

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

28 September 2022

Countryside Access Service - Waymarking

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To advise members of the NYLAF on how the Countryside Access Service currently responds to requests for waymarking from landowners, Parish Councils and the public, and request strategic advice on how this could be modified to streamline the process.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 In addition to signing public rights of way where they leave a metalled road, the highway authority has a duty under Countryside Act 1968 section 27 to erect signs along the route where it considers they are necessary to guide people unfamiliar with the right way. However, there is no national standard when it comes to deciding where this is necessary.
- 2.2 In deciding on a clear set of principles, the Countryside Access Service (CAS) wish to ensure consistency across the network, as well as ensuring that they are making best use of limited resources, both financial and staffing.

3.0 Aims of waymarking

- 3.1 **To guide people without excessive use of waymarks or over-reliance on waymarks**

We do not want to litter the countryside with waymarks; nor do we want people to rely solely on waymarks to find their way. We would expect most users of the network in most cases, to be following a map, leaflet or guide book of some sort, although this may be less likely the case closer to urban areas.

- 3.2 **To protect privacy, livestock, users' safety, and the natural environment**

By ensuring that people do not trespass off the Right of Way, we aim to keep users of the network safe, as well as protect the environment, protect livestock, and protect privacy of landowners.

4.0 Current position

- 4.1 The service currently receives around 200 requests for waymarking each year, and resolves a similar amount, thus breaking even. However, there remains a backlog of over 1200 requests that require resolution. Waymarking issues are all categorised as low priority due to the low risk associated with them.
- 4.2 Where a landowner or Parish Council requests waymarking, the PROW Officer may send waymarks directly for them to install themselves. However, in the vast majority of cases, waymarking issues are resolved by Countryside Volunteers carrying out the waymarking.
- 4.3 Currently, all requests for waymarking instigate a visit by a Countryside Volunteer, who will assess whether waymarking is considered necessary and waymark where appropriate. If a waymarking post needs installing, the PROW Field Officers will do this.

4.4 Countryside Volunteers are issued with a guidance document on how and where to waymark (see Appendix 1) – this includes, for example, ensuring they use the correct colour demarking the status of the PROW, to seek consent when waymarking through a farm or other property, and to ensure that old waymarks are removed. They are also advised that waymarks should only be used at the following locations:

- Where a PROW changes direction
- Where a PROW crosses a non-PROW
- A junction of multiple paths
- Cross-field paths – in both directions at both ends

5.0 Considerations for future ways of working

5.1 The service would like to consider whether a more stringent approach to responding to waymarking requests would be useful and prudent, to make best use of staff and volunteer time, and budget. There are many caveats and factors to consider, some of which are outlined below.

5.2 Caveats to consider

5.2.1 Waymarks cost around £1 each and a typical issue will cost c. £30 to resolve.

5.2.2 Waymarks are made of plastic and thus contribute to plastic consumption.

5.2.3 Volunteer time spent visiting routes and waymarking where it might not be necessary could be more usefully spent on other higher priority and higher risk issues.

5.2.4 Many network users request waymarking even if they did not get lost along the way. There seems to be an expectation to see waymarks at all points along a route.

5.2.5 Guidance from Natural England (2008) (Appendix 2) states the following:

- Waymarks should not be placed at random, but be part of an overall scheme;
- Upland areas should not be waymarked as this can provide a false sense of security;
- Only the minimum amount of waymarks necessary to make the route clear should be installed.

5.3 Questions for consideration

5.3.1 Do other Local Authorities employ any kind of waymarking strategy?

5.3.2 Should route category be taken into consideration – e.g. Category A routes are well used so paths should be more defined – do they need waymarking? Conversley, Category A routes are more likely to be near urban areas and thus used more by people without a map or guide book, so should they be more heavily waymarked?

5.3.3 Should routes not be waymarked where they do not provide a circular route – e.g. dead-end routes, or routes that lead to a dual carriageway?

5.3.4 Should we erect signage on all dead end routes to indicate that it is a dead end?

5.3.5 Should third party promoted routes be more or less heavily waymarked? Users are likely to have a guidebook. Should promoters of the route pay for or contribute towards the cost of the waymarks?

5.3.6 Should we consider all requests after one customer report or should we advise that we will only take action if two or more customers report the same problem with finding their way? Should we close the request if a specified time lapses with no further requests for waymarking on the same route?

5.3.7 Should we only consider requests where at least one of the criteria referred to under 4.3 above are met – i.e. change of direction; route crosses a non PROW; junction of multiple paths; or cross-field path?

5.4 Note; this is not an exhaustive list and NYLAF Members may wish to consider other pertinent questions.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications as this is an advisory report only.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications as this is an advisory report only.

8.0 Equalities Implications

8.1 There are no equality implications as this is an advisory report only.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 The Countryside Access Service would value the views and input of the Members of the NYLAF with regard to considering options for the development of a streamlined approach to way marking, specifically:

9.2 That Members of the NYLAF carry out research to identify how other Authorities currently deal with requests for waymarking from users of the network; and

9.3 That Members of the NYLAF consider their findings, along with the above report, and provide strategic advice on how the service could amend their current approach.

IAN KELLY
Countryside Access Manager

Author of report: Arrietty Heath, Volunteer Coordinator

Background Documents:

Appendix 1: Countryside Access Service - Waymarking Procedure

Appendix 2: Natural England (2008) - Waymarking Public Rights of Way.
[NE WAYMARKING \(5622\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/201222/NE-WAYMARKING-5622.pdf)