

# North Yorkshire County Council

## North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Wednesday, 27th September, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Paul Sherwood in the Chair, plus Will Scarlett, Rachel Connolly, Patricia Coulson, Jeremy Dunford, Belinda Ryan and Robert Heseltine

Others in Attendance: David Shorrocks (National Rail), Bruce Cutts (Natural England), Ben Jackson and George Dali (NYMNP)

Officers present: Ian Kelly, Rebecca Gibson, Paul Thompson and Trevor Watson and Melanie Carr.

Apologies: Roma Haigh, David Lepper, Samantha Perks and David Jeffels.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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### **27 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Roma Haigh, David Lepper, Samantha Parks and Councillor David Jeffels.

### **28 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2023**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **29 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **30 Public Participation**

There were no public questions or statements.

### **31 Coast to Coast Path National Trail Update**

Bruce Cutts from Natural England attended the meeting to provide an update on the ongoing work to upgrade the Coast to Coast Path National Trail, starting at St Bees on the west coast, running through the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks, and ending at Robin Hood's Bay on the east coast.

In response to Members questions, he confirmed:

- Legal work on the physical infrastructure was underway, with a move next year to the infrastructure stage;
- The scheme was expected to be completed in October 2025 – DEFRA was keen not to

- extend that target date;
- Work around the A19 would be the biggest task, requiring a safe crossing;
- The medium to long term objective was a suitable crossing suitable for all Trail users - the cost of a footbridge would be in the region of £13m and a Bridleway bridge around £22m;
- Finding the funding for the required crossing was likely to be a lengthy process;
- Natural England was working closely with North Yorkshire Council to identify the best place for the permanent crossing;
- In the meantime an alternative short term option for crossing the A19 was being considered;
- Work was ongoing to assess how much of the route could be wheelchair accessible through the use of appropriate infrastructure;

Members recognised that the national publicity around the Trail would increase its usage and went on to discuss the issues around the required A19 crossing and the potential safety risk to walkers that any detour to a temporary crossing site might create, in that walkers who had already walked 20+ miles would most likely choose to risk crossing the road at the point where the Trail route met it rather than walking extra miles to where a temporary crossing was situated.

Forum Members also noted that Cycling UK's and the British Horse Society's aspirations were for a rider's route to compliment the national trail pedestrian route. The vision was to have the two diverge in places and then re-converge at key points, in order to maintain access to the villages and use of their facilities along the route.

Bruce Cutts confirmed the intention was to install better signage and visitor information, including signposts that showed destinations and distances, and signs to help walkers find local services such as shops, cafés and transport hubs. Also to support local businesses and ensure they had the information and contacts they needed to make the best of the business presented by having National Trail walkers passing through.

The Chair thanked Bruce Cutts for his attendance at the meeting and it was

**Resolved** – That the update on the ongoing upgrade of the Coast to Coast National Trail be noted

## 32 Network Rail Update

David Shorrocks of National Rail attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the ongoing relationship between railways, bridleways and rights of way. He confirmed:

- The introduction of Health & Safety legislation in the 1990's led to the Government championing National Rail to close level crossings following a number of high profile accidents;
- Since 2010, National Rail had been working hard to remove as many level crossings as possible – in 2010 there were approximately 30,000 level crossings and there were now around 6,000, the majority of which were on private land not public rights of way (PROW);
- There was one level crossing on the Coast to Coast Trail route, south of Rounton;
- There were approximately 250-300 intentional deaths on the railway lines a year.
- Work was ongoing to reduce accidental deaths with none in the last 12 months – improved signage and accessibility accounted for the reduction;
- In North Yorkshire there was one pending application for the closure of a level crossing due to a rail safety issue;

David Shorrocks drew attention to one active level crossing closure just outside Micklefield where the diversion would bring a PROW route into North Yorkshire. Members noted that the Railways could apply to divert a PROW and where it was successful, could force its diversion onto someone's land. Members were pleased to note that it was very rare that a footpath was distinguished without putting some other route in its place.

The Chair thanked David Shorrocks for his attendance, and it was

**Resolved** – that the update be noted.

### 33 Overview of Disability Access & Equality Act Measures

Ben Jackson from North Yorkshire Moors National Park attended the meeting to provide an overview how the National Park was dealing with access issues in response to the requirements of the Equality Act 2020 and the steps it had taken to date, which included:

- The formation of a North Yorkshire Disability Action Group, made up of NYM staff, partners & stakeholders, meeting quarterly to discuss PROW and countryside access, visitor centres, opportunities for influencing partner organisations and to carry out site visits;
- The Action Group also looked at wider diversity issues;
- The provision of visitor centre accessibility guides, available from visitor centres;
- The promotion of routes – Miles Without Stiles
- A Trampler Scheme and the provision of funding for Trampers at partner sites;
- Way marker signage and route cards for consistency of user experience;

In regard to:

- Visitor Centre Accessibility Guides – It was noted this included clear descriptions of the facilities, illustrative photographs and details of the widths, steps, surfacing and thresholds.
- The Trampler Scheme - It was confirmed that new members received training on the operation of the Trampler and route advice via route cards supplied with Trampers. It was noted there were a number of live sites – Sutton Bank, Ravenscar, Dalby Forest, Forest Holidays Cropton and Forest Holidays Keldy, with the intention of extending the Scheme over time through the use of Section 106 monies.
- Miles Without Stiles – It was noted the routes (approximately 13 accessible via the Park's website) were divided in to three categories:
  - 'For Some' – for strong and confident wheelchair users and suitable for off-road mobility scooters. Gradients not limited but slopes greater than 1:8 with improved surfacing or handrails
  - 'For Many' – for assisted wheelchairs users and families with more robust, all-terrain type buggies. Existing gradients no more than 1:10 and all newly built gradients up to 1:8
  - 'For All' – for anyone including pushchairs and people operating their own wheelchairs. Gradients no more than 1:10

It was also confirmed the National Park had entered in to a partnership arrangement with Outdoor Mobility (previously Lake District Mobility) who managed their assessments, staff training, annual inspections and membership /bookings.

Finally, Members noted the National Park's intention to extend their offer of accessible promoted routes with the Park going forward, funded through the accessing of DEFRA's Disability Fund, and Changing Places.

The Chair thanked Ben Jackson for his attendance at the meeting and it was

**Resolved** – That the overview of the ongoing work of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park to improve access for all be noted.

### **34 Planning Update from NYC Assistant Director for Planning**

Trever Watson, new Assistant Director for Planning attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the plans for a new Planning Service for North Yorkshire and the progress made since the formation of the new North Yorkshire Council.

He confirmed:

- A new Committee structure had been implemented
- A review of processes had been undertaken to ensure the decisions being taken were both safe and legal
- Work has started on a new Local Plan
- Staff were working together across the new geography
- A detailed programme of transition and transformation was underway
- The intention was to maximise opportunities of coming together as one council

In regard to the new Local Plan, he provided an overview of the key issues and confirmed the intention was to have the new Plan for the whole area in place within five years (2028), He also detailed the next steps which included the formation of a robust evidence base, with lots of engagement throughout the process.

Finally he provided an introduction to the new Planning Service's leadership team

Members noted the new Planning Service would be focussed on six new Locality Areas not the old District and Borough areas, with the nine original teams coming together as one, including building control. They also noted the existing Local Plans would remain in place until the new Plan was introduced.

The Chair thanked Trevor Watson for his attendance at the meeting and it was

**Resolved** – That the presentation be noted.

### **35 Planning Sub-Group Final Report**

The Committee considered a draft final report from the Planning sub-Group on their review of Rights of Way and the planning process. The report detailed their findings in regard to:

- What the current two tier structure looked like, in terms of planning
- How it compared with other unitary authorities
- What advice was currently available to anyone submitting a planning application
- How things might work in the future

Forum Members noted the report and attention was drawn to the list of proposed recommendations drafted by the Planning Sub-Group. Forum members agreed with the majority but a revision to the final recommendation was proposed so that it would read as follows:

*'Identify and agreed an appropriate process for engagement and liaison with NYLAF, for where a major development, a PROW, public open space or connectivity to an*

*existing PROW was being considered, and for any other appropriate applications where issues of connectivity and sustainable transport options were affected.'*

Given the ongoing review of NYC's Planning Service, the Forum agreed it would be worthwhile keeping the sub-group in place so that it may keep a watching brief on developments and perhaps contribute to any discussions around future engagement.

The Chair thanks the sub-group for the work to date on the review and it was

**Resolved** – That:

- i) Given the ongoing development of the new Planning Service, the subgroup should continue its work to help inform the service review
- ii) The draft recommendations to date as listed in the report be formally submitted to the Authority for its consideration, subject to the identified revision to the final draft recommendation, as listed above.

### **36 Local Transport Plan Update**

Rebecca Gibson, Senior Transport Planning Officer attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the Local Transport Plan.

Members noted that work was underway to rewrite the LTP for North Yorkshire and would include Local Transport Delivery Plans for each of the old Unitary Council areas. It was confirmed the new plan developed in partnership with City of York Council, would look at transport in its widest sense, including all aspects of the region's transport i.e. road, rail, bus, cycling and walking, digital connectivity (reducing the need to travel), information products (like timetables and apps) and services like car clubs and e-bikes.

They also noted:

- The government saw transport as a means to an end and not an end in itself.
- The new Plan would take account of other key strategies e.g. the Levelling Up Agenda, Public Health and climate change
- In order to fully understand the priorities, the Council had gathered detailed information on transport networks across the county in preparation for a county-wide consultation, as part of the formal process for developing the new LTP.
- There was ongoing targeted engagement with key stakeholders - the Forum was encouraged to feedback via an online survey.
- To support its development, residents would be encouraged to share their travel habits via a residents' survey, accessed via: [Let's Talk North Yorkshire | North Yorkshire Council](#)
- Face to face meetings were also being held in a range of community settings - Members were pleased to note the efforts that were being made to consult young people via a number of Young People's Forums, as well as colleges and schools.

Rebecca Gibson confirmed the intention was to bring all of the feedback together to inform a complete re-write of the LTP. The Council had until the end of 2024 to complete the work, and the aim was to have a final draft of the document in advance of Mayoral elections in May 2024.

The Chair thanked the officer for her attendance at the meeting and it was

**Resolved** – That the LTP update be noted.

### **37 Secretary's Update Report**

Considered – The report of the Secretary, which updated on developments since the last meeting.

Attention was drawn to the ongoing work to prepare and adopt a new Local Development Plan by 1 April 2028, to replace the existing local plans of the former councils. It was noted that those existing Plans would continue to apply until such time as the new Plan was in place.

Members considered the update on the September meeting of the Regional Forum, which led to discussions around the role of Sustrans, and it was agreed to add this to the Work programme for the next Forum meeting in January 2024.

**Resolved** – That the update be noted.

### **38 Council Liaison & LAF Project Updates**

The Chair updated Forum members on the ongoing A66 Highway Improvement works. He also confirmed that contractors were now in place and construction was starting on the A59, which would involve some re-routing of some Rights of Way.

Rachel Connolly confirmed there had been no feedback received on the Forum's response to the Gayles Quarry planning application.

**Resolved** - That the verbal update provided at the meeting be noted.

### **39 Work Programme**

Members considered the Forum's Forward Plan and were invited to identify any additional items of business to be added.

In regard to the next meeting in January 2024, it was agreed that the role of Sustrans be added to the agenda, together with a report on proposed revisions to the Forum's Terms of Reference.

In addition it was agreed that the appointment of a new Chair and Vice-Chair be added to the work programme for the May 2024, to bring those appointments in line with other appointments made by the Council.

Paul Thompson the new Assistant Director for Integrated Passenger Transport, Licensing, PROW & Harbours attended the meeting to introduce himself and give a brief overview of the planned work to review the future direction of the Countryside Access Service. Noting the timing of that work, the Forum agreed to receive an annual appraisal of the Countryside Access Service at their May 2024 meeting.

**Resolved** - That the Work Programme document be updated as detailed above.

The meeting concluded at 12:30pm