people;
- Local communities may not agree about the value of the network and it will be impossible to arbitrate;

We disagree that paths which are likely to get more use should have a higher priority. It will always be necessary to make tactical decisions about priorities regardless of the level of resources available for rights of way maintenance. However, it would be a mistake to create an inflexible and predetermined framework of maintenance priorities based on the intensity of usage for several reasons:

- There is no comprehensive or reliable data on the number of people using rights of way, or on frequency of use;
- Patterns of use change over time;
- Routes that are apparently used only infrequently may nonetheless be vital links in bespoke routes, and neglect could make access to the network more difficult

From: Paul Jackson
Sent: 17 March 2017 17:38
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Public Rights of Way consultation

Ian

I have the following comments to make in response to the consultation:

1. Having worked closely with CAS (and its predecessors) on Howardian Hills AONB PROW management and improvement over the last 20 years, I fully understand the need to establish a mechanism for prioritising the resolution of issues.
2. However, given that the AONBs are the primary focus for tourism (outside the two National Parks), it's disappointing to see that AONB routes are only proposed as being Category C. As nationally designated landscapes, visitors arrive from all over Britain and beyond to explore these areas. Although we offer a selection of promoted route leaflets, many users make up routes of their own from looking at the OS map. I believe that, in an AONB, users ought to be able to do this and follow any route relatively easily and free from major obstruction or hazard. The rating of AONB routes at Category C doesn't give me the confidence that this will be the case.

I don't believe that the rating at Category C reflects the economic growth objectives put forward in either the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan or the County Council's own draft Economic Growth Plan. Both of these documents recognise, and seek to develop, the rural tourist economy in the County's most attractive landscapes. The role of AONBs in providing significant economic growth opportunities, both in the tourism sector and as an attractive place for new employees to live and enjoy, is now well recognised. In order to fulfil this potential it's crucial that the PROW network is managed to a high standard, otherwise visitors will not return. The key areas for economic growth are in repeat visitors and the shoulder months of the year, neither of which will be encouraged by a PROW network that is difficult to use.
3. Whilst the concept of scoring 'community value' is perhaps laudable as an objective, the consultation paper recognises the difficulties in how this could be consistently applied across the network. Whilst some further work could be carried out on this, I feel that it might be better to ensure that 'community value' is embedded in the 'characteristics' scoring, in order to remove subjectivity. Some assumptions would have to be made, e.g. that routes close to villages have high community value, and the various types of 'community' would also need to be considered.
4. In arguing that routes in AONBs should be graded as Category B, this is also in recognition of the fact that additional resources are available in these areas to assist with management (as they are in respect of National Trails). The ability to assist with maintenance and improvement works either via the use of volunteers, supplementary funding or AONB staff time input, means that a collaborative management regime can be developed. Such a mechanism is less likely to be developed if routes in the AONBs are rated at a low level, as commitment from the AONB Team might be negated by the low prioritisation of issues within that area. Although the consultation paper recognises the role of collaboration in carrying out works, neither the proposed Service Delivery Principles, the path characteristics table or the issues scoring matrix explicitly mention the scope for accessing additional external resources, or whether this might have an impact on issue score. This could lead to potential partnership projects and important sources of external funding and assistance being missed.

I hope that you will find these comments useful in developing a new mechanism for prioritising path issues - please give me a ring if you wish to discuss any of them.

Paul Jackson
AONB Manager
Howardian Hills AONB
The Old Vicarage
Bondgate
Helmsley
York
YO62 5BP

T: 0845 034 9495 (01609 536778) / NYCC ext 6775

Mob: 07715 009426

W: www.howardianhills.org.uk

T: @Howardian_Hills



North Yorkshire County Council—Public rights of way consultation

Response from the Open Spaces Society, March 2017

- 1 The Open Spaces Society is Britain's oldest national conservation body, founded in 1865. We cover the whole of England and Wales and are a statutory consultee on all proposals to change the routes of public paths.
- 2 While we appreciate that, with diminishing funds, NYCC must find ways to carry out its duties and powers more expeditiously, we are deeply concerned at the new proposals for public paths.

Proposed statement of service delivery principles

- 3 We object to the wording in the seventh bullet: 'Appropriate enforcement action is taken *where it is in the public interest to do so ...*'. Enforcement action should be taken wherever a public path is illegally obstructed; the test must not be 'the public interest' which is, in any case, arbitrary.

Route categorisation, issue prioritisation

- 4 The first paragraph should acknowledge that NYCC remains the highway authority, ultimately responsible for public rights of way in the two national parks.
- 5 There is no recognition of the economic benefit of public paths. They attract income to the county outside the national parks and AONBs and therefore it pays to invest in public paths. This is illustrated by the fact that there are Walkers Are Welcome towns in North Yorkshire which are benefiting from encouraging walkers.
- 6 We are deeply concerned at the proposed categorisation of routes, it appears that those which are afforded low priority will be neglected and consequently used less than now, and could in effect be lost even if they are not closed legally. The county council has a statutory duty to maintain *all* the highways in its area, it cannot in law neglect any of them, however little they are used.

7 The proposed categorisation will lead to distortion of the network, with urban paths being better maintained than rural ones, and no attention given to paths between communities.

Issue prioritisation

8 We submit that high priority should be given to reports of ploughing and cropping, otherwise by the time the path is inspected the problem will be different. Ploughing and cropping must be nipped in the bud. The council can threaten legal proceedings the first time there is a report of ploughing or cropping, and then follow through with a notice next time. The farming community will soon learn that it pays to obey the law.

9 To make the most of its resources, the council should ensure that landowners carry out their legal responsibilities on the network, mending or preferably removing stiles, cutting back vegetation etc. The council must focus on its statutory duties.

Conclusion

10 We consider that the processes in this consultation are immensely complex and will take up considerable staff time to establish, explain and implement. We submit that the council must abandon its sinister proposal to categorise routes, and should work out the prioritisation of problems to ensure that landowners are required to obey the law and play their part in maintaining the network. In addition, the council should make full use of volunteers.

Kate Ashbrook
General Secretary
The Open Spaces Society



RECEIVED 20 MAR 2017

The Chief Executive
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
DL7 8AD

16 March 2017

Dear Sir,

Consultation on the Future Management of Public Rights of Way.

I refer to the Council's Consultation on the Future Management of Public Rights of Way.

The British Horse Society appreciates the financial constraints that highway authorities are currently operating under, and broadly welcomes your proposals as pragmatic and reasonable, but takes issue with the way you have expressed two of your proposed future standards:

Maintenance and improvement works are carried out within available resources and according to a published method of prioritisation.

It is important that your proposed method of prioritization does not result in rights of way never being maintained - or, indeed even repaired. Proactive maintenance is one thing, but repairing a route that is otherwise unusable or very difficult is inherently a matter of priority, even if that route is 'less used'. We believe that you should make this baseline clear to consultees.

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 important that your wording does not indicate that you consider that some obstructions are not appropriate for enforcement, because if it does it does not accord with the terms of the obstruction procedures in s.130A of the Highways Act 1980. Prompt action against recent obstructions is essential. If the Council allows recent obstructions to become unenforced old obstructions sends out the wrong message to people who wish to obstruct public rights of way for their own gain and deprive the public of their legitimate rights.

It seems to us that these are matters of law which must bind your priorities and preferences.

The Society also considers that the scoring proposal should represent best value and as such would recommend that the proposed characteristic scores should be doubled when the route caters for 3 or more types of user, ie walkers, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and motor vehicles.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Weston
Tel: 02476 840515
Email: mark.weston@bhs.org.uk

Director of Access
The British Horse Society

The British Horse Society is an Appointed Representative of South Essex Insurance Brokers Limited who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

Byways and Bridleways Trust

57 Bowers Mill Barkisland Halifax HX4 0AD

E mail: notices@bywayandbridleway.net

Web: www.bywayandbridleway.net

Registered Charity number 280214

28 February 2017

The Chief Executive
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
DL7 8AD

Dear Sir

Consultation on the Future Management of Public Rights of Way.

Your Council have recently issued a consultation on the way that you will manage public rights of way in the future. The Byways and Bridleways Trust appreciates that highway authorities are operating in cash-strapped times, and broadly welcomes your proposals as pragmatic and reasonable, but we must take issue with the way you have expressed two of your proposed future standards:

Firstly,

Maintenance and improvement works are carried out within available resources and according to a published method of prioritisation.

Simply, you cannot deprioritise a right of way such that it never gets maintained - or, perhaps more importantly - repaired (and there is a degree of difference). Proactive maintenance is one thing, but repairing a route that is otherwise unusable or very difficult is inherently a matter of priority, even if that route is 'less used'. We believe that you should make this baseline clear to consultees.

Secondly,

Appropriate enforcement action is taken where it is in the public interest to do so, to remove unlawful obstructions and reinstate obstructed routes.

Again, we think that your wording here indicates that you will deem some obstructions not appropriate for enforcement. This is a dangerous step and, anyway, it seems to us that this is not in accordance with the terms of the obstruction duty and procedures in Sections 130 & 130A et seq of the Highways Act 1980. Prompt action against recent obstructions is essential. Allowing recent obstructions to become unenforced 'old' (non-recent) obstructions breeds a climate of contempt for public rights.

We would also suggest that the public interest requires in almost every case that an unlawful obstruction to a right of way is subject to some form of enforcement action by the County Council

as Highway Authority. The Section 130 statutory duty on the County Council to prevent the stopping up or obstruction of a highway is clearly of considerable importance in this context.

It seems to us that these are matters of law which ultimately bind your priorities and preferences.

We would urge the County Council to have regard to the above points in formulating and adopting any policy. Perhaps it would be appropriate for further consultation to take place with those who have responded to the consultation in the light of our points above.

We would be grateful for a response on the important issues raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully

Robert Halstead Trustee
Byways and Bridleways Trust

E mail: notices@bwyandbridleway.net

From: Jane Harrison [<mailto:jane.harrison@cla.org.uk>]
Sent: 17 March 2017 16:42
To: Ian Kelly <ian.kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Public consultation on NYCC public rights of way

Dear Ian

I started to complete the questionnaire but didn't fit any of the criteria as I am responding as a landowner representative.

However, I would like to confirm that the CLA agrees with your proposals.

Regards.

Jane

Mrs Jane Harrison

Rural Adviser
CLA North
Aske Stables
Aske
Richmond
DL10 5HG

T: 01748 907070 M: 07702 926259
F: 01748 907075 E: jane.harrison@cla.org.uk



The CLA is the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales. For information on our work and how to join online, visit www.cla.org.uk

From: Rupert Douglas [<mailto:Rupert.Douglas@sustrans.org.uk>]
Sent: 17 March 2017 10:34
To: Ben Jackson; Mike Gurney
Subject: RE: North Yorks PROW consultation

Hi guys.

Only really glanced at this so far, but pleased to see you clearly recognise PROW that is NCN (260km) and that this contributes to it being scored highly for the purposes of your categorisation.

Rupert Douglas
Network Development Manager (Yorkshire)
England North

rupert.douglas@sustrans.org.uk | **07876 234112**

Sustrans | Leeds Bridge House | Hunslet Road | Leeds | LS10 1JN
0113 245 0006
www.sustrans.org.uk

From: Burton in Lonsdale Parish Council
Sent: 27 February 2017 11:10
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: 17.02.27 Countryside Access Service: 2017 Consultation: Burton in Lonsdale

Dear Mr Kelly

Countryside Access Service Consultation: Burton in Lonsdale Parish Council response.

The Parish Council has considered the map (see attached) and proposals for grading of footpaths within the Burton Parish.

Path no 05.9/6/1 and 05.9/7/1/

The Parish Council suggests the route marked in blue (Grade D) between Kepp House and Lund Farm and Lund Holme is upgraded to Grade C (green).

The reasons for this are that the route between Ingleton and Burton is regularly used by walking groups (both from this area and outside the area) and by Duke of Edinburgh Ward groups; it would be beneficial and more consistent to maintain the whole of the route to the same standard with a similar grade to that coming from Ingleton (ie Grade C joining a grade B path, rather than a grade D path joining the grade B path)

We trust you will give this suggestion your full consideration.

May we take this opportunity to say how good the interactive map is for this exercise; the councillors found it most useful.

Kind regards

Susan Gregory
CLERK, Burton in Lonsdale Parish Council

Clerk <clerk.suttonincraven@gmail.com>

Subject: NYCC Countyside Access Service

Dear Mr Kelly,

Thank you for your email of 31st January in which you informed us of North Yorkshire County Council's Countryside Access Service review of how it manages and maintains the county's public rights of way network.

We note that you are now formally consulting the public on a new proposed approach to prioritising management and maintenance of public rights of way within North Yorkshire, excluding those managed on your behalf by The North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

The proposals include a suggestion that Parish Councils should play a formal role in the prioritisation of the network of paths, and you have invited us to pass on our views.

This was discussed at the Parish Council meeting held on 6th February. It was the unanimous view of the Parish Councillors present at the meeting that Parish Councils should not be *expected* to play a formal role in what is in effect, the formulation of a NYCC management policy. We felt strongly that it is up to NYCC to conduct its own public consultation on this matter. We felt that Parish Councils might be mindful to assist, but it would be up to individual Parish Councils, and indeed individual Parish Councillors to decide whether or not they should undertake such duties, bearing in mind that the role of a Parish Councillor is a voluntary role. As such, this expectation of the role of Parish Councils needs to be removed from your proposals. We feel very strongly that NYCC needs to manage its own public consultation on this matter, as it did with the Library Service proposals.

From: .
Sent: 02 March 2017 13:52
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation

Please see below response to the Consultation, from Killinghall Parish Council:

Thank you for consulting the Parish Council.

The Council would like to emphasize the need to keep open ALL right of ways in the area.

Thank you.

Regards,

Michele Wadsworth

KPC Clerk.

From: Louise Pink
Sent: 01 March 2017 12:29
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Cc: Ben Jackson <Ben.Jackson@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: FW: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation - A4 POSTER

Dear Ian,

After discussion at the last Sheriff Hutton Parish Council meeting the Parish Council agreed that the scheme proposed in the consultation is in line with the existing arrangements and therefore the Parish Council has no objections.

The Parish Council would like to point out that they currently have frequent and successful interaction with your Footpaths Officer, Ben Jackson and hope that this will continue in the future.

Best Regards,

Louise
Clerk - Sheriff Hutton Parish Council

From: KTC Admin [<mailto:office@knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk>]

Sent: 09 March 2017 11:05

To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>

Subject: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation - Knaresborough Town Council

Dear Ian Kelly,

Following receipt of your email dated 31 January 2017 regarding the public rights of way consultation, Knaresborough Town Council discussed the information received at a meeting on 27 February 2017. In response to the consultation Knaresborough Town Council agreed the following resolution:

RESOLVED: That KTC responds to NYCC stating that the increased effort and costs of maintaining and monitoring this categorisation is incompatible with the cost savings objective of the process, and will lead to a worsening of the service rather than an improvement.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Angela Pulman

Assistant Clerk

Knaresborough Town Council

Knaresborough House

High Street

Knaresborough

HG5 0HW

T: 01423 864080

E: office@knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

W: www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00am - 12:30pm

From: Washburn Council
Sent: 08 March 2017 10:25
To: Ian Kelly <ian.kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: FW: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation - A4 POSTER

Dear Mr Kelly

On behalf of Washburn Parish Council I have been requested to respond to the public rights of way consultation to inform you that the Council are interested in the consultation and assisting you where possible. However, it was felt that more information is required particularly in relation to concerns over responsibilities and liabilities.

Yours sincerely
Jason

Dr Jason Knowles
Clerk to Washburn Parish Council

From: Tadcaster Clerk [<mailto:clerk@tadcastertowncouncil.co.uk>]
Sent: 13 March 2017 12:46
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation

Dear Ian

Please see below the Council's comments regarding the Countryside Access Consultation:-

Tadcaster Town Council's response to "NYCC - Countryside access Service – Public Consultation"

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.

We are concerned that a system of prioritisation will get in the way of this obligation. Indeed, in the knowledge that a right of way is low priority – something that anyone with internet access could easily look up under these proposals – and that the County Council is less likely to take any significant action over an impassable path, the land owner may choose to plough and crop it over. Having already had issues with various land owners who have attempted to impede and obstruct public routes across their land, we are naturally wary of anything that might further embolden them in trying to block the public's right of way.

In addition, while we understand the desire to get direct feedback from residents on which routes should be protected, it is concerning that seemingly the entire responsibility for doing this will be handed over to parish and town councils. Local council offices are increasingly under time and budgetary pressures, and organizing the type of public consultation needed to properly categorise a potentially large number of routes would be a potentially very time-consuming exercise, and would likely expose us to the brunt of any criticisms of this new policy. The alternatives, namely we as a council categorising the footpaths based purely on our subjective judgements, or abdicating it to county council officers who may not even be familiar with the area, hardly seem any better.

Ultimately, it is our opinion that these proposals are not in the best interests of the walking public.

Kind regards

Jo Mottershead
Deputy Clerk to Tadcaster Town Council

Tadcaster Town Council, The Ark, 33 Kirkgate, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire LS24 9AQ
t: 01937 834113 e: clerk@tadcastertowncouncil.co.uk w: www.tadcastertowncouncil.co.uk

Office Open: Monday to Thursday 9.30 am – 12.30pm (closed Fridays)

From: Edstone Parish Council [<mailto:edstoneparishcouncil@btinternet.com>]
Sent: 16 March 2017 14:43
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation - A4 POSTER

Dear Mr Kelly

I have completed the online survey on behalf of the Edstone Parish but I have also been asked to provide some more specific feedback in terms of the consultation and proposal.

I suspect you may not be ready at this moment in time to alter anything or make more specific changes but at the meeting we held, which was very well attended by both residents and landowners and is of high interest, it was unanimously agreed that the Edstone Parish formally request:

That all the public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways) in Edstone Parish should be upgraded to priority B classification. The reason being that they are well used, particularly with regard to the bridleways.

Many of the residents not only use the local PROW's regularly but some have been quite active in helping to keep them in good order and liaising with landowners. They felt very strongly about this matter and that great weight should be given in the decision making process to the local community.

Please will you make note of this request and comments. If it is not the appropriate time to assess any change of category to the current proposals - please will you contact me at the appropriate time so this will be formally considered.

Kind Regards

Mrs J White
Clerk to Edstone Parish

From: Pateley Bridge Town Council [<mailto:clerk@pateleybridgecouncil.org.uk>]
Sent: 20 March 2017 13:52
To: Susan Stott
Subject: Public rights of way consultation
Importance: High

Dear Susan

I have just realised that I've missed the deadline for this consultation, so if possible, please could you forward this to whoever is collating the responses?

The Council recognised the need for prioritising management and maintenance and is very willing to be consulted – but having looked at the map showing the categories, it wondered why parts of the Nidderdale Way were in the yellow(B) category, rather than the orange (A).

With many thanks.
Sarah

Sarah Adamson
Clerk to Pateley Bridge Town Council
The Council Chamber
King Street
Pateley Bridge
HG3 5LE

Tel: 07751 571 374
www.pateleybridgecouncil.org.uk

From: Helen Gibbs [mailto:cononleypc@gmail.com]
Sent: 22 March 2017 15:07
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation

Dear Ian,

I appear to have missed the deadline for responding to the public consultation via the website. However, I would be most grateful if you would accept this late submission on behalf of Cononley Parish Council via email.

1) The Cononley Parish Council (CPC) appreciate that with a decrease in funding it is necessary to prioritise routes that have the most community value. However, CPC thinks it is vital that paths at the heart of villages are maintained to the same level as those in neighbouring urban areas, as these are vital to the community in allowing access other than by vehicle to village amenities. The Parish Council would therefore like to see routes within 1km of the village centre moved into Category B as with their urban counterparts.

2) The Parish Council is concerned that the prioritisation takes no account of path status - footpath, bridleway etc. Cononley has very few bridleways, which can be used by horse riders or cyclists, so if one of these gets blocked or falls into disrepair, it has a disproportionate impact.

I do hope that you will accept this late submission.

I look forward to your reply,

With best wishes,

Helen Gibbs

From: Ken Bell
Sent: 05 April 2017 10:41
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: NYCC - Countryside Access Service - Public Consultation

Ian,

Please accept our apologies for this late reply on your recent public consultation exercise regarding NYCC Countryside Access Service. I realise that the end date for the consultation exercise has passed but nevertheless felt that I should forward you some views expressed by one of our parishioners, Mr Nigel Bateman. See his thoughts below:

I write to you as Chairman of the Ravensworth Parish Council in the hope that we can have some input during the consultation period.

I have read the document and it seems a good attempt at defining a way to prioritise their spending on their statutory duty to maintain footpaths and bridle paths. However their scoring system in terms of "characteristic"(national v local and relationship to population) is on a scale of 10 - 4 whereas the "community" has a scale of 5 - 1 thus devaluing the input of the local community and biasing the scoring against rural paths. It is proposed to implement the characteristic score in 2017. We appear to have no input to this score.

The community score will be provided by Ravensworth PC and will not be used until 2018 at the earliest. This raises two questions. The first is how will RPC measure the value of the many paths in its area to the residents and the second is what will happen to our paths during the interval between 2017 and the full implementation of the scoring system

Lastly the County Council has a grading system to prioritise action when a problem is reported. This weights danger of accident to users much above inconvenience. This makes sense to a cash strapped Council wishing to avoid legal challenges but does not necessarily reflect importance to local people.

In the question and answer document the question is asked "Will this mean that low scoring paths are left unmaintained?" It is not answered. This raises the prospect of the County Council being able to ignore "less important" paths as they have set out their policies after consultation and can ignore their statutory duty if they do not have the resources. There is no mention of asking the Parish Councils to help. I think our parishioners who use the paths would be very happy to help if they were asked and empowered to do so.

I hope you consider this response helpful. I would be delighted to talk to you about it should you wish,
Best wishes,

Nigel.

Thanks on behalf of Ravensworth Parish Council
Ken Bell
Acting Clerk

From: S ROCKLIFF
Sent: 07 April 2017 17:33
To: Ian Kelly <ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: RE: prow consultation

Hello Ian,

Carlton Parish Council looked at the PROW consultation documents at the meeting on the 28th March and are in agreement with the proposal.

Kind regards,

Sara

Sara Rockliff,

Clerk to Carlton Parish Council

LONG MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL
(Incorporating the villages of Long Marston, Hutton Wandesley and Angram)

Chairman: Cllr F T Abbey

Clerk: Mrs B Plimmer

E mail
Telephone

17th March 2017

Mr Ian Kelly
Countryside Access Department
County Hall,
Northallerton DL7 8AH

Dear Sirs,

Public Rights of Way Consultation.

I have been asked to advise that members of this Parish Council have studied the consultation document and they agreed that as there are only a small number of paths within the Parish, they have no relevant comments to make.

Yours sincerely,


Clerk to Long Marston Parish Council

Coxwold

Ian Kelly,
Countryside access Manager,
NYCC, Northallerton

13 March 2017

Dear Ian,

Countryside Access

We have received your letter of 6th February and displayed the poster on our village notice board. There has been considerable feedback to the parish council on concerns for the future of our enviable network of footpaths.

Residents and visitors do heavily use what will probably be classified as high priority paths but it could be considered equally important that many walkers use the options provided by what might be classified as low priority which indeed make up the enviable network of paths, rather than a simply 'a path'.

Most of our parish lies within the national park and we have met with Karl Gerhardsen NYMNPA in Helmsley 28/02/17 to understand their proactive and interested approach to maintaining and monitoring PROWs.

Coxwold parish is small and the parish councillors have walked all the paths within the boundary 1-12th March and we intend to work positively with both NYCC and NYMNPA to keep all paths open and usable. We list below the specific shortcomings noted for possible improvement for footpaths in the parish and not in the national park:-

- 1) *Signage in the field below Low Parks Farm(OS 530760) is poor and electric fencing is an impediment (10/03/17)*
- 2) *Signage not adequate for the recent path diversion around Angram Grange (OS514769)*
- 3) *Roadside sign posts at Greens Beck and High Leys farm are not 'planted' in the ground (CPC volunteers will help remedy this over coming weeks)*

We will write separately to NYMNPA for any similar points for PROWs lying within the national park.

The concessionary path along the old railway line from Coxwold to Hushwaite is much used and vegetation has been kept under control.

We also intend to contact all neighbouring parishes to gather their opinions and hopefully work together so that the networks are not diminished.

We look forward to hearing from you and benefitting from your support and advice to maintain the status quo, and retain the enviable network of paths enjoyed by so many people.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Le Gassicke Chairman Coxwold Parish Council

Cc Karl Gerhardsen NYMNPA k.gerhardsen@northyorkmoors.org.uk
Neighbouring parish councils of Hushwaite, Oulston, Wass, Kilburn, Carlton Hushwaite, Thornton Hill

Coxwold

Karl Gerhardsen k.gerhardsen@northyorkmoors.org.uk
NYMNPAs, Helmsley

13 March 2017

Dear Karl,

Countryside Access and PROWs

Further to our meeting of Tuesday 28th February the issue of PROW maintenance has been discussed by our Parish Council and there has been considerable feedback on concerns for the future of our enviable network of footpaths.

Most of our parish lies within the national park and we now more fully recognize and appreciate NYMNPAs' proactive and interested approach to maintaining and monitoring PROWs.

Coxwold parish is small and the parish councillors have walked all the paths within the boundary 1-12th March and we intend to work positively with both NYCC and NYMNPAs to keep all paths open and usable. We list below two specific points for concern for footpaths in the parish and within the national park:-

- 1) *Signage at the footbridge near Fox Folly (OS 531784) is not adequate.*
- 2) *A hanging bough is a overhead risk in the copse (OS 535786)*

We will write separately to NYCC for any similar points for PROWs in the parish and not lying within the national park.

The concessionary path along the old railway line from Coxwold to Husthwaite Gap is much used and vegetation has been kept under control.

We also intend to contact all neighbouring parishes to gather their opinions and hopefully work together so that the networks are not diminished. We consider that the current condition of the paths both in our parish and in the national park is excellent!

We look forward to hearing from you and benefitting from your support and advice to maintain the status quo, and retain the enviable network of paths enjoyed by so many people.

Yours sincerely''

Simon Le Gassicke
Chairman Coxwold Parish Council

Cc: ~~Simon Le Gassicke~~, NYCC, Northallerton
Neighbouring parish councils of Husthwaite, Oulston, Wass, Kilburn, Carlton Hustwaite,
Thornton Hill

To Ian Kelly
From Footpaths Sub-Committee, West Riding Ramblers
Date February 2017
Subject Group Response

A New Approach to Categorising the Public Rights of Way Network

This Ramblers Sub-Committee has discussed and considered these proposals. Several members of this sub-committee have responsibility for some areas of North Yorkshire.

We have concerns about the long-term effect of the proposal on the network, especially the risk that low priority routes may become unusable and lead to applications for extinguishment on the grounds that they are thus not needed for public use. Nevertheless, we recognise that North Yorkshire is facing funding problems and thus we (with some reluctance) will currently not raise any objections to your proposal.

We do however, reserve the right in the future to review the effect of the new approach and if it appears to cause harm to the integrity of the network we could then decide to oppose the continuation of your approach.

In that context, we have particular reservations about your 'less likely intention' to move to enforcement action on ploughing and cropping on so-called low priority paths. If that is how you propose to proceed, then it is likely that this will trigger our future opposition to the whole proposal

To : North Yorkshire County Council, Countryside Access Service
From : Tadcaster Walkers are Welcome

I am writing this behalf of Tadcaster Walkers are Welcome Group in response to your consultation on "A new approach to categorising the public rights of way network". We welcome the chance to comment on NYCC plans.

I would first like to say how difficult it has been for us to find out information about this consultation and that the timescale for responses should be lengthened and greater publicity given to its content and purpose. For example, on the main the main rights of way webpage on your web-site, <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23590/Public-rights-of-way> there is no information about this consultation. I would have expected a banner headline.

A second point is that the on-line consultation questionnaire does not permit a proper response to the consultation and thus we are responding by email.

Tadcaster Walkers are Welcome are a group affiliated to the national Walkers are Welcome organisation which aims to help towns and villages promote walking in their local area. Several towns in North Yorkshire are also affiliated. We are responding to this consultation on the basis of the impact it might have on our ability to promote walking. Our purpose is to encourage tourism and visits to the the town and it's local area, and to encourage the health and enjoyment of local inhabitants through walking in the countryside. We are supported by the town council and local business.

Our comments are below. We would welcome feedback and involvement in the secondary community input to the prioritisation process.

Bill Oldroyd

Secretary, Tadcaster Walkers are Welcome
tadwalks.org.uk

1. We find nothing intrinsically wrong with having a method for prioritising the response of NYCC to problems arising in the footpath and bridleway network in North Yorkshire.
2. Likewise, the statement of service deliverable principles is adequate. However, it is not clear how the available resources will impact on this implementation of these principles. Can NYCC give more information on this point as it is crucial to understanding NYCC's commitment to maintain the rights of way network. For example in Tables 3 and 4, where will the line be drawn ?.
3. We find the method for categorisation of footpaths and bridleways unsuitable for the following reasons. We find some of the proposed allocation inexplicable.
 - a. From examination of the map, the use of "links", which may be allocated different priorities, has the effect of giving an overall lower priority to a route because one or more of the links has a low category. We recommend that the a single categorisation is given to continuous routes from A to B so that such paths do not become unusable because a part of the route has a lower priority and as a result an issue on that part is not addressed. Two examples local to Tadcaster are the Old London Road from Chantry Lane to Towton and the Old Street from the Catterton Lane to Streethouses. These types of routes should have a single categorisation throughout.
 - b. One particularly surprising situation is the path 35.52/3/1 changes from category A to category D half-way across some fields. This corresponds to a parish boundary. Do parish boundaries have an impact on the categorisation ?. (There are other similar examples)

- c. The Ebor Way, which runs through Tadcaster, has parts with categories ranging from A to D. This route is promoted by NYCC on its website. The categorisation be consistent along the route ?
- d. It is quite clear from viewing the map that the scoring mechanism gives priority to routes close to areas of population as opposed to those routes in the countryside. This does not reflect the fact that many walkers use the network to pass through and enjoy the quiet countryside. An example is the network of paths around Hazelwood Castle. If the low categorisation given to these paths results in a very low priority given to issues arising on these paths then a very beneficial part of the rights of way network may become unusable. The scoring given to country paths and urban paths should be equivalent. The need to prioritise paths with local importance, for example to schools or adjacent to residential areas, should be addressed by the local community input mentioned later in the proposal.
- e. One particular aspect of the characteristic scores is the scoring for paths that allow the walker to avoid A & B class roads. A route that avoids such a road by providing a roughly parallel path, can quite frequently be more than 50 metres away. Such routes need to be identified and given a higher score moving them into Category B. An example is the set of the paths from Pallathorpe Farm towards Steeton Hall, Colton and beyond towards Copmanthorpe. These paths join up to provide a quiet route paralleling the A64 from Tadcaster to York. There are many other similar examples in the NYCC network.
- f. Many paths on the boundaries of NYCC continue in areas that are the responsibility of other authorities and the impression is that these paths are not given an appropriate priority. For such routes there needs to be a mechanism where the priority given by both authorities can be appropriate and even. Also, it is not clear how local inhabitants outside the NYCC boundary can input to either the primary and secondary consultation processes. A good example are the Category D paths near Aberford which are used by inhabitants of that village.
- g. There should be a range of values from 1 to 10 allocated to community scores, otherwise this score is likely to have little impact on the overall score. If this score were separated half and half between the primary and secondary communities it would make the priorities given by these communities much clearer.
- h. There is an example in Tadcaster where two parallel paths run alongside the River Wharfe from Tadcaster Bridge to Kettleman Bridge, at some places only a few yards apart. The path nearest the river (probably originally the towpath, 35.64/16/1) is not used and near Tadcaster Bridge is blocked in several places. Walkers quite happily use the other path (35.64/2/1). Allocating both these paths a high priority seems unnecessary. Is there a mechanism when the priority of closely adjacent paths can be adjusted to reflect this type of issue.
- i. There is an example of a path in Tadcaster where the map shows a path crossing the A64 Tadcaster by-pass. There is no safe means of crossing the A64 at this point effectively blocking the route. It appears this path may have been diverted alongside the A64 to the riverside path when the by-pass was built. This new route is recorded on OS maps but not the definitive map held by NYCC. How will such a path be categorised ?

4. The section on measuring community value is vague as to when this aspect of

the scoring will be accommodated in the scheme and to how and when the consultation will gather views from the public. This needs to be settled before other aspects of the consultation can be approved.

5. Although it might make sense to engage local input through parish councils there could well be a varied response from adjacent parishes with a route thought important in one parish is considered unimportant in another: the danger being that the route becomes unusable due to a lower priority score. The right of way network is a national network, not a parish network. How will this be addressed ?.

6. The engagement of the secondary community is also vague. One problem is that much use of the network is made by informal groups or individuals that are not a part of or represented by local, regional or national organisations. How will this be addressed ?.

7. The issue of prioritisation scoring has an unacceptable aspect in that if category C and D routes, which constitute almost two thirds of the rights of way network, were obstructed by such things as a locked gate, substantial barbed wire fence or a wall and thus impassable they would have almost the lowest priority and therefore the defect would be unlikely to be addressed. (The score would be 0 or 1 + 6 + 1.) This means that over time the network is at risk of being severely reduced, contrary to the statutory obligations placed on NYCC to maintain the right of way network. This aspect of the prioritisation of defects can also be seen as an invitation to unscrupulous land-owners to block routes in rural areas: routes which, as has been mentioned earlier, have largely been given the lowest priority but which often provide the best access to the countryside. The prioritisation method must address this issue as it is unacceptable.

8. The issue of prioritisation approach is also unclear where an obstruction causes a minimal risk and severity score, for example where the obstruction physically prevents movement along the route. There are two examples in Tadcaster where Category A paths are in one case blocked by a wall with a spike railing on top and in the other case by a chain linked fence 6-feet high. As we understand the scoring this would be $5 + 6 + 1 \times 1 = 12$. This does not seem to be a sufficiently high score that reflects the importance of two blocked town centre paths and that the blockages are unlikely to be addressed. (Paths 35.64/19/1 and 35.64/3/1 respectively.) Are we correct in this interpretation ?.

From:

Sent: 08 March 2017 13:07

To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>

Cc: Lee Davidson

Subject: Harrogate Ramblers Group response to the Consultative Document on Footpaths

Dear Mr Kelly,

As you are aware, The Harrogate Group of Ramblers is part of The West Riding Area. The Area response to the consultative proposals was tabled at last weeks' LAF meeting at Northallerton at which you were present. We are aware of the submissions made on our behalf and support them. However, we are somewhat concerned about the categorisation proposals.

With particular reference to our group's bailiwick, we are concerned that our high usage routes, which are heavily promoted by ourselves and supported by NYCC, are not given Category A status throughout their length. Some three years ago we worked with Mike Gurney to re-sign the whole of The Harrogate Ringway and The Knaresborough Round and instigate repairs where necessary. Should not these be classified as NYCC promoted routes?

To illustrate just one of the inconsistencies, please look at your web map at the path running south from Forest Moor Road at point 434044/455598 (path number 15.54/50/1, which is on The Ringway). You will see that the path is re-categorised along its length whilst crossing fields with no junction or other feature. Is it merely a change in aspect that brought this about? I found similar changes in your promoted routes e.g. 'A Hambleton Ramble' published as an NY walk has category changes in its short length.

A way forward may be to place all long distance paths, as shown on the latest OS maps, in Category A, as you have done for The Nidderdale Way.

I trust you find these comments useful and remain,

Yours faithfully,

Peter Wells

Footpath Officer, Nidderdale Parishes, Harrogate Group of Ramblers

From: Leslie Atkinson
Sent: 06 March 2017 14:38
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: RoW problems

Hi Ian,

My name is Les Atkinson, I am the Footpath Secretary, Scarborough Ramblers Group. Fylingdales Parish Council Member, and a NYMNPA member too.

An ex member of NYCC LAF, A present member of NYMNP LAF. I live in the NP. I also work closely with Bill Dell Cleveland footpath Sec, for Ramblers. I see he has just contacted you too. So that's a bit about me.

I have had a lot of communication about the new system, proposals, whatever you want to call them, and the news is not good. I fully understand that your superiors have given you instructions as to what you should say and your hands have been tied. It all revolves about money I know. The political thinking is that if it doesn't make money then get rid of it. This thinking appears in all Authorities that are politically run but not in the NP which is none political and is such a joy to be part of. So personally we don't blame you. Unfortunately NYCC seem to only want what makes them look good to the public and they are the ones, they are happy to put money into. Old Roads. RoWs away from the general public's view, Stiles bridges which aren't used everyday, wonky gates we come across them every walk we go on, outside the NP. I organise a Work Party group too and faults we find we go out ourselves and deal with them. We have an amazing understanding with our local NP Ranger and manage to get all our problems sorted with no problems at all. We don't worry about priorities, we just get on with it. Every problem is a priority and has to be dealt with. The difference is you have inherited a maintenance program which has been neglected for years. To catch up you are going to need a huge number of volunteers and they must be allowed to get on with it. Yesterday our Group did a walk in the Crambe, Howsham Area and my colleague Bob Clutson sent you some photos as I didn't have my camera.

SE 729/627 Howsham Weir Collaps't step very dangerous when stepping off. We met lots of canoeists here too. Popular place

SE 730/631 S of Crambe Grange. Long RoW hedge which needs cutting right back or nobody will be able to walk it in the summer.

SE 727/643 Finger post knocked down needs replacing.

SE 730/631 near Crambe, Dangerous footbridge. very rotten in middle. could result in an accident. Very easily repaired in a day.

I had a hip replacement at Christmas and this was my first outing with the group. I didn't find it easy but I completed the 8 miles.

At SE 7483/6432 stile near Spy Hill. we came across this stile which I had personally great difficulty in getting over. The step was completely in the wrong place. When you have a Physical problem like I have at the moment you are much more aware how they must be a difficulty for people who are permanently disabled. So this hip op has been a real eye opener for me for people with a disability. These people have a right to the country side as anyone else.

These problems are just on one walk and we do two a week and we are just one group. There are many other groups out every week. So something has to be done. Unsupervised volunteer groups are the answer. The majority of action required is perfectly straight forward. Any Rambling Group could take the job on of signage for a start. You don't have to be a rocket scientist.

We are all very concerned and worried about the abandonment of RoW which come under the NYCC. Walking brings vast amounts of revenue to North Yorkshire as a whole and this I'm afraid is

being overlooked. To retain this hidden revenue we must have some investment in the RoW system or it will be lost to our descendants.

Thanking You, Les M Atkinson.

West Riding Area Craven Group

Group contact details:
David Gibson
Footpath and Planning Officer

13 March 2017

My reference
Your Reference

By email to ian.kelly@northyorks.gov.uk

Dear Mr Kelly

Consultation on Rights of Way

I don't think we've met as I retired from the NYLAF just before you were appointed. I hope to meet you at one of the Craven Local Liaison Meetings.

I was rather disappointed that consultation did not give more opportunity for comment and that if comment had to be cut short there was no warning of this or an indication of how much text could be included. But this is the nature of consultations!

As I could not make all the points I wanted I attach an additional sheet of comments which I hope you will take into account when considering the consultation.

I am a Countryside Volunteer and also a member of the Burton in Lonsdale Parish Group.

I have put myself forward to be consulted on the implementation of the proposals.

Yours sincerely

C David Gibson
Footpath Officer

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION TO NORTH YORKSHIRE CC CONSULTATION ON RIGHTS OF WAY

1 Landowners should not only be made aware of their statutory responsibilities for maintaining rights of way but they should be enforced against them equally in accordance with the law. It is unfair and inequitable to say we will enforce landowners' rights on priority paths but not those with lower categorisation. You may push a 'poor' farmer to remove an obstruction on a high category route but not bother a 'rich' landowner on a low category route. This could be seen as contrary to the Equality Act!

2 In some parts of the county ploughing and cropping is seen as the biggest problem for walkers. This does not seem to have been fully taken into account in these proposals. You used to have a procedure to deal with these. When a complaint came in you followed up with a warning letter and then sending out a volunteer to check that the route had been cleared. This reduced the number of occurrences drastically but no doubt if no enforcement is taking place the effect will wear off and more routes will be blocked more often.

3 Volunteers can and should be used much more to check compliance and to follow up complaints of obstructions and report back with further information on the actual state of the obstruction and the danger likely to be caused. This could be done automatically when lodging the complaint to the nearest county volunteer or the relevant Ramblers/BHS rights of way officer. It is appreciated that you cannot spare staff for this job but it is not one that takes a lot of training.

4 I am very concerned about what will happen to low category rural routes in the next 10 years. These are often in the most scenic area but may not have a large footfall but are appreciated by the walkers who take the trouble to use them. They are going to disappear on the ground and natural growth will overtake them. Additionally landowners will have no incentive to ensure they are unobstructed. The result will be that when the financial crisis is over the backlog of work will be even greater than it needs to be.

C David Gibson
Craven Ramblers Footpath Officer

From: George Bateman
Sent: 19 March 2017 19:34
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: NYCC Consultation on Pasty Priorities

Ian

I enclose a response to the consultation on behalf of the Hambleton and Richmond Ramblers
In producing the response we have consulted Ramblers HQ
I have also completed the on line responses but that approach does not provide the opportunity for
"rounded comments " especially given the space restrictions

You will see there are both strategic and detailed concerns

At the most detailed aspects I also attach a list of the (many) links between villages in our area
where all of the only link path , at least part of the route, is in the lowest priority .

George Bateman
Footpath Secretary
Richmond Ramblers

The Ramblers' Association is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. Company registration number: 4458492.
Registered Charity in England and Wales number: 1093577. Registered office: 2nd floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TW.

THE RAMBLERS - RICHMOND AND NORTHALLERTON GROUPS NYCC CONSULTATION ON PATH PRIORITIES

Introduction

Thank you for consulting about future management of public rights of way. The Ramblers recognize the difficult times in which councils are operating, and, with those constraints in mind, we broadly also recognize the proposals contained in the consultation to be pragmatic and reasonable. We are, however, concerned about some of the proposed future standards and the context created by the current standard of our paths even before the most recent staffing cuts.

Comments on Maintenance Standards

This first is that "Maintenance and improvement works are carried out within available resources and according to a published method of prioritization".

We are troubled that this seems to accept the deprioritization of a particular right of way so that it would never be maintained, or repaired. Repair of path that is so out of repair as to be either unusable or very difficult to use is inherently a matter of high priority, even if that route is not much used and classified as low priority. This baseline should be made clear to consultees. The paper refers to North Yorkshire's statutory obligations which apply to ALL paths including low priority paths .Some walkers are concerned that in due course low priority routes may "disappear" on the ground and provide a case for extinguishment.

The second is that "Appropriate enforcement action is taken where it is in the public interest to do so, to remove unlawful obstructions and reinstate obstructed routes."

This rather looks as if it is meant to say that your Council will deem some obstructions not appropriate for action to enforce and assert the public's right. This is in our view a backward step too far. It seems to ignore the duty in section 130 of the Highways Act 1980 and does not sit with the provisions in sections 130A–130D of the Act. The swift tackling of a new obstruction is very important or the wrong message is sent (never mind the inconvenience, etc). We know that some obstructions are ancient and their age and entrenchment can make them hard to deal with. This does not justify their continued existence, but we are aware that their age makes for extra difficulty.

But swift action against a new obstruction is vital, or it will become another 'long established' problem which becomes increasingly intractable with age. This sends the wrong message to those who show disrespect for people's rights by breaking the law.

2 We also wish to set out our concern on the context which gave rise to this exercise. All Councils are faced with making savings. However other authorities have approached the exercise by determining the level of staff required to meet their statutory duties. However, NYCC decided on an arbitrary large reduction of their staffing and only then assessing how they can meet their Prow responsibilities. This is against a background where the network of paths on the definitive map were already well below the requirement of being freely passable with a backlog of over 9000 unresolved issues. Furthermore, details of unusable paths are not known to the public jeopardising the planning of a country walk.

Comments on Approach to Categorisation

Most of issues which NYCC have to address are landowner responsibilities and NYCC, s role is to ensure the landowner knows and meets those responsibilities rather to carry out the work. NYCC must give much greater emphasis to enforcement, education and persuasion of landowners.

Walkers, such as Rambling Groups walk on routes, typically circular, usually between villages which , in virtually every case have been given the lowest priority score outside the (relatively very small) urban parts of the county .Consequently , whilst these paths may have lower "walkers per mile" the vast majority of "miles walked " will be on low priority paths. If you look at the map of paths there are large areas of countryside where every path falls in the lowest category

In short the potential for having a decent walk in the county will be further reduced.

Furthermore this position seems to have arisen because you have not addressed, as promised to LAF of avoiding an urbanised model or a model which gives different criteria to different lengths of the same path ie high priority in the urban fringe with low priority "out in the countryside".

One solution would be to give a higher score to an least two paths between all towns and villages. Ramblers will be happy to assist in reviewing the application of this suggestion in Hambleton and Richmondshire

The proposals to give a higher score to routes near to livery yards seems to be applied to all paths rather than just bridleways.

Surely the Coast to Coast Path should be treated as if it were a national trail.

Comments on Community Value Proposals

We understand the reason for this approach but consider it is unworkable. The overall approach is already very complex – note our concerns regarding the time involved in administering the process even without endless debates on community scores. We suggest NYCC field officers exercise discretion on special issues as and when they arise.

3 Other Comments

All issues must be recorded (onto CAMS) in advance of applying the criteria and remain until resolved.

Given these are new and radical proposals we share the views that the scheme must be reviewed 12 months after its implementation

We strongly agree with the comment (p30 of the consultation) on the achievement of operational efficiency by dealing with issues using the criteria only as a guide

We remain concerned that NYCC staff spend too much time recording and planning the remedy of issues, reported on them and too little time actually doing the required work.

Given the level of staffing this adds to the danger that NYCC cannot meet its statutory responsibilities and we cannot enjoy a walk in the county

John Marshall Footpath Secretary Northallerton; George Bateman Footpath Secretary Richmondshire

From: David or Enid Nunns
Sent: 19 March 2017 22:45
To: Ian Kelly <Ian.Kelly@northyorks.gov.uk>
Subject: Countryside Access service Consultation

East Yorkshire Ramblers, Area Footpath Secretary (York & North Yorkshire)

We have read various comments from other Ramblers Areas and Bridleway Groups, so feel there is no need to repeat all their comments.

We are disappointed to note the approach to how the service prioritises issues and defects reported to it has not changed, as we believed you were carrying out a full examination of your processes as a matter of priority.

We consider the effort put into your scoring exercise could have been better spent in the short term.

We maintain your first principle is to ensure that all paths are maintained such that they are passable by most people appropriately dressed. Your delivery principles state appropriate enforcement action is taken where it is 'the public interest' to do so, but you then restrict it further on to suit the the finance made available to your Section, contrary to your Statutory Duty to maintain all paths.

We are disappointed at the supposed timely rate of resolution of outstanding DMMO requests, bearing in mind the need to produce an up to date Definitive Map for the former Scarborough Borough and the spectre of 2026 hanging over us.

We agree there is no money available for you to improve paths, without obtaining other funds, or more imaginative working with external Groups and are willing to try and continue to provide several individual Countryside Volunteers and at least one Working Party for you. We don't have many higher level paths in our Area, so would expect to work some of the time on our lower level paths.

You mention you will ensure Landowners (and Tenants) understand their responsibilities. Until recently County Councillors have suggested you soft pedal in following up Issues with Landowners, but this must not be allowed to continue in these straightened times.

Landowners (and Tenants) are responsibly for well over half the Issues reported to you and we support your use of Customer Services staff to carry out the initial assessment of incoming Issues, however we maintain that this should be done irrespective of your scoring process.

We also support your contacting Landowners and Tenants, asking them to carry out appropriate work in a reasonable timescale, prior to carrying out any inspection by your staff.

This action is especially suited to ploughing and crop Issues, which should be progressed for all paths, even the lowest priority ones.

You had an exercise some years ago, pushing for reinstatement of cross-field paths with some success. There are farmers who have since restored their path every season, resulting in much greater use of some of these paths.

If word gets round that you are ignoring many such transgressions in the future the 'good' farmers will again cease restoring their paths, as such we object strongly to your suggestion that you are less likely to move on to further action on Issues that are the responsibility of Landowners on the lower priority paths.

Your route category should be used to help prioritise defects reported that are the responsibility of NYCC, such as roadside signage, field edge paths and many of your bridges.

Route categorisation should not be used as a guide to prioritise work that is the responsibility of Landowners.

Regarding your proposed path characteristics:

We believe all named routes shown on OS maps should be included as 8, as should all routes published in guide books, local leaflets and the Internet, as well as your promoted routes.

To this end, we note the recent intervention by the Richmondshire MP, to try and get the Coast to Coast Walk recognised as a National Trail.

Why should all routes within an AONB be given 6, other than for your convenience.

There are several C class roads that we consider dangerous to walkers and paths adjacent to these should be scored at least 6.

Some of your path links are scored for their individual characteristic, whilst forming inter-village routes. You can therefore get a mixture of scores within an inter-village route, suggesting the lower scored links should be upgrade.

Why are you using 10,8,6 & 4, rather than 10,9,8,7. Are low priority path links that much worse than higher scored links?

We note Issue prioritisation is still based mainly on injury potential. As such a high priority path that becomes inconvenient to use would not score 16 unless there was a medium likelihood of a reportable injury.

We look forward to seeing some changes to your proposals and will probably seek to change some of your path link scores.

Within the next 2 years, we will seek resolution of some of the long-standing Issues in Ryedale that are the Landowners responsibilities, along with the southern parts of Hambleton and Scarborough District, irrespective of your scoring process.

Some years ago I wasted a year of voluntary time with Council Members, NYCC staff and other volunteers looking into NYCC's practices, minimum manpower and necessary financial needs to support the Countryside Service and PROW network, following a slating of the state of your paths – I believe they were the second worst in the Country at that time. This included comparing Authorities such as Durham and Lancashire and national statistics for Shire counties. We managed to get agreement to change some work practices and obtain increased resources for 2 or 3 years. The current resources are below half of that level, so it is no wonder that the condition of your paths is deteriorating despite the efforts of your staff.

David Nunns

Dear Sir/Madam,

R.O.W. MAINTENANCE PROPOSALS.

With regard to the above, I am a little concerned that these proposals will result in less maintenance of 'little used' paths.

Whilst appreciating the financial restraints you are experiencing I would like to forward my thoughts concerning the footpath network.

Although popular paths are worthy of attention any priority they receive will no doubt be at the cost of less well-used paths.

I am a believer in using underused paths in order to (1) keep them open and (2) it spreads the load (wear & tear). Popular paths should if used regularly keep down overgrowth etc whereas little used paths soon result in weed growth etc.

The stone flagging of many popular routes

is not to my liking, but I can understand the logic behind this action. Popular paths attract usage whilst little known paths soon become difficult to negotiate.

In order to promote usage of the full footpath network, and thereby spread the wear & tear, I think clearance of lesser known paths is essential.

As a regular walker of some years I and my companions have cleared paths, whilst on our walks and with volunteer groups (NAC HALL & RA).

Yours Faithfully,

RECEIVED 05 MAR 2017

2nd March 2017

Dear Mr Flinton

Public Rights of Way

We wrote to you in March 2014 (copy attached) following a long and highly frustrating correspondence with your officers to achieve action on the largely unusable network of public rights of way within Habton parish where we then lived. We were informed by a senior manager in your Service that we would receive updates on progress in resolving these issues. Since we received no such updates we recently re-visited the Parish and saw that the lack of communication had been matched by the minimum of issues addressed. Even where issues raised had public safety implications or where they could be resolved by requiring land owner action at no cost to the County Council action had not been taken. Surely this is not acceptable?

We have since moved to the above address where we had great hopes that there may be a different approach to the discharge of your duties. Thornton Dale Parish as you will be aware is partly within the North York Moors National Park and the Park Authority exercises responsibility for the public rights of way network in their area. There could not be a greater contrast in the condition of the path network within and outside the Park area. Within the Park area all paths are signed, unobstructed, where necessary maintained – and as a result all are constantly in use by the public. Outside the Park the situation is the polar opposite with the majority of paths obstructed and access generally discouraged. You may be told, we anticipate, that this is a reflection solely of the resources which are being allocated to rights of way management within and outside the Park. Whilst the correct resources should of course be allocated to ensure that the Council discharges its statutory responsibilities (and we expect that the £2745 we pay annually in Council Tax results in such a relatively small allocation) that is not, we suggest, the sole or main reason why performance is so lamentable. Responsibilities for the management of rights of way are essentially divided between the County Council (or other authorities with highway responsibilities) and landowners. Landowners are generally quite clear about their responsibilities to ensure that rights of way are unobstructed and available for public use but will not seek to discharge those responsibilities if the overseeing authority is known to be inactive. Such inactivity does not save public money but does result in the loss of public rights, encourage a disrespect for the powers of the local authority and result eventually in major public expense. In recent weeks in the part of Thornton Dale parish where NYCC administers the rights of way network we have seen the deliberate removal of roadside path signposts and repeated obstruction of paths (including by unchallenged development) and aggressive denial of public rights by landowners. We see no such issues in the Park area where there is the Authority has no such ambivalence in discharging its duties.

It is of great concern to us that we now see a consultation exercise being commenced by your Rights of Way Service 'A new approach to categorising the public rights of way network' which appears designed to entrench present poor practice. If you are not familiar with the proposed approach it is essentially to allocate scores based on the characteristics of individual paths and to direct resources to the maintenance of highest scoring paths with some unclear 'community value' assessment being added at an unspecified later date. If this sounds scientific and efficient it is not. It is as if your Trading Standards service were to declare that breaches of consumer legislation law were to be acted upon in towns but not in the rural areas. The responsibilities of the County Council are quite clear – they are to assert and protect public rights over the entire public rights of way network. The consequences of a selective approach to your legal duties are those we have outlined above – and our own observation is that about 40% of the public rights of way network in Ryedale has now problems which inhibit public enjoyment and this percentage is increasing on a daily basis. Based upon the direct experience of ourselves and other users we are certain that issues on paths to which your officers decide to accord low priority will not receive attention and this neglect will result in the effective loss of these rights of way to public use. Nowhere in the consultation is there any reference to

landowners being required to meet their responsibilities which is a key to service delivery in all well performing authorities. Landowners are being extremely generously rewarded through the Basic Payment scheme for complying with their legal responsibilities for the public rights of way network – and all progressive highway authorities are ensuring that active partnerships are established at this time. We ask that you re-asses this consultation exercise. The starting point must surely be how you respond positively to all complaints and deliver statutory duties in the most efficient manner. The 'categorisation' of rights of way is not a means for achieving more efficient working – it is a means for justifying inaction in response to illegal actions and legitimate public complaints and as such it cannot form the foundation for the County Council's approved policy.

We do appreciate there are many demands on your working day but we trust that you take some time to look independently into the issues we raise which we know are widely shared. We would of course be extremely disappointed if we were merely to receive a response drafted by the service about which we are making complaint. We have both had a large part of our working lives in the public sector (including 15 years in rights of way management) and are fully aware of the constraints upon service delivery and also of the deterioration of service standards which occurs if bad practice is not challenged. We fully support your aspirations that North Yorkshire should be 'a responsive County Council providing excellent and efficient local services' and whilst we do not wish to be drawn into any unproductive 'consultative' procedures we will be pleased to make any direct input which might be helpful to you.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

Information / Action requested:

We wish to submit the following comment on the public rights of way consultation, hoping that, although we have missed the deadline, our views can be included: We are deeply concerned about the proposals. It appears that those routes which are afforded low priority will be neglected and consequently less used and they could in effect be lost even if they are not closed legally. Public footpaths and bridleways are highways in law, just like any road. The County Council has a statutory duty to maintain all the highways in its area. It cannot in law neglect them — it would not allow an obstruction to remain on a public road, and it should treat public paths in the same way. We believe that the proposed categorisation will lead to a distortion of the path network, with urban paths being better maintained than rural ones, and little attention given to paths between communities. There is no recognition in the consultation document of the economic benefit which can be reaped from public paths. They attract income to the county from walkers, riders and cyclists and therefore it pays to invest in public paths. This is illustrated by the fact that there are Walkers Are Welcome towns in North Yorkshire which are benefiting from the encouragement they give to walkers. We are also troubled that the Council proposes to give lower priority to some of the issues which are reported to it on public paths. We consider that, contrary to the Council's proposals, high priority should be given to reports of ploughing and cropping of paths, otherwise by the time the path is inspected the problem may be different. Ploughing and cropping offences must be nipped in the bud. The Council should threaten legal action the first time there is a report and then follow through with a legal notice if the offence is repeated. It must show it means business. To make the most of its resources, the Council should ensure that landowners carry out their legal responsibilities on the path network, mending or preferably removing stiles, cutting back vegetation etc. The Council must focus on its statutory duty of removing obstructions and asserting and protecting the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of the paths. We also believe that the proposed new processes for categorising paths and problems are immensely complex and will take up considerable staff time to establish, explain and implement. We urge the Council to abandon its sinister proposal to categorise routes and instead ensure that landowners obey the law and play their part in maintaining the network. The Council should also make full use of volunteers, as it is already doing to excellent effect with the Lower Wharfedale Ramblers and others.