

North Yorkshire Local Access Forum

29 January 2025

Proposals for managing NYLAF meeting agendas for 2025 and 2026

Report of Committee Members: Stephen Clark, John Toogood and Roma Haigh

1.0 Purpose of the Report

This report sets out proposals for what NYLAF might consider in its meeting agendas for the next two years (see also attached draft calendar).

The Forum is asked **to agree** a draft programme, noting that it can be reviewed over time.

The Forum is asked **to consider** how to assign activities to sub-groups and individuals. Initial actions will often include making new contacts and defining the best timescales for NYLAF's action.

To consider and agree how the Forum should engage with North Yorkshire Council in carrying out this programme. The programme potentially includes a range of Council functions including tourism, leisure, environment, planning, transport and highways.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper sets out some thoughts for what the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum (NYLAF) should cover in its future meetings.
- 1.2 John, Roma and Stephen have met several times since the last Forum meeting and have developed these thoughts together. This draft paper has also benefitted from constructive inputs from Ian Kelly and Dawn Drury of the Council's Countryside Access and Governance teams respectively. Unless stated explicitly the views expressed here are those of the Forum members only.
- 1.3 Key considerations have been:
 - 1.3.1 The NYLAF should focus on its primary objectives as set out following the Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000). Those include seeking improvements to public access for the purposes of (1) open-air recreation and enjoyment, and (2) utility or functional access (e.g. the use of rights of way to access public amenities and workplaces).

- 1.3.2 Our resources are limited. We set for ourselves the goal of wanting to make a difference by focussing on strategic items.
- 1.3.3 North Yorkshire Council's Countryside Access Service (CAS) is the main point of reference for NYLAF in the Council. Given their good work, we should in general seek to complement their work, rather than overlap with them.
- 1.3.4 We should also provide guidance and challenge to North Yorkshire Council (NYC) at large, as well as other organisations, with a view to seeking to improve access to the countryside. Within the Council this might include bringing NYLAF's agenda to the attention of the Highways Network Strategy teams (e.g. para 2.6); Planning (e.g. paras 2.7 and 2.8); Parks and Grounds (responsible for various cycling routes and green spaces/assets across NY); Tourism and Public Health (e.g. para 2.3).
- 1.3.5 In developing a draft programme we have developed a list of issues we thought we should cover in the next two years (section 2). The Appendix includes a draft programme.
- 1.3.6 The programme should be reviewed after each 4-monthly meeting. We should also review the programme as part of a wider review of our own effectiveness each year (para 2.13).

2.0 Proposals for content of future programme

2.1 Review of Rights of Way Improvement Plan

- *Purpose.* There is a statutory duty on NYC to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), and for this to be reviewed at least every ten years. A discussion should be scheduled to consider where we can best assist NYC to review its ROWIP.
- *Possible Outcomes.* Small number of actions where NYLAF can support CAS and NYC in reviewing its ROWIP.
- *Timing and priority.* A precis of the current ROWIP will be presented to the January 2025 meeting for discussion. We can then review the timing of any actions NYLAF might take to support the work.

2.2 Countryside Access Service (CAS) Annual Report.

- *Purpose.* To review the annual report of the CAS. To understand where NYLAF can support the work of CAS, and to flag any areas of concern. To support CAS in setting priorities and defining policies where the NYLAF input may help in better managing scarce CAS resources.
- *Possible Outcomes.* Small number of actions where NYLAF can support CAS.

- *Timing and priority.* The CAS annual report for the year 23-24 was tabled at the last meeting. It is proposed that the annual CAS report is presented and discussed in May each year.

2.3 Rights of way network and the North Yorkshire tourism, culture and leisure agendas.

- *Purpose.* Given the undoubted importance of the rights of way network to tourism, culture and leisure in Yorkshire can more be done to exploit this to the benefit of the network and the North Yorkshire economy?
- *Possible Outcomes.* Proposals for better integrating the rights of way network into tourism, culture and leisure initiatives. Where appropriate better support the Countryside Access Service to further tourism and leisure initiatives.
- *Timing and priority.* We thought we should do this soon, especially given the new impetus towards the marketing of Yorkshire as a tourism destination. It is proposed that NYLAF talks with the departments responsible for tourism, culture and leisure to prepare for a possible discussion at the NYLAF May meeting. We should also determine if there are any relevant milestones in respect to tourism, culture and leisure agendas.

2.4 Nidderdale and Howardian Hills National Landscape management plans for 2025-30

- *Purpose.* To formulate inputs to these two National Landscape management plans, both of which are due for consultation around May 2025.
- *Possible Outcomes.* To formulate response to any formal consultation.
- *Timing and priority.* A discussion is scheduled for the May meeting.

2.5 Potential Yorkshire Wolds National Landscape

- *Purpose.* To follow up on actions following NYLAF's response to the consultation on a possible Yorkshire Wolds AONB.
- *Possible Outcomes.* NYLAF involvement in development of an action plan, including in helping to support making the case for adequate resourcing of such plans.
- *Timing and priority.* Timing dependent on outcomes of Defra consultation.

2.6 Access to the Public Rights of Way network

- *Purpose.* How to improve "ease of access" to the public rights of way network, including by car (including car parking), public transport and active travel (e.g. "how do you get to the start of a day on Yorkshire's public rights of way?").
- *Possible Outcomes.* Proposals for improving public access onto/into the rights of way network.
- *Timing and priority.* We thought we should do this early in our future programme – and the draft plan suggests September. We

should determine if there are any relevant milestones in the NYC forward calendar relating to transport policy, active travel policy and highways. Note also this area might be too much to cover in one session. The development of plans in this area will also be subject to the Mayoral Combined Authority agenda.

2.7 Input to Local Plan

- *Purpose.* To make a strategic input to the development of (a) the Local Plan, and (b) planning policy more generally in North Yorkshire.
- *Possible Outcomes.* To ensure the rights of way network is properly considered especially in NYC's local plan.
- *Timing and priority.* To be determined in conjunction with NYC Planning department. No specific dates included in programme at this point.

2.8 Planning applications, decisions and interventions

- *Purpose.* NYLAF to discuss and formulate responses to any major planning applications. To note smaller planning decisions, as well as a number of larger applications, are also discussed and responded to by correspondence between meetings.
- *Possible Outcomes.* (1) To ensure right of way network is properly considered especially in major planning applications, and for NYLAF to take prominent role in making representations on them. (2) To consider further development of an overarching set of guidelines in relation to how planning applications should take account of, and support, the public rights of way network. (To note relevant work in this area has been developed by East Riding Council and the Institute of Public Rights of Way.)
- *Timing and priority.* Outcome (1) Major planning applications: To be determined in line with known pipeline of expected major applications, which we should aim to get from Planning department. No specific dates included in appendix at this point. Outcome (2) Planning Guidelines: It is suggested we have further discussion on this before our May meeting.

2.9 Policy development

- *Purpose.* During our work we may encounter areas where the NYLAF could develop a helpful policy position on certain issues (the specific case of guidance for planning considerations above is one such area). It is not proposed that we develop a forward agenda on such areas at this point, but that we are prepared to be reactive should issues arise.
- *Possible Outcomes.* Development of formal policy positions as required, where it is clear such positions will help others improve the public rights of way network, and the public's enjoyment of it.
- *Timing and priority.* Reactive to issues as they arise.

- 2.10 Public education about Countryside.
- *Purpose.* To consider whether more can be done to educate those using the public rights of way network in North Yorkshire about its usage, including around the “countryside code”.
 - *Possible Outcomes.* Proposals for inclusion of advice in “advertising materials” aimed at tourists and others making use of the network.
 - *Timing and priority.* We were not confident that we could make a significant difference in this area, but thought the item should be included in the later part of the 2026 programme (Sept 26).
- 2.11 Review of Best Practices in Local Access Forums in England
- *Purpose.* To review what we can learn from other Access Forums in England to improve our effectiveness.
 - *Possible Outcomes.* Proposals for the future programme, and for new streams of activity.
 - *Timing and priority.* This has a synergy with the item about reviewing our own effectiveness (see 2.13 below). We thought this work should precede the proposals to review our own effectiveness. The attached programme proposes September 25. John agreed to contact the East Yorks Council Forum, and Stephen the Cumbria/Lakes forum.
- 2.12 Review of NYLAF works with Stakeholders
- *Purpose.* To review our relationships (or not) with stakeholders who share an interest in the public rights of way network, and to explore where we can better work together. Could include stakeholders such as Ramblers, Cycling UK, National Farmers Union, Trail Riders’ Fellowship, Country Land and Business Association or the British Horse Society.
 - *Possible Outcomes.* Common agendas with relevant stakeholders, where there is mutual benefit.
 - *Timing and priority.* We felt this would take some preparation – but could be achieved for a discussion in September 2025.
- 2.13 Review of effectiveness of NYLAF and review of future programme
- *Purpose.* To consider where we have made a difference over the previous year, and how we can improve. This should include a review of the reputation and profile of NYLAF, and its effectiveness in influencing real decisions.
 - *Possible Outcomes.* Proposals for the future programme, and for new streams of activity.
 - *Timing and priority.* We thought we should do this annually, starting in Jan 2026 (see point 2.11 about best practice above).

3.0 Standing Items

- 3.1 The Standing Items for meetings include:
- Review of Minutes
 - Matters Arising
 - Public Questions and Statements
 - NYLAF Secretary's Report
 - Regular updates from area representatives and major project representatives (if any). NB: Major projects include the C2C National Trail work, and the A66 project.
 - Review of agenda for next meeting and forward plan
- 3.2 Statutory items on the forward plan also include the election of Chair and Vice Chair (at the May meeting).

4.0 Discussion and way forward

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Forum discusses the proposed content of the programme, and the timing of items especially for the next two meetings. The proposed programme is set out in the Appendix.
- 4.2 It is also proposed that either (a) an individual or pair take responsibility for preparing each agenda item for discussion, or that (b) a sub-committee is established for more complex or long-standing issues. This can build on established roles in the Forum. If the Forum is content with this proposal it is suggested that "expressions of interest" are communicated with the Chair/authors of this paper at or after the January NYLAF meeting. Discussions after that can then establish a set of proposed responsibilities for future agenda items.
- 4.3 If we are to make progress it is essential that there is good quality engagement between the Forum and those responsible in North Yorkshire Council for areas including tourism, leisure, planning, environment, transport and highways. It is suggested that we discuss the best ways to give profile to our agenda with a range of key Council departments.

APPENDIX: DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR NYLAF 2025-26

Meeting	Proposed item (Figures in brackets refer to section in paper)	Lead individual(s) or sub-committee
2025		
29 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of future programme (this paper). • Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2.1). • Consultation on Yorkshire Wolds AONB (2.5). 	
28 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Access Service report for 24-25 (2.2). • Rights of way network and North Yorkshire tourism, culture and leisure activities (2.3). • Howardian Hills/Nidderdale mgmt. plans (2.4). • Election of Chair and Vice Chair. 	
24 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of way network, highways, transport policy (including active travel) (2.6). • Review of Best Practices in Local Access Forums in England (2.11). • Review of NYLAF works with Stakeholders (2.12), 	
2026		
21 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of effectiveness of NYLAF and review of future programme (2.13). 	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Access Service report for 25-26 (2.2). • Election of Chair and Vice Chair. 	
Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education on countryside and access (2.10). 	
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Minutes • Matters Arising • Public Questions and Statements • NYLAF Secretary's Report • Regular updates from area and major project representatives (if needed). • Agenda for next meeting and forward plan 	
Items to be added when timescales are clearer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps on Wolds AONB consultation (2.5). • Local Transport Plan / Active Travel Strategy (2.6). • Input to NYC Local Plan development (2.7). • Major planning interventions (2.8). • Emerging requirements for policies, strategies or operational position statements (2.9). 	