

Coast to Coast Bridleway Proposal Considerations and Observations

Introduction

I have been invited as a member of the North Yorkshire LAF to sit in as “an observer” on your Yorkshire Dales Access Forum meeting on Wednesday 7th December 2022. I have previously commented on the proposed Coast to Coast National Trail consultation through the NYLAF forum. I have walked most of the Coast to Coast over 25 years ago, and the section in the NYLAF area across the Vale of Mowbray some 4 years ago. I am a keen long distance walker, having completed some 15 different Recreational Paths across the country over a 30 year period. My partner was a horse-rider who I sometimes accompanied on foot in the vicinity of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail, so I am aware of some of the issues from a rider’s perspective. I previously worked for the Countryside Commission, Countryside Agency and Natural England before taking early retirement.

Extracts From Introduction to Wainwright’s A Coast to Coast Walk

“It is an enjoyable **walk** across England entirely on existing rights of way or over ground where access is traditionally free for all”

“Surely there cannot be a finer itinerary for a **long distance walk**! For sustained beauty, variety and interest it puts the Pennine Way to shame”

“The route has a bias in favour of high ground rather than low”

Cycling and horse-riding additions context

Defra and Natural England are to reconsult on plans for the new National Trail, the Coast to Coast Wainwright Trail, which could make it accessible for people cycling and horse-riding after Cycling UK and the British Horse Society **threatened legal action** on not being originally consulted.

Existing alternatives

There is already a **Sea to Sea or C2C long distance cycling route**, established and promoted from 1992 which goes from Whitehaven or Workington on the Irish Sea coast across to Sunderland or Tynemouth on the North Sea coast. I observed that this was popular and well used by groups of cyclists when I stayed in the North Pennines some 10 years ago.

As far as I am personally aware there is **no corresponding horse riding route in existence** that has been created or promoted officially.

Cyclists and Horse-riders needs

A long distance walker will typically want to use facilities within a 2 ½ mile or 4km distance from the route ie no more than an hours walking time.

Cyclists and horse-riders can readily cover more ground within an hour from a route, so their corridor of search and use of facilities will typically be wider, usually perhaps 6 miles or 10 km from the official route.

Cyclists will need a dry secure place (a barn, shed or garage) where a group of at least half a dozen bikes can be parked and stored overnight.

Information on local cycle shops and repair facilities for issues more serious than a puncture repair need to be researched and provided.

Details of any transport that will be willing and able to collect and carry a cycle is required. This is for those who cannot complete the whole route. Options need to be researched and promoted.

Horse-riders will require stabling/livery options for overnight stops.

Information on local farriers along the route with emergency telephone numbers, if for instance a horse loses a shoe, will be helpful. Similarly contact details for vets who deal with horses in case of any health or accident incidents will be useful.

Locations to safely park horse lorries and boxes with agreement of local landowners that can be publicised and promoted.

Local agricultural suppliers or farmers along the route that can provide horse feed and equipment should also be researched and promoted.

Providing BHS contacts for advice and information on riding in the local area will be useful

Other issues

Realistically a braided route for cyclists and horse-riders that sometimes shares but often parallels the National Trail footpath will be likely to be the most practical solution.

Four issues may be of particular concern to cyclists and horse-riders compared to walkers:

1. The **minimum width required will be greater** than a simple footpath for walkers. There may be pinch points that these users cannot navigate. Stiles, Gates and Gaps through walls and hedges, and bridges or stepping stones across rivers that accommodate only walkers are examples.
2. The **ground conditions** in terms of **how smooth or rugged the surface and terrain** is, and also the **underlying drainage on soggy ground** may make some of the proposed footpath route unsuitable for cyclists and horse-riders. In such instances alternatives need to be provided, to avoid the ground surface becoming a quagmire or badly rutted and poached making it unattractive and in the worst cases unusable.
3. Quiet roads, byways, and unsurfaced unclassified roads maybe ideal for cyclists and horse-riders as a more pleasant alternative to footpaths. **Busy roads with fast moving traffic to travel along or cross should be avoided where possible, particularly for horses** who can be more unpredictable when faced with traffic hazards.
4. The busy **A19 crossing** with fast and heavy traffic is a particular concern. Ideally a separate bridge is required for walkers to get over this dangerous road. If this bridge also has to

accommodate cyclists and horse-riders it will have to be wider, avoid steps and be safe due to these users safety and convenience needs. This will increase the technical needs and costs accordingly. The alternative will be for cyclists and horse-riders who can more readily divert a further distance to use other existing safer crossings of the A19, with just walkers using the footbridge. Any decision on this A19 crossing could have significant cost implications. This needs to be directly addressed early on now. I understand there is a Feasibility Study looking at the options. **The LAF's and user groups should be involved and consulted on this at an early a stage as possible for their advice and views**, not be presented with a fait accompli.

There needs to be a **Code of Conduct or Good Practice between users** if this is going to be a shared route on the ground at some locations for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. This should encourage kind and considerate behaviour between different users that encounter each other. Horses in particular can be vulnerable to surprise if cyclists approach fast and quiet from behind with no warning and make them start, possibly unseating the rider.

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