

Committee: ACCESS
Date: 26 July 2007

Report: CUMBRIA COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of Cumbria County Council's re-drafted proposals for the partnership called 'Cumbria Countryside Access:'

Strategic Planning Framework

2. 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 Objectives***

- AR1. Manage and improve the network of public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2010, and maintain that level in future years.
- AR2. Identify the most appropriate measures to manage the use of motorised recreational vehicles on each sensitive 'Green Lane', and put all such measures in place by 2011.
- AR3. Produce digital versions of the three 'Definitive Maps' of rights of way covering the Yorkshire Dales by 2011 to make it easier to check and resolve issues around the legal status of routes.
- AR4. Develop 'Rights of Way Improvement Plans' for Cumbria and North Yorkshire by 2007, and involve local communities and their representatives, the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum, landowners/managers and users in their development and implementation.

Background

3. At the January 2007 Access Committee Members received Cumbria County Council's proposals to create a partnership with the Lake District National Park Authority, Carlisle City Council, and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority called Countryside Access: Cumbria. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is delegated Highway Authority for rights of way on behalf of Cumbria County Council for the parishes of Garsdale, Dent and Sedbergh.

4. The Authority was asked to give its views on the ideas put forward together with its willingness to participate in the partnership. In responding to these proposals the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum advice was sought. The Forum made the following comments:
 - More general information on how the partnership would work in practice needed to be provided.
 - More information needs to be provided on how the partnership and working groups will be resourced;
 - The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority needs to ensure they have a place on the partnership.
5. These views were endorsed by the Access Committee and it was concluded that it was important for the Authority to play its full part in 'Countryside Access Cumbria'.

Proposed Partnership Arrangements - "Cumbria Countryside Access"

6. In the light of the consultation responses Cumbria County Council have now produced a revised suggestion for the partnership – now called Cumbria Countryside Access. These proposals are reproduced in full in the **Annex**.
7. These are largely similar to the previous proposals but with much more detail in relation to aims, key tasks, and membership and remit of the individual elements of the partnership which is helpful. The aims of the partnership are now clearly stated. The key activities of the partnership are also clearly laid out and are very wide ranging (see **Annex**).
8. The proposals also identify two new tasks in relation to the partnerships activities:
 - 'In carrying out these activities the partners will use integrated information, management and performance monitoring systems, procedures and standards. CCA will present a uniform and consistent interface to users and stakeholders.'
 - 'An annual action plan which will include specific targets for performance management will be prepared for the Board'.
9. In terms of how the partnership will operate in practice, this is similar to the original proposals. There will still be an 'operational steering group' of officers from the relevant local authorities supported by a number of individual 'task groups' reporting to the steering group, which will look at specific issues. The operational steering group will be overseen by the partnership board which will be made up of members of the relevant local authorities and the three local access forums, including the YDAF.

Staffing implications

10. In terms of staffing implications identified in the previous report it was proposed that:
 - The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Recreation Management Member Champion, Dr. Malcolm Petyt, be the Authority's member on the partnership board.

- The Access and Recreation Manager and Ranger Service Manager attend the Operational Steering Group (which officer will depend on the agenda items of the particular meeting).

11. Membership of the task groups will be determined by the operational steering group, but are likely to involve other Authority staff as follows:

Subject	Officer
• Mechanically propelled vehicles	Access Officer Projects
• Improvements (ROWIP)	Transport and Visitor Management Officer
• Improvements (Access for All)	Access Development Officer
• Maintenance	Area Ranger (Cumbria)
• Definitive Map	Senior or Area Definitive Map Officer

Conclusion

12. In looking at the proposals, in January 2007, the Access Committee recognised that the key challenges for the Authority and YDAF were:

- maintaining the unique identity, and quality of rights of maintenance and standard of customer service, associated the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, whilst providing a 'seamless' service through Countryside Access Cumbria;
- playing our part in the partnership, but recognising that our commitment of resources should reflect the fact that only 12% of the Yorkshire Dales rights of way network is in the Cumbrian part of the Park.

13. Whilst the partnership proposals are now much clearer these challenges remain.

RECOMMENDATION

14. That members note the report.

Kathryn Beardmore
Access and Recreation Manager

28 June 2007

Background papers:

Countryside Access Cumbria Report to Access Committee 25 January 2007

Proposed Partnership Arrangements “Cumbria Countryside Access”

Introduction

It is intended that whilst the respective statutory duties and responsibilities of the Signatory Organisations will be fully recognised, a partnership approach will be applied to countryside access activities and projects within Cumbria.

The Partnership will be named “Cumbria Countryside Access” (CCA)

1.0 Overall Aim of the CCA Partnership

It is recommended that:

- *the overall aim is: “To work together across Cumbria to manage, develop and improve access to the countryside, to ensure that the services and facilities provided by all the partners are of a consistent high quality and standard, and that overall provision is integrated and coordinated.”*
- the key policies and guidance which will drive the CCA partnership will be the Cumbria Countryside Access Strategy and the Cumbria Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Other relevant policies and guidance are listed at Appendix A.

2.0 CCA Partnership Aims

It is recommended that its key aims be:

1. To promote enjoyment, awareness and understanding of the countryside access resource
2. To ensure the rights of way network is accessible and open to the public and maintained to a consistent high quality and standard
3. To facilitate and manage access to open country and registered commons
4. To develop and improve access to the countryside so as to meet a wide range of users needs, and ensure this work is coordinated and linked
5. To broaden access opportunities for all and to encourage wider participation
6. To encourage community involvement in managing access to the countryside

3.0 CCA Partnership Activities

It is recommended that the partnership be responsible for undertaking the following generic activities. These relate to the six aims set out above and will initially cover:

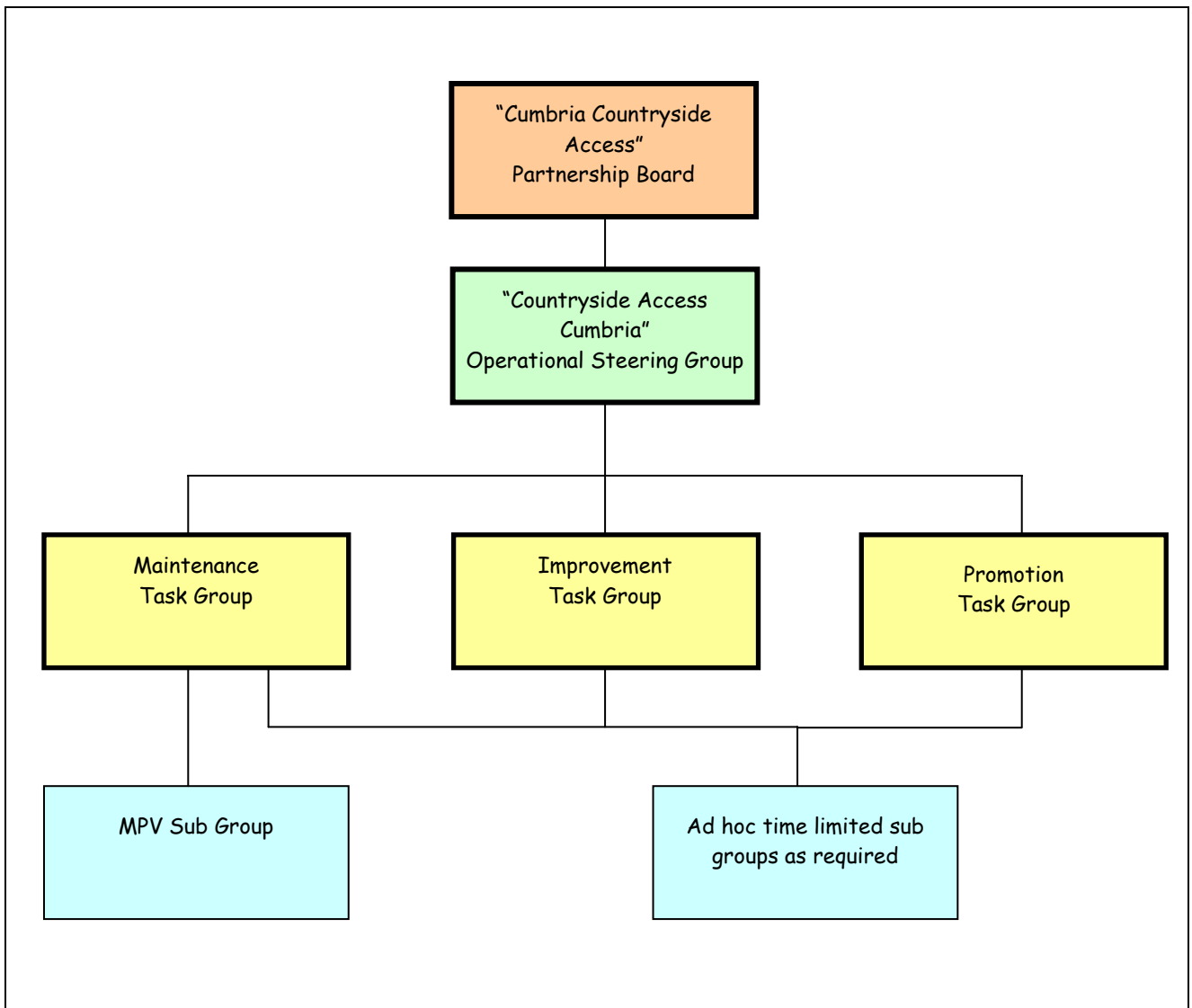
- **Countryside Volunteering**
 - Parish Path Initiative
 - Wider network for training etc
- **Development of the PROW Network**
 - Implementation of the ROWIP
 - Miles without Stiles
- **Open Access Management**
- **Performance Management**
 - Innovation, Best Practice
- **Promotional Activity**
 - Communication [including Web Sites]
 - Routes [e.g. Cumbria Way, Coast to Coast]
 - Interpretation, Information [including maps and leaflets],
 - Events
 - Health and well being
- **Rights of Way Management**
 - PROW Maintenance – surveys, surfaces, structures, bridges, vegetation, signage
 - National Trails and other long distance routes
 - Definitive Map – modifications, diversions
 - Enquiries - route queries, obstructions
 - Motorised Vehicle Access
- **Strategic policy development**
 - Coastal Access

In carrying out these activities the partners will use integrated information, management and performance monitoring systems, procedures and standards. CCA will present a uniform and consistent interface to users and stakeholders. An annual action plan which will include specific targets for performance management will be prepared for the Board.

4.0 Structure of the Partnership

It is recommended that:

- the proposed CCA structure be as below with a separate Partnership Board, Steering Group and supporting Task Groups.
- the Partnership Board meet following every two meetings of the Operational Steering Group (OSG).
- the OSG and Task Groups meet every 2 months.
- the Partnership Board and OSG be serviced by Cumbria County Council.
- the Task Groups be serviced by their own secretariats drawn from members of each Task Group.
- The structure and arrangements for CCA be reviewed after one year of operation to ensure it is working effectively



5.0 CCA Partnership Board Remit and Membership

It is recommended that:

- the Partnership Board be responsible for;
 - agreeing policy, procedures and standards
 - relevant matters placed before it by the Operational Steering Group (OSG)
 - considering and approving the annual action plan and
 - receiving performance monitoring reports.
- the Partnership Board consist of 8 elected / appointed members drawn from the following organisations;
 - Cumbria County Council (2)
 - Lake District NPA (2)
 - Yorkshire Dales NPA (1)
 - Chairs of the 3 Local Access Forums (3)
- the Partnership Board meet following every two meetings of the Operational Steering Group
- each meeting be held in two sessions; a session of members on their own followed by a session with members from the OSG
- a balanced quorum of members be required for decisions to be validated or approved (to be set out in a simple constitution)
- consideration be given to having an independent Chair
- Cumbria County Council to provide the secretariat for the Board
- The process is started by the OSG meeting to draft out an initial work programme and the membership of the Task Groups.

6.0 CCA Operational Steering Group Remit and Membership

It is recommended that:

- the OSG's remit be:
 - to advise the partnership board
 - to agree on the development of policy, procedures and standards
 - to ensure that measures are delivered effectively and efficiently
 - to keep the partnership action plan under review
 - to take advise from the Task Groups
- the OSG consist of the following officer representatives:
 - Cumbria County Council [chair] (2)
 - Lake District National Park Authority (2)
 - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (1)
 - District Council Representative (subject to consultation with all DCs) (1)
 - Member representative of all 3 LAFs (1)

- The chairs of the three Task Groups (to report back on their work) (3)
- the OSG meet every 2 months, and that part of its every third meeting be to attend as part of Partnership Board meeting
- a balanced quorum of officers be required for decisions to be validated or approved (to be set out in simple constitution), and that to ensure continuity any substitutes must be first agreed with the Chair.
- Cumbria County Council to provide the secretariat for the Board
- the work load of the OSG be shared by the officers – both input to the agenda and development and presentation of papers
- the OSG be informed by three Task Groups: Maintenance, Improvement, Promotion

7.0 CCA Task Group Remit and Membership

It is recommended that there be 3 main Tasks Groups:

Maintenance Task Group

Responsible for CCA aims 2 and 3.

“To ensure the rights of way network is accessible and open to the public and maintained to a consistent high quality and standard”, and “to facilitate and manage access to open country and registered commons”

Improvement Task Group

Responsible for CCA aims 4 and 5.

“To develop and improve access to the countryside so as to meet a wide range of users needs”, and “to broaden access opportunities for all and to encourage wider participation”

Promotion Task Group

Responsible for CCA aims 1 and 6.

“To promote enjoyment, awareness and understanding of the countryside access resource”, and “to encourage community involvement in managing access to the countryside”

It is recommended that:

- the membership of the Task Groups to be determined by the OSG and be drawn from organisations expressing an interest in being involved. It will be a requirement that organisations submit named representatives.
- the agenda and papers of all three Task Groups be made available to its combined membership, to give members the opportunity to make representation on any issue to the appropriate Task Group chair.
- the function and role of individual Task Groups be reviewed as required by the OSG.
- that a yearly public workshop be held open to all access interests with specific topics to present and discuss. Its purpose will be to update users about the work of CCA, and to get broader feedback from users about this work.