

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ACCESS COMMITTEE**

2nd February 2006

**UP-DATING OF
“AN ADVISORY ROAD HIERARCHY FOR THE YORKSHIRE DALES”**

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide Members with the background to ‘An Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales National Park’ published in 1981;
- Consider the existing Government policy context regarding hierarchies in relation to up-dating of the 1981 hierarchy;
- Consider the work currently being undertaken by the Highway Authorities (North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Cumbria County Council (CCC)) and the implications this has for the future of ‘An Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales National Park’.

Strategic Planning Framework

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority’s statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

Best Value Performance Plan 2005 / 2006

Update the Yorkshire Dales Advisory Road Hierarchy in consultation with the Highway Authorities and Highways Agency.

Integrated Access Strategy

AS12 Support measures which either reduce dependency on motor vehicles for movements to, and within, the National Park or remove unnecessary and inappropriate traffic from the National Park; and promote the management of traffic so that vehicles use appropriate routes both inside and outside the National Park.

Background

The original ‘Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales’ was developed in response to the Government’s circular entitled Roads and Traffic - National Parks (Department of the Environment Circular 8/77; Welsh Office Circular 182/77; Department of Transport Circular 8/77) which issued guidance to highway and traffic authorities on how they could continue to play their part in the implementation of the then recently prepared National Park Plans.

More specifically, the Government endorsed the idea of defining within National Parks a hierarchy of roads based on their function as recommended by the National Parks Review Committee, and observed that:

“... This classification, which would also necessarily have regard to functions not confined to the park area itself (i.e. some roads have a function as through or access routes to the towns surrounded by, but not in parks), would form a basis for planning road improvements in a comprehensive way, for traffic management schemes, and for measures, such as advisory route signing, designed to discourage certain types of vehicle from using certain roads. The hierarchy, which would be reflected in both the Structure Plan and the National Park Plan, would be the primary responsibility of the highway authority but would need to reflect not only their expert knowledge on highway and traffic matters but also that of the national park authority as to the ‘character’ of the roads in terms of the natural features and recreational aspects of the park.”

National Parks Policy Review Committee (Department of the Environment Circular 125/77)

In response, ‘An Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales’ 1981 was prepared by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee in close collaboration with the County Surveyor of North Yorkshire County Council and in consultation with the County Surveyor of Cumbria County Council, and was intended to provide such general guidance.

Current Policy Context (Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)

An Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales National Park has never been updated or reviewed since its publication in 1981. However, the document forms a key part of the current and emerging Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan and the key aspects have been incorporated within these policy documents. It has also formed the basis of determining advisory networks for coach operators and drivers; which are publicised through the ‘Yorkshire Dales Group Organisers and Coach Drivers Guide’.

When the Integrated Access Strategy was developed it was acknowledged the Advisory Hierarchy of Roads for the Yorkshire Dales National Park should be updated to take account of:

- Settle bypass
- Skipton bypass
- Kirkby Stephen lorry restriction
- Improvements and planned improvements to the A66
- The increasing size of public services vehicles including coaches and heavy goods vehicles
- The increase in traffic volumes
- The emergence of fast speeding motorbikes
- The County Councils’ network hierarchy

Current Government Guidance and Implementation by Highway Authorities

The Government has indicated that it will soon be announcing proposals for rural speed management and has indicated this will identify two rural speed categories, one for higher speed roads and one for lower speed roads.

North Yorkshire County Council, together with partners including the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, has developed a Road Safety Strategy (95 Alive) for North Yorkshire and the City of York (see separate agenda item to this Access Committee). This includes a proposed hierarchy of roads for speed management, which builds on the Advisory Road Hierarchies which exist in the North York Moors National Park, the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the City of York and the Hierarchy of Roads being developed as part of North Yorkshire County Council's Transport Asset Management Plan. For the purposes of speed management this would be a two tier hierarchy consisting of Upper and Lower Tier Roads. However, in the Road Safety Strategy table A (Rural Road Hierarchy) it states:

Measures such as junction improvement schemes, improved signing and lining, segregated vulnerable road user facilities and bend re-alignment would normally be considered appropriate on upper tier roads subject to environmental considerations. Lower tier roads would be categorised by lower speed limits, carriageway narrowing, improved pedestrian facilities and measures to accommodate other vulnerable road users taking into account their environmental impact. Lower tier roads would also cover quiet lanes which require different management methods. Villages, conservation areas and protected landscapes would require special consideration regardless of which classification of route passed through them.

In addition, North Yorkshire County Council are in the process of developing a new road hierarchy for their Transport Asset Management Plan and this includes a seven category hierarchy which, based on discussions with NYCC officers, is similar to the categories used in the 1981 Road Hierarchy. With the categorisation of a road within the hierarchy being largely determined by its function in relation to the access it provides to local service centres.

At the same time Cumbria County Council (CCC) has also developed a functional road hierarchy for roads for the whole of Cumbria which will be used to identify management regimes for these roads within the non urban parts of Cumbria, including the part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park within the County of Cumbria. CCC, like NYCC will also be producing a Road Safety Strategy, to support its Local Transport Plan.

These hierarchies of roads, which are being or have been produced by the highway authorities, address the issues that were to be considered in any updating of the 1981 Advisory Road Hierarchy such as design, speed, traffic management measures, routing of traffic on the roads within the National Park together with the problems of speeding motor cycles and the problems associated with the increasing size of vehicles.

The Future Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales?

To avoid potential confusion, and to ensure that any hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales National Park is given due 'weight' in decision making, particularly as part of the planning process, and is not simply dismissed as 'superseded' at a public inquiry, it is proposed that the 1981 Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales be updated by merging those new hierarchies being produced by the County Councils. In doing this the Authority needs to ensure that there is agreement between the National Park Authority and the County Councils. Within this context it should be remembered that the responsibility for developing road hierarchies for National Parks is the primary responsibility of the Highway Authorities,

as is highlighted by the 1977 circular (which has not been superseded and still remains the most comprehensive statement on this subject), rather than National Park Authorities.

The Authority's Transport and Visitor Management Officer is currently liaising with the county councils so that the new road hierarchies pay due regard to the 'character' of the roads in terms of the natural and built environment features and recreational function as far as the Authority is concerned. It is expected that the new North Yorkshire hierarchies, combined with the new Cumbria road hierarchies, will encompass a new and acceptable hierarchy for the whole of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Conclusion

The role of An Advisory Road Hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales is still as relevant today as it was 24 years ago and, in fact, more so with increased traffic and Government proposals on rural speed management soon to be announced.

As the responsibility for producing advisory road hierarchies rests primarily with Highway Authorities, rather than the National Park Authority, and the Highway Authorities either have or are in the process of developing advisory road hierarchies, it would be inappropriate and irrelevant to update the Yorkshire Dales Hierarchy independently. Instead it is proposed that the Authority continues to engage with the Highway Authorities so that the new Hierarchies that they are producing or have produced pay due regard to National Park purposes and are merged to form a new road hierarchy for the Dales. It is fundamental that any hierarchy for the Yorkshire Dales has the full support of the relevant highway authorities as this is the only way that it will have any impact on the design, speed, traffic management measures, and routing of traffic on the roads within the National Park.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that

- (a) the Authority continues to engage with NYCC so that their new advisory road hierarchies pay due regard to National Park purposes;
- (b) the hierarchies produced by CCC and NYCC are merged to produce a new advisory road hierarchy for the whole of the Yorkshire Dales.

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Background Documents:

An Advisory Hierarchy of Roads for the Yorkshire Dales National Park 1981. North Yorkshire County Council Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee.

Road Safety Strategy for North Yorkshire and the City of York. York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership-95 Alive.

A Functional Road Hierarchy for Cumbria Capita Symonds for Cumbria County Council

21 December 2005