

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ACCESS COMMITTEE

11th May 2006

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE PLAN

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to seek Members views and comments on the Public Rights of Way Maintenance Plan (Annex 1).

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:

- ***National Park Management Plan***
AR11 Manage the network of public rights of way to meet agreed standards.
- ***Best Value Performance Plan***
Access & Recreation, Objective 1, Produce a comprehensive maintenance plan.

Background

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) has been granted delegated authority by North Yorkshire and Cumbria County Councils to carry out certain highway functions in relation to the public rights of way network within the national park:

“The National Park Authority will discharge the functions of the County Council (within the area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park) as local highway authority in relation to the maintenance of all footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic maintainable at the public expense including the maintenance of publicly maintainable bridges and other structures which form part of the highway.”

The network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways which cross the Yorkshire Dales National Park are extremely important because:

- The extensive network of public rights of way, provide many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the National Park.
- They are fundamental to achieving the National Park Authority's second purpose of 'promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public'.
- They make a vital contribution to the economy of the National Park.

This plan sets out procedures that can be measured in relation to the practical maintenance and improvement of the rights of way network within the Yorkshire Dales over the next 5 years. It is very

much an internal working document intended to guide the Ranger Service in its practical work on the ground by:

- Prioritising work across the National Park.
- Targeting resources to achieve our objectives.
- Ensuring that the network is maintained to an appropriate level consistently across the National Park.
- Monitoring progress and achievement.
- Demonstrating that resources are being used effectively.

The Authority is currently measured in relation to its work on public rights of way by two National Performance Indicators. These are:

- Total percentage of public rights of way that are easy to use
- Total percentage of public rights of way that are signposted from a metalled road

The nationally agreed definition of 'ease of use' as developed by the Countryside Agency and the County Surveyors Society and stated in the national methodology available from www.iprow.co.uk is:

'Routes that are signposted or waymarked where they leave the road (in accordance with the authority's duty under s.27 of the Countryside Act 1968), and the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path, that are free from unlawful obstruction and other interference (including overhanging vegetation), and where surface and lawful barriers (e.g stiles, gates) are in good repair and to a standard necessary for them to be used without undue inconvenience'.

It has long been felt that these two indicators do not truly reflect or measure the effect the Authority has in relation to the management of the network. The plan puts in place a series of specific targets which will more accurately reflect the nature of the work carried out by the Authority in relation to its practical management of the public rights of way and delegated duties.

The Yorkshire Dales Access Forum has had an opportunity to comment on the plan and their amendments are included in the draft.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to Members comments on the draft Maintenance Plan (Annex 1), the plan and associated targets be adopted for implementation.

ALAN HULME
RANGER SERVICES MANAGER

Background documents:

Minute of the YDAF Meeting held on 21 March 2006

21st April 2006

**YORKSHIRE DALES
NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY**

**PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY
MAINTENANCE PLAN**

2006 to 2011

1. Introduction

The network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways which cross the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) are extremely important because:

- The historic and extensive public rights of way, supplemented by extensive areas of public access, provide many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the National Park.
- They are fundamental to achieving the National Park Authority's second purpose of 'promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public'.
- They make a vital contribution to the economy of the National Park.¹

This plan sets out the approach for the delivery of the maintenance and improvement of the existing rights of way network within the Yorkshire Dales over the next 5 years. It is intended to guide the Ranger Service to:

- Prioritise work across the park.
- Target resources to where they are best allocated to achieve our objectives.
- Ensure that the network is maintained to an appropriate level consistently across the eight Ranger areas.
- Monitor progress and achievement.
- Demonstrate that resources are being used cost effectively.

2. What We Are Trying To Achieve

This plan is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is therefore necessary to consider the Authority's existing objectives for rights of way.

The overall aim for Access & Recreation, of which rights of way are a key part, is set out in the National Park Management Plan²:

“Access and recreation in the National Park will be developed so that as wide a social range of people as possible, with as wide a range of abilities as possible, can enjoy the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales and derive a sense of well from their experiences.

These developments will involve local communities, landowners and users. Access and recreation will be managed and promoted in a manner which improves and extends opportunities consistent with National Park statutory purposes. Information and guidance, through a wide range of media, will encourage users from diverse backgrounds to act in a responsible way.”

¹ A study carried out as part of the Craven Integrated Rural Development project in 2003 established that the public rights of way were worth £75 million per year to the Craven area alone

² The National Park Management Plan (2006/2011) will be published May 2006. The aims/ principles and objectives within this plan are subject to finalisation and consultation.

The National Park Management Plan also identifies a number of principles that should guide the Authority's approach to rights of way:

- *The development of access and recreation opportunities will involve local communities, landowners and users.*
- *People from every social group and people of all abilities will have opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.*
- *The public rights of way network and open access land will be managed to improve and extend opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the National Park.*

Finally the National Park Management Plan sets out two specific objectives for rights of way in the park:

- **Manage the network of public rights of way so that 85% meet the national standard of Ease of Use by 2010.**
- **By 2010 the range of routes and sites across the National Park will ensure that 0.5% of the rights of way network is accessible by wheelchair users and 5% by those with limited mobility.**

It must also be recognised that the Authority has several other National Park Management Plan objectives that affect the public rights of way network. The following objectives must, therefore, be seen as running parallel to the targets contained within this plan relating to rights of way maintenance:

- Put in place appropriate management options for motorised recreational vehicles on all sensitive routes (as defined by section NERC Act) by 2010.
- Consolidate the three definitive maps covering the Yorkshire Dales into one Definitive map by 2010

Further guidance on the Authority's approach to rights of way issues is set out in the Integrated Access Strategy:

AS1 Provide an open and welcoming countryside by continuing to be the Delegated Highway Authority for Rights of Way.

- *Maintain and enhance existing engineered rights of way routes.*
- *Consider the implications of undertaking engineering projects and major rights of way repair works on the busy routes, to ensure these are not carried out at the expense of minor routine maintenance, such as installing or mending stiles and gates and waymarking, on less frequented routes.*
- *Continues to undertake public rights of way maintenance with the help of volunteers and continue to use local contractors for major projects.*

To succeed in delivering the two key objectives for rights of way from the National Park Management Plan it is essential that a clear and co-ordinated approach is adopted in relation to the maintenance and improvement of the existing public rights of way.

3. Legal Requirements

The YDNPA has sought and been granted delegated authority by North Yorkshire and Cumbria County Councils to carry out certain highway functions in relation to the public rights of way network:

“The National Park Authority will discharge the functions of the County Council (within the area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park) as local highway authority in relation to the maintenance of all footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic maintainable at the public expense including the maintenance of publicly maintainable bridges and other structures which form part of the highway.”³

This places specific statutory duties and responsibilities on the National Park Authority in regard to the maintenance of the public right of way network.

In addition, Highway Authorities have a duty to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) requires local highway authorities to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) covering all of their area by November 2007. There is no corresponding duty to ‘implement’ the ROWIP. The National Park Authority has not taken on delegated responsibility for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This responsibility remains with the Highway Authorities.

4. The Organisational Structure

The Park Management Department of the YDNPA has overall responsibility for the network of rights of way. Within the department, the Ranger Service is responsible for the delivery of rights of way maintenance and improvement on the ground, and provides a first point of contact for local communities and users on rights of way issues. The Definitive Map team, also within the Park Management Department, undertakes the duties of the ‘surveying’ authority that is keeping the Definitive Map up to date and under continuous review through administering public path orders and definitive map modification orders. The Ranger Service works closely with the Definitive Map team.

The Ranger Service is split into eight geographical areas: Lower Wharfedale, Upper Wharfedale, Lower Wensleydale, Upper Wensleydale, Swaledale/ Arkengarthdale, Cumbria, Ribblesdale and Malhamdale. Every year, money for rights of way work is allocated to each of the eight areas. So, this plan needs to assist with the prioritisation of work across all eight of these areas.

³ Extract from delegation agreements 199798. The agency delegation agreements are currently under review. The responsibilities outlined in this plan will need to take into account any changes identified in the review.

5. Current Situation

The rights of way network is the National Park's most important recreational resource. The total length of public rights of way within the Yorkshire Dales National Park is 2,112km. This network consists of:

Public Footpath	1,458km
Public Bridleway	623km
Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)	31km

Public rights of way maintenance and improvement must reflect the importance of the rights of way network to recreational users, visitors' enjoyment of the park and the local economy. The importance of rights of way is reflected in the priority the YDNPA places on maintaining the network (priority A) and in the resources it commits to maintaining and improving the network from its own budget allocation.

The YDNPA will continue to seek to improve and enhance the Public Rights of Way network by the creation of new legally defined routes or through the co-operation of landowners in relation to the ongoing management and creation of permissive paths.

The condition of the network is currently measured through two national performance indicators:

- *The percentage of public rights of way that are easy to use by members of the public.*

2003/2004		2004/2005		2005/2006	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
	61%	70%	71%	73%	86.1%

- The percentage of public rights of way signposted where they leave a road.

2003/2004		2004/2005		2005/2006	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
	85%	90%	90%	93%	97%

To ensure that maintenance of the network continues to improve, under the increasing demands on the resources of the Authority, the need for a strategic approach is paramount.

6. How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

The aim and objectives for the public rights of way network are set out in the National Park Management Plan. While rights of way management encompasses many areas of work, this plan identifies the seven key areas that are essential to achieving those objectives.

They are:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Ease of Use | 1. Signs and Waymarking |
| | 2. Infrastructure |
| | 3. Surface Condition |
| | 4. Engineered Routes |
| | 5. Bridges and River Crossings |
| | 6. Obstructions |
| Accessibility | 7. Access For All |

For each of these areas of work, this plan sets out:

- Specific yearly targets, which collectively will enable a strategic and targeted approach to be taken to rights of way maintenance. (These targets will also be shown as 'actions' in the Best Value Performance Plan for the relevant financial year).
- Guiding principles that shape our policy and overall approach to what we do.
- The Authority's responsibilities as delegated highway authority.

7. How We Will Monitor Our Progress

To establish whether we are achieving our objectives a comprehensive monitoring system has been put in place. Information relating to the seven key targets will be recorded on a regular basis by Rangers and Volunteers (through Mapinfo a geographical data base). The recording of information relating to the seven key areas of public rights of way work and targets is an integral part of all Rangers work.

By collecting the relevant baseline data it will be possible to identify where we are in relation to our targets.

Progress towards our targets will be reported annually to the YDNPA Access Committee.

Ease of Use:

Ease of Use will continue to be recorded as the overarching record of overall improvement and the national best value performance indicator. Statistics on the ease of use of public rights of way in England are collected annually by every highway authority.

Ease of use is measured according to the percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way, which are easy to use, by members of the public. This involves consideration of:

- The extent to which a footpath or other right of way is signposted or waymarked.
- The extent of unlawful obstructions and other interference, including overhanging vegetation, to the public rights of passage.
- Good repair of the surface and lawful barriers, such as stiles and gates, to a standard necessary to enable the public to use without undue inconvenience.

National Park Management Plan Objective:

Manage the network of public rights of way so that 85% meet the national standard of Ease of Use by 2010*

2006/2007		2007/2008		2008/2009		2009/2010		2010/2011	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
75%		78%		80%		82%		85%	

*The Ease of Use figures are based on 5% random sample of the network in any one year. This means that the sampling method can itself lead to some variation (up or down) from one year to the next. To establish a trend it is necessary to view the figures over a sustained number of years.

Signs and Waymarking:

Description:

Effective signposting and waymarking give the public confidence to use the public rights of way network, assist land and visitor management, and reduce trespass and visitor conflicts.

Context:

As delegated Highway Authority, YDNPA has:

- The duty to signpost all footpaths, bridleways and byways where they leave a metalled road.
- The power to erect and maintain (with the permission of the landowner) signposts along any footpath, bridleway or BOAT to assist people unfamiliar with the locality.

Targets:

Percentage of rights of way signposted where they leave a metalled road:

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
95%	96%	97%	98%	98%

Roadside Signs

Guiding Principles

Where there is a duty to signpost a right of way where it leaves a metalled road it is recommended that the sign should indicate:

- the nature of the right of way, i.e. whether it is a footpath, bridleway or byway;
- the destination of the way;
- the distance to this.

Signs and Waymarking Guiding Principles

Signing

A sign should only be erected where:

1. There is a statutory requirement to do so: or
2. There is a need to manage visitor behaviour in order to protect conservation or other interests; and a sign is the most effective way of doing this, and its provision is less damaging than the problem it is seeking to prevent; or
3. There is a need to convey information/ interpretation to the public in order to pursue the National Park Authority's 'second' purpose of promoting understanding and enjoyment, a sign is the only and most effective way to do this, and its provision would be environmentally acceptable.

Waymarking

The only statutory requirement is a fingerpost indicating where a right of way leaves a metalled road. Any other 'waymarking' will depend on location:

- From settlements and other development, waymarking will be sympathetic and used to the extent necessary to orientate visitors and give them confidence in their surroundings for example farm yards:
- In rural lowland areas waymarking will be basic but clear to avoid 'over-management' and will be unobtrusive within the surroundings;
- In upland areas the use of waymarks will only be used out of legal necessity or where required as an aid to navigation, with the aim to ensure that any signs of human activity are minimal given that typical users could be expected to carry a map and compass.
- We will endeavour to remove unnecessary and misleading signs from all areas.

Rights of Way Infrastructure:

Description:

The repair, replacement and improvement of rights of way infrastructure is a fundamental part of public rights of way maintenance and management. Ensuring that infrastructure is in good repair and is easy to use is essential to providing a safe and accessible network.

For the purpose of this plan infrastructure may refer to gates, stiles and any other type of boundary crossing; signage; or any other piece of countryside furniture associated with the rights of way network that is maintainable at public expense (excluding bridges & stepping stones).

Context:

The Highways Act 1980 requires any stile or gate across a right of way to be maintained by the landowner in a safe condition and to the standard of repair required to prevent unreasonable interference with the right of users. A landowner is entitled to recover at least 25% towards the cost of this from their local highway authority.

Given the importance of the rights of way network to the area, the YDNPA has a policy by which the Authority will fund 100% towards the cost of rights of way maintenance.

As delegated highway authority, YDNPA also has the power to:

- Take all reasonable steps for repairing and making good stiles, gates or other works when the landowner has failed to do so.
- Authorise new stiles or gates in certain circumstances (following Sec 147 procedures).

Targets:

Percentage of public rights of way infrastructure maintained in condition 1, 2 or 3⁴

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
	Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
Condition 1					
Condition 2					
Condition 3					

Maintenance of Rights of Way Infrastructure Guiding Principles

Where repair and replacement of infrastructure is required, any work should be subject to the following considerations:

- *Infrastructure should be suitable to the route's status and should be of a standard necessary for them to be used without undue inconvenience.*
- *Construction should be of a high standard and appropriate to the route's use. Although there is no statutory design to which infrastructure must comply, suggested designs are provided by publications such as 'British Standard – Gaps, gates and stiles' or the 'Pennine Bridleway Design Guide'.*
- *Infrastructure should be appropriate to its location: matching where possible the local design, material and methods of construction. All works should safeguard the historical, scenic and environmental value of the National Park.*
- *Wherever an existing piece of infrastructure is being maintained, every opportunity to replace difficult barriers with more accessible features will be considered. For example: where a ladder stile needs replacing could it be replaced with a gap or gate? The less remote a route the more stringently this criteria for repairs should be applied.*

⁴ Infrastructure condition information is gathered and monitored through public right of way surveys carried out by volunteers (every route surveyed on a two year cycle) and is defined as:

1 - In good order and will last up to three years

2 – In need of minor repairs and will not last three years (includes improvements to make 'easy to use')

3 – Urgent work required

Surface Condition:

Description:

The good repair of the surface of a right of way is necessary to enable the public to use a route without undue inconvenience. As a last resort works are sometimes required to:

- Maintain the surface of a right of way in a condition appropriate for its expected use.
- Address environmental or landscape impacts.

There are no universal solutions to problems associated with the surface condition of a route. Each right of way has specific requirements influenced by the particular circumstances of the route and will demand different solutions.

The range of options available, to address concerns over surface condition, are therefore numerous, and may include: drainage works, surfacing, subsoiling, flagging or revetment. Such works may be minor or major in nature.

Context:

As delegated Highway Authority, YDNPA has:

- The duty to maintain publicly maintainable highways at the public expense.
- The power to agree to undertake maintenance of a footpath or bridleway.
- The power to improve, widen or level rights of way.
- The power to undertake works to drain a right of way.

Targets:

Percentage of the public rights of way network requiring major works due to concerns over surface condition⁵

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Target	Target	Target	Target	Target

⁵ Major works are defined as those, which will require significant financial resources to address (over 5k) because the surface condition is seriously damaged & not in a state suitable for its use (equivalent to Green Lane Survey Category 3).

Information on surface condition is compiled by Rangers and through Green Lane Condition Surveys.

Repair of Route Surfaces

Guiding Principles

When there is no other option but to repair the surface of a right of way, it is essential that the right solution is found for each situation. All works should take into consideration: user requirements, accessibility considerations, legal status of route, route environment (maintain the character of the route in relation to its environment and surroundings), appropriate design and sensitive landscaping, use of materials, and ecological or archaeological constraints.

Repair of Upland Route Erosion

Guiding Principles

Before any repair work is agreed the question should be asked: 'Is there a better solution?' Where repair and maintenance of a route is necessary, for environmental or recreational reasons, it should be subject to the following considerations:

- *Repairs are necessary to prevent or ameliorate visual intrusion and/or environmental damage;*
- *Works should be of a high standard of design, have minimal impact on setting and character, and implemented, where possible, using indigenous materials, sympathetic in colour and texture to the immediate surrounding area, and employing traditional techniques. Uniformity of construction should be avoided, e.g. regular or geometric steps;*
- *Techniques used should protect existing vegetation and, normally, only locally occurring plant species should be used in restoration. Non-local species will be acceptable only where necessary as a nurse crop;*
- *The more remote the route the more stringently this criteria for repair should be applied. This will be a matter of judgement but in general, the more remote or wild the location the less acceptable an obviously engineered route will be;*
- *Repaired routes should be suitable to the route's use and constructed on a scale appropriate to the route's status as a footpath, bridleway or (BOAT).*

Engineered Routes:

Description:

Where, due to recreational and environmental reasons, it has been necessary to carry out works to the surface of a right of way and provide an 'engineered' solution it is essential that such routes are maintained through a programme of planned maintenance.

Effective maintenance can prevent major deterioration occurring and minimise the extent over which repairs are needed. Its aim is to keep the route in a condition suitable for its intended use throughout its length, or to prevent impact on the surrounding landscape.

For the purpose of this plan an 'engineered route' refers to one that has had major enhancement works carried out to the surface. These could include: aggregate, subsoiled, grass/gravel, flagged or geo-textile/aggregate paths, stone pitched paths, tarmac/concrete paths

Planned maintenance may include re-dressing and re-compaction of surface material, maintaining existing drainage, upgrading existing drainage or incorporating new drainage.

Context:

As delegated Highway Authority, YDNPA has the duty to:

- Maintain publicly maintainable highways at the public expense.

Total length of routes engineered	## km	##% (as percentage of network)
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Targets:

Percentage of engineered routes in condition 1⁶

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
	Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
Condition 1					

Maintaining Engineered Routes Guiding Principles

All engineered route should be subject to the following considerations:

- *Regular monitoring of the route is necessary to identify any problems at an early stage.*
- *Adequate and effective drainage is the single most important factor affecting the success of engineered routes. It is essential that:*
 - *drainage systems are regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure that their condition does not deteriorate.*
 - *ongoing maintenance is carried out in order to keep them functioning properly.*

Without maintenance drains become blocked, causing water logging on flat or lowland paths, and erosion to upland paths and surrounds.
- *Techniques should continue to be used to encourage re-vegetation of the route and surrounding area.*
- *Many routes that have been surfaced with aggregate will require re-surfacing over time to maintain the standard of the surface.*

It is essential that when planning capital engineered maintenance works that appropriate year on year budgetary provision be made for future maintenance.

⁶ All engineered routes should be monitored regularly. Information on their condition is gathered through this ongoing monitoring and is defined as:

1 - In good order – no works required

2 – In need of minor repairs to prevent further deterioration

3 – Urgent work required as serious deterioration has occurred

Bridges and River Crossings:

Description:

Providing and maintaining bridges, stepping stones and fords that carry public rights of way are an essential part of the network.

The role of the YDNPA involves:

- Carrying out a general condition survey of all bridges every 2 years. Dales Volunteers play a key part in performing this role.
- Carrying out a structural survey of 'major bridges' every 5 years.
- Carrying out maintenance works as necessary to ensure that all river crossings are maintained in a safe condition.
- Installing or replacing bridges where they are either missing or inappropriate to the status of the route.

Context:

As delegated Highway Authority⁷, YDNPA has the:

- Duty to maintain bridges that are maintainable at public expense.
- Power to construct a bridge to carry a right of way – subject to delegation agreement.

Total number of bridges	
Total number of stepping stones	

Targets:

Percentage of publicly maintainable bridges and river crossings maintained in condition 1, 2 or 3⁸

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
	Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
Condition 1					
Condition 2					
Condition 3					

⁷ The agency delegation agreements are currently under review. The responsibilities relating to river crossings outlined will need to take into account any changes identified in the review.

⁸ Bridge condition information is gathered & monitored through general condition surveys carried out every 2 years by Dales Volunteers of Access Rangers. They are defined as:

- 1 - In good order and will last upto three years
- 2 - In need of minor repairs and will not last three years
- 3 - Urgent work required

Bridges and River Crossings Guiding Principles

Where repair and replacement of a bridge is required, any work should be subject to the following considerations:

- *Bridges should be suitable to the route's status.*
- *Construction should be of a high standard and appropriate to the route's use.*
- *Bridges should be appropriate to their location: matching where possible the local design, material and methods of construction. All works should safeguard the historical, scenic and environmental value of the National Park.*
- *Where a bridge is not the sole responsibility of the Highway Authority to maintain, negotiation with other interested parties must be carried out regarding: giving consent for works, individual responsibilities and sharing cost of repair.*
- *Where stepping stones are being maintained or replaced, best practice design guidelines should be followed.*
- *In planning any works, the requirements for temporary closures must be considered (following procedures in Ranger Manual).*

Obstructions:

Description:

Rights of way must be kept clear and free from obstructions at all times. Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 makes it an offence for any person, without lawful or excuse, wilfully to obstruct the free passage along a highway. Obstruction is interpreted as anything that could inconvenience or endanger the public in any way or discourage use.

The role of the YDNPA is to keep the public right of way network open by:

- Securing the removal of temporary obstructions as they arise;
- Working to remove long-standing issues. It is acknowledged that some of these issues require resolution through Definitive Map Orders and that work to this end will be progressed through the Definitive Map Team.
- Respond to notices about obstructions served by members of the public under the Highways Act 1980 as amended by section 63 of CRoW 2000 sec 130 (a)(b)(c)&(d).

Context:

As delegated highway authority, YDNPA has:

- The duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of, and prevent so far as possible the stopping up or obstruction of all their highways.
- The power to require the removal of a structure or other obstruction from a right of way.

Total number of obstructions ⁹ (01/06)	## Long term requiring practical resolution by Ranger Service to resolve
	## Long term requiring Definitive Map Order to resolve

Targets:

- **Deal with 90% percent of short-term obstructions within appropriate timescale.**
- **Number of long term recorded obstructions resolved:**

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Target	Target	Target	Target	Target

⁹ The overall numbers of obstruction may rise following the digitisation of the definitive map.

Obstructions

Guiding Principles

- *In dealing with obstructions the procedures laid down under Section 130 of the Highways Act (and as amended by section 63 of CRoW Act 2000) will be followed. These are complimented by the procedures set out in the Ranger Service Manual & internal working procedures.*
- *New or reported obstructions will be dealt with within the timescales outlined in the Ranger Procedures.*
- *Obstructions caused by overgrown vegetation or fallen trees are the responsibility of the landowner to remove. The YDNPA will seek to ensure that this responsibility is carried out.*
- *The priorities for dealing with long-term obstructions should be based on:*
 - *Relative history of the case.*
 - *Whether an alternative route on the ground is already available.*
 - *Affect of the obstruction on the network.*
 - *Popularity of the route.*
 - *Source of complaint.*
 - *Prioritisation of case within Definitive map case load.*
 - *Whether the route is disputed.*
- *The obstructions register will be kept up to date.*

Accessibility:

All visitors and residents of the YDNP should have opportunities to access the countryside no matter what their level of ability. The public rights of way network, however, often presents barriers that are limiting to access.

Accessibility issues encompass a wide body of users. Wheelchair users, ambulant people mobility impairments, people with visual impairments, hearing impairments, learning difficulties, speech impairments, the elderly, families with pushchairs and young children are all potential users of the rights of way network.

Addressing 'access for all' issues must be an integral part of all rights of way maintenance and improvement.

Context:

Integrated Access Strategy AS13:

"Provide access so that all potential visitors (those who are fully able and those with a variety of mobility and sensory impairments) have a wide and varied spread of opportunities to access the Yorkshire Dales countryside.

National Park Management Plan Objective:

By 2010 the range of routes and sites across the National Park will ensure that 0.5% of the rights of way network is accessible by wheelchair users and 5% by those with limited mobility.

Countryside Agency 'By All Reasonable Means'

In the absence of statutory standards for outdoor access improvements the Countryside Agency (CA) guidelines 'By All Reasonable Means' outlines a framework for improving access. Their framework for action is based on the principle of:

- **Least Restrictive Access (LRA).** *This requires that all work, whether planned improvement or ad hoc maintenance, must meet the highest possible access standards for that piece of work. Where the highest standards cannot be achieved – for example because of insufficient funds, lack of consent by owners or practical difficulties – there should always be a clearly reasoned justification for the decision to use a lower standard.*

LRA is an approach that helps raise the overall standard of access of a route over a period of time.

- **Access Standards and Management Zones:**

Currently, there are no statutory benchmarks for reasonable practice in the outdoors in regard to the DDA 2005. This makes it challenging for managers and owners to know what standards to apply when planning access improvements. CA guide recommends selecting the guidelines according to the particular context of a particular site or route using either the BT Countryside for All Accessibility Standards or Countryside Access Management Zones.

Access For All:

Description:

Providing physical and intellectual access to the rights of way network includes:

- **Planned programme** of projects to upgrade specific routes. The Accessibility Audit (05/06) helps to identify paths with the potential to be improved to provide access to the less mobile. Such projects may include barrier reduction or wheelchair accessible schemes.
- **Ongoing maintenance** of rights of way surface and infrastructure.
- **Information** to enable individuals to make informed choices.

Reduced budget for 2006/07 and beyond will mean that it will be essential to secure additional funding and partnership approaches to achieve specific access for all projects which are beyond routine maintenance.

Targets:

Minimum percentage of rights of way network accessible by wheelchair (05/06= 0.25%)¹⁰

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
0.3%	0.35%	0.4%	0.45%	0.5%

Minimum percentage of rights of way network accessible to those with limited mobility¹¹:

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
1%	2%	3%	4%	5%

¹⁰ Based on the Countryside Agency 'Zone A' national standard which is equivalent to BT Access for All Standard 3, that is routes designed for wheelchair use rather than more challenging routes capable of being used by wheelchair users with strong pusher.

¹¹ Based on Countryside Agency 'Zone B & C' national standard.

Access For All Guiding Principles

Addressing countryside 'Access for All' issues is an integral part of all works on public rights of way:

- *Wherever an existing right of way is being maintained, every opportunity to replace difficult barriers with more accessible features will be considered. For example: where a ladder stile needs replacing could it be replaced with a gap or gate?*
- *In each of the geographical areas of the National Park, routes suitable for all user abilities will be identified and upgraded, or where a need has been identified new routes will be created. Where practicable, routes that radiate from villages, visitor centres or public transport interchanges will be provided as a matter of priority.*
- *The creation and upgrading of Access for All routes must safeguard the historic, scenic and environmental value of the National Park. In particular location there may be a conflict of interest between the desire to improve Access for All and the NPA's duty to conserve and enhance the environment within its care. These conflicts must be resolved on a case-by-case basis.*