

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ACCESS COMMITTEE**

2 February 2006

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PARK MANAGEMENT

1. ACTIVITIES

- Attendance at a Cumbria County Council workshop looking at ways of prioritising of rights of way 'improvements' identified as part of the Cumbria ROWIP.
- 2 Meetings of the Sustainable Travel Partnership
- NW Region Local Access Forum Networking Event, hosted by Cumbria County Council and attended by Jim Knight.
- Meeting with Moorland Association to discuss the use of open access land up until the end of September based on the access duty observations and visitor perception survey undertaken over the Summer.
- Meeting hosted by Sport England Yorkshire and Humber region looking at ways of increasing participation in cycling and walking from a regional perspective.
- Local Access Forum, interviews for new members
- Meeting with the Yorkshire Dales Society
- Meeting with Friends of the Lake District – Boundary Review
- Meeting of the Member/Officer working group looking at the management of Green Lanes.
- Workshop run for the YDAF to learn about North Yorkshire ROWIP and rights of way adequacy assessment.
- Attendance at a North Yorkshire County Council workshop looking at ways of prioritising of rights of way 'improvements' identified as part of the North Yorkshire ROWIP.
- Meeting with the British Mountaineering Council to discuss how liaison arrangements can be improved.
- Ranger Services Management Meeting, Exmoor.
- Meeting with the Countryside Agency, renewal of 3 year memorandum of agreement for Pennine Way Ranger position and future works.

2. ISSUES FOR MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION

Highway Authority Agency Agreements

The Authority has two Highways Agency Agreements, in respect of certain responsibilities for the management of Public Rights of Way within the National Park. These Agreements are with North Yorkshire County Council and Cumbria County Council and date from 1997 and 1998 respectively. Since the Agreements were entered into, changes in legislation, notably the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, have introduced new powers and

responsibilities for Highway Authorities in respect of Public Rights of Way and Definitive Maps.

The terms of reference of the Access Committee include *'to agree changes to the delegation agreements relating to changes in legislation'*. The Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06 includes an *action 'to review and update the rights of way delegation agreements with the county councils to take account of changes in legislation'* with a target completion date of November 2005.

The completion date has already slipped slightly although work has been completed to identify the necessary changes to the agreements as a result of changes in legislation. However recent cautionary advice regarding future budget settlements from DEFRA and the current re-negotiation of the agreement between the Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria County Council make it sensible to give more comprehensive thought to the future agreements rather than just addressing the issue of changed legislation.

It is therefore proposed that the BVPP target be postponed to allow us to fully consider the Authority's current position and that this is done in the first instance by having a session on the subject at the Policy Development Forum on 20th April 2006. This will provide an opportunity for members to fully consider the financial implications of the agreements and the benefits to the Authority and the National Park before we sign up to revised agreements with the County Councils. There is little practical detriment in postponing the review of the changes in legislation as the situation is being managed adequately at the present time.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Best Value Performance Plan action relating to Highway Authority Agency agreements be postponed until 2006 following consideration through the Policy Development Forum and by the full Authority.

Access Committee Times and Training

At the last meeting of the Access Committee members commented on the possibilities for bringing forward the start time of meetings in order to facilitate the provision of training and awareness raising events after the formal meetings.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the meeting start time be brought forward to 10am and that the following training sessions are attached to each meeting.

Meeting 11 May, Yoredale: Public Rights of Way Surveying/Ease of Use Performance Indicators

Meeting 10 August, Grassington: CRoW Restrictions update and review

Meeting 9 November, Yoredale: To be confirmed

3. ISSUES FOR MEMBERS TO NOTE

Ecologically Sound Travel in Europe

As part of the final rounding off of the 'Target' project, the partnership led by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and which included Leeds City Council, Bradford Metropolitan District Council METRO, North Yorkshire Council and the Yorkshire Dales Public Transport User group, the project has been entered into an award scheme for 'Ecologically Sound Travel in Europe' which is being run by the Austrian Government as part of their approaching presidency of the European Community. Awards are being made to practical projects, activities and initiatives which bring together the fields of environmental protection, tourism and transport. The main focus being inter/trans-disciplinary projects such: as sustainable travel, tourism and leisure, which have a special relevance for sustainable development in tourism.

The Target project has now been notified that it has been selected as winner in the category 'regions and destinations'. The award will be made at a European conference 'Challenges and Innovations facing Environment, Transport and Tourism' at the end of January, which is enabling participants to share best practice with other regions in Europe.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans, Adequacy Assessments

Both North Yorkshire and Cumbria County Councils are following the Government's statutory guidance on ROWIPs but are approaching the issue in different ways. The guidance asks that an 'adequacy' assessment is completed and that improvements identified are 'prioritised'.

Cumbria County Council

A number of Local Access Forum workshops have been held looking at the adequacy of the rights of way network and agreeing a system for prioritising of improvements. Cumbria are now seeking rights of way 'improvements' and have issued a pro-forma (available through the YDNPA website) for members of the public to complete and return to the Cumbria County Council access officer. Deadline for comments and suggestions is 28 February 2006.

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire has completed a draft adequacy assessment which has taken in to account a wide ranging consultation exercise to identify potential improvements, including the Authority's 'Area Actions' and discussions with National Park Authority Rangers. Comments on the Draft Adequacy Statement will be pulled together and included in the draft ROWIP for North Yorkshire. Members of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum have had an opportunity to comment on the draft Adequacy Statement at workshops and meetings.

Accord with Sustrans

An 'Accord' has recently been agreed between Sustans and the Association of National Park Authorities. Sustrans, one of the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, develops practical and imaginative solutions to transport challenges. Their vision is 'a future in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.' Their

flagship project, the National Cycle Network reached the first 10,000 miles in September 2005.

The Accord, signed on the behalf of the Association of National Park Authorities by Jim Dixon the Peak District National Park Authority Chief Executive, chair of the National Park Transport Officers Group (NPTOG), and John Grimshaw, Chief Executive Sustrans, includes agreement on the principles of: A joint vision, communication, consultation and advice, and joint projects.

Perception and Monitoring of Use of Open Access Land

Two reports have been completed looking at the use and impact of the new open access rights. The first is a review of data gathered through the access duties carried out by Dales Volunteers and looks at the number of people and dogs observed on or near open access land, and whether they were using public rights of way, other tracks, or were walking over open moorland. This review also looks at the possible impact on the sites identified with English Nature as potentially vulnerable to increased numbers of visitors.

The second report gives the findings of a Park wide questionnaire survey. This looks at people's knowledge concerning open access and the new rights and responsibilities. Demographic information was included so that levels of knowledge are assessed against where people come from and the activities they are involved with.

A short article giving the main findings of both studies will be included in the February Members Information Bulletin.

Dedication of Land under CRow Act Section 16

The Countryside Agency is launching a £1.2 million project to encourage landowners to voluntarily dedicate access to areas of land for a wide range of users. The purpose of the project is to investigate, nationally and locally, the steps that can be taken to promote and encourage dedication. The three year project will also investigate landowner motivations and concerns, and will work with local authorities, landowners and other local partners to secure dedications on the ground. A project officer will be employed in each of three 'demonstration' project areas, working with local partners to identify opportunities for dedication in places where they are most needed and for a wide range of users.

Briefing information about the project has been circulated widely by the Agency to relevant external stakeholders. Information is also being sent to National Countryside Access Forum members.

Review of CRow Act Signage and Local Information on Open Access Land

In August 2004, the Countryside Agency issued the guidance 'Signs on access land in England' to access authorities and landowners, dealing with signage and information about open access at the local level. This is the guidance the Authority used to develop its own local signing strategy. Now that the right of access is commenced the Agency is reviewing whether signs and messages about open access are meeting the needs of the public. The

National Signage Working Group, consisting of the key national stakeholders, including ANPA, has been reconvened and discussions have taken place with a number of access authorities, including the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. The Agency is also sending out a questionnaire to access authorities and to local access forums, seeking feedback on the main issues, which will be complemented by user surveys on site. This data will be analysed during February 2006 and it is anticipated that if new guidance is required this will be available from April 2006.

**JON AVISON
HEAD OF PARK MANAGEMENT**

18th January 2006