Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 12**

25 June 2024

Public Rights of Way Annual Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with the opportunity to comment on the Rights of Way Annual Report prior to submission to Westmorland and Furness (W&FC), North Yorkshire Council (NYC) and Lancashire County Council (LCC).

Recommendation

2. The Rights of Way annual report be submitted to the three councils, subject to any comments from Members.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:

    - **Corporate Plan Objective 7:**
      Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023

Background

4. Recent discussions with the Unitary Councils have highlighted the fact that the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority undertakes maintenance of public rights of way at no cost to local farmers or landowners. This hasn't been widely understood among the public generally, and contrasts sharply with the situation outside the National Park where such responsibilities sit with the local authority and the landowner.

5. In addition, it is only recent events that have highlighted, for many members of the public, that the legal responsibility for rights of way maintenance actually rests with Lancashire County Council, North Yorkshire Council and Westmorland & Furness Council.

6. The Rights of Way annual report for 2023/24 (**Appendix),** identifies progress made by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) on public rights of way maintenance against our Corporate Plan actions and targets. This work is undertaken through delegation agreements on behalf of the three Highway Authorities - the councils that cover the National

Park. As part of the agreements, the YDNPA is required to submit a report to the councils each year.

7. The Authority has previously taken on responsibility for rights of way maintenance functions because a well-managed rights of way network is considered important for the delivery of the YDNPA's statutory purposes.

Surveys

8. A network that can be used with confidence is beneficial to visitors, land managers and residents alike. Businesses, inside and outside of the National Park benefit because access to the area's special qualities underpins the visitor economy. The park-wide visitor survey conducted in 2022, continues to show the importance of the rights of way network with approximately two out of every three visitors (61%) undertaking a walk of an hour or more during their visit.

9. The recent National Park Management Plan consultation (Jan 2024) also placed 'keeping the rights of way network in good condition, and improve options for cycling and other sustainable outdoor recreation activity' in the top six priorities selected by respondents.

10. Moreover, in the recent Residents survey (Nov 2023), 88% of residents put 'Maintaining Rights of Way' as the most important function that should be undertaken by the Authority.

Ease of Use Target

11. The Authority's current objective for Rights of Way maintenance is based on National Park Management Plan objective B1 which states:

    'Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023'.

12. 'Ease of use' in this context is based on a nationally established performance indicator for rights of way. This is defined as:

    I. signposted or waymarked where the right of way leaves the metalled road and to the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path;
    II. free from unlawful obstructions and other interference, (including overhanging vegetation);
    III. surface and lawful barriers (e.g. stiles, gates) in good repair and to a standard necessary to enable the public to use the way without undue inconvenience.

13. In simple terms, a member of the public should be able to follow a route easily and not encounter anything that detracts from the enjoyment of the route whether on foot, horse, bicycle or using a mobility scooter.

14. There is a note of caution, as the 'ease of use' indicator measures a 5% random sample of rights of way across the network, as such figures will fluctuate year on year. Results over several years are required to average out any sampling variation and determine the figure which is a true reflection of the network. The 2023-24 figure is 89% which although disappointing, perhaps reflects both the recent weather conditions during 2023 and the

continued high levels of use. However, the average over the five-year period of the National Park Management Plan remains at 90% ‘easy to use’.

National Trails

15. The Authority continues to perform the ‘lead partner’ role for management of the Pennine National Trails Partnership, which oversees the management of the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway. During the past year the Authority has distributed 34 grants to 11 different partners, and the partnership has overseen £473k of expenditure.

16. In 2022 the Government announced that the Coast to Coast route will become a new National Trail. The 197-mile path stretching from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in the North York Moors National Park passes through the Yorkshire Dales National Park. National Trail status achieves the National Park Management Plan objective B2 in relation to the Coast to Coast route:

> ‘Maintain and promote the Pennine Trails and other recognised long-distance routes, identify opportunities for new multi-user routes, and campaign for the Coast-to-Coast path to become a National Trail by 2024’.

17. Natural England have been given £5.6 million of Government funding to improve the route. They are working alongside partners to ensure the path meets the National Trail Quality Standards and is fully open and available for public use. The YDNPA is undertaking the legal and establishment work in the National Park.

18. Enhancement works will be undertaken over the next two years with the upgraded path expected to be ready for opening by the end of 2025. It is intended that the new National Trail will closely follow the existing route. The Coast to Coast route has existed for many years, but has not benefited from the promotion and status of a member of the National Trial family. Natural England and partners are also looking at the wider benefits of designation, including opportunities to develop link routes and circular routes; engage with local communities and businesses; improving nature connectivity; information provision; and tourism opportunities.

Volunteers

19. Volunteering opportunities - to help survey and maintain public rights of way - continued throughout the year. In total 1193 days of practical work, and 470 days of surveying, were undertaken by volunteers during the year. This equates to approximately 8 full time equivalent staff.

20. The surveying of all the 2637km rights of way in the National Park is a significant achievement, and helps the YDNPA plan the work required for the coming year. The survey work includes:

- Conducting both ‘ease of use surveys and Parish Path surveys for the entire network of the National Park;
- A visual inspection and report on each bridge in the National Park;
- Inputting all survey information into Authority’s IT database.

Funding

21. We continue to seek external income to help resource this priority work programme. During 2023/24 we were successful in bringing in £387k of funding, with individual contributions and contributions 'in kind' from various sources.

22. Members will be aware of the discussions with North Yorkshire and Westmorland & Furness Councils regarding a financial contribution towards the cost of maintaining the ROW network. Funding has been secured for W&F but discussions are still continuing with North Yorkshire. The most recent conversations have involved the Chair and the CEO meeting with the Leader and CEO from North Yorkshire. A verbal update on those discussions will be provided at today's meeting.

23. The failure to reach a settlement with North Yorkshire Council has meant that consequently we have had to scale back the rights of way programme in North Yorkshire. The impact of this two-tier approach will be felt in the longer term, with the National Park ultimately having to manage the reduction in the quality and condition of rights of way in North Yorkshire in the coming years.

Yorkshire Dales Access Forum

24. Ahead of Members receiving this annual report, the paper has been considered by the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum (YDAF) in their role as statutory advisor to the Authority on opportunities for open-air recreation.

25. Members of the YDAF acknowledged the wealth of work conducted by field staff and volunteers throughout the National Park and the Ranger Service's efforts in raising external funding to aid works to ensure the network is maintained to a high standard.

26. YDAF Members raised concerns that in seeking external funding there might be an adverse effect on the levels of general maintenance. A recent example given was the work relating to the establishment of the Coast to Coast Path as a National Trail. This is a high profile project which is currently 100% funded and will take a significant staff commitment to deliver over the next two years.

27. The Head of Park Management explained that, in line with the Authority's Income Generation Strategy there is a need to seek funding that potentially offsets the cost of general maintenance.

Financial Implications

28. None. This is a report to external organisations.

Legal Implications

29. Issues relating to the legal agreements we have with the 3 Highways Authorities are being examined in the current year and will be reported back to Members in due course.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

30. None

Human Resources Implications

31. The decision on future delegation arrangements with North Yorkshire Council are likely to have HR implications. These would be reported to Members as part of that consideration.

Risk Management

32. There are potential reputational issues involved. The Authority will need to manage public expectation and understanding of our role in managing the ROW network as a consequence of any change to the current delegation arrangements.

Conclusion

33. The importance placed on rights of way maintenance and access is often cited as one of the advantages of being in a National Park. With the lengthening of the season and increasing importance placed on individual health and well-being, this year's visitor numbers have remained high.

34. Though not part of the delegation arrangements, the Coast to Coast path is being implemented after being confirmed as a National Trail. This comes with financial resources for implementation and future maintenance as well as for 'wider benefit' opportunities.

35. Rights of way maintenance and volunteering continue to make an important contribution to the delivery of our objectives and specifically our second statutory purpose. As a priority programme our aim is to ensure the National Park has one of the best maintained rights of way networks in the country. This work is undertaken on behalf of the Councils who retain the statutory responsibility.

Alan Hulme
Head of Park Management

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Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Public Rights of Way Delegated Highway Authority

Annual Report 2023/24

May 2024

Introduction

1. For the period of this report, April 2023 to March 2024, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (the Authority) had delegated Highway Authority responsibilities for maintenance of the 2,637km of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic, and restricted byways) within the National Park area.

2. The public rights of way Delegation Agreements are for: North Yorkshire Council (NYC) 1922km and Westmorland & Furness Council (W&F) 710 km. In addition, since April 2021 delegated responsibilities also applies to the 16 km in the Lancashire County Council (LCC) area of the National Park.

3. The Delegation Agreements cover a broad range of functions that allow for the management of public paths on the ground. These functions can be summarised as:

    - Signposting of public paths
    - The maintenance and improvement of public paths
    - The maintenance of river crossings
    - Traffic Regulation Orders and Temporary Closure Orders
    - Enforcement and protection of public rights.

4. The Authority has taken on these responsibilities because it recognises that a well-maintained rights of way network is fundamental to the achievement of its statutory purposes, particularly its second purpose - promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park.

About this Report

5. This report identifies the key achievements for the year 2023/24. It considers the Authority's corporate actions, targets and progress relating to the following areas:

    - General maintenance
    - River crossings
    - Major projects
    - Path Orders and Definitive Map
    - Pennine National Trails Partnership Management
    - Development of the Coast to Coast as a National Trail
    - Unclassified Unsurfaced Roads (North Yorkshire)
    - Flood damage.

Key Achievements 2023/24

Public Rights of Way Maintenance

6. During 2023/24 the following maintenance work was undertaken:

- 815 improvements to rights of way infrastructure: stiles, gates and signposts;
- 62 river crossings and 3 sets of stepping stones maintained or replaced;
- 800m of new engineered paths constructed;
- 2.5km of engineered paths repaired.

7. A total of **£386,682** of external funding and in-kind contributions were secured for rights of way projects in the National Park. The breakdown is as follows:

Value	Description
£ 84,165	National Trails Partnership Manager (inc £16,159 Lead Role income);
£ 31,275	Pennine Way Ranger;
£ 2,164	Pennine Way, maintenance;
£ 14,148	Pennine Way,Pen y Ghent, Miners Track works;
£ 21,901	Pennine Bridleway Officer;
£ 2,006	Pennine Bridleway, maintenance;
£ 1,303	Pennine Bridleway, update & reprint Settle Loop leaflet;
£ 27,282	Three Peaks Project (Friends Scheme, merchandise and donations);
£ 26,000	Three Peaks Legacy Donations;
£ 4,803	Tees Swale, Naturally Connected, Access Enhancements
£ 94,916	Coast to Coast Path Initial implementation of route (inc £23,616 staff);
£ 11,163	Path Orders;
£ 45,740	Works to Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads, (NYC) (inc £8,142 staff);
£ 2,500	Donation, Trail Riders Fellowship;
£ 7,650	Production of signs from workshop;
£ 980	Donation, Kettlewell;
£ 686	Donations various, Swaledale and Wensleydale.
£378,682	**Total**

Contribution in kind:

£ 8,000	Brackenbottom Stone, Hansons
£386,682	**Grand Total**

Pennine Way

8. Total funding secured for the Pennine Way, for 2023/24, was £47,587:

£ 31,275	Pennine Way Ranger;
£ 2,164	Pennine Way, maintenance;

£ 14,148 Pennine Way, Pen y Ghent, Miners Track.

Pennine Bridleway

9. Total funding secured for the Pennine Bridleway, for 2023/24, was £25,210:

£ 21,901 Pennine Bridleway Officer;
£ 2,006 Pennine Bridleway, maintenance;
£ 1,303 Pennine Bridleway, update & reprint Settle Loop leaflet.

Pennine National Trails Partnership

10. During 2023/24, the Authority was the Lead Partner for the Pennine National Trails partnership and is expected to continue performing the role for the foreseeable future.

11. Functions of the Lead Partner include to:

- Accept the grant offer from Natural England (NE) and claim and receive payments;
- Have an oversight of delivery and report to NE about how our financial support has been used by the partnership and what has been; achieved;
- Ensure that partners have the opportunity to participate in the management and development of the maintenance of the trails.

12. Over the last year, between April 2023 to March 2024, the partnership has met on two occasions once by video conference and once face to face. The Authority through the partnership has:

- Received from NE an initial grant of £425,678;
- Distributed 34 grants to 14 different partners;
- Secured an additional £47,727 from NE underspend;
- Total expenditure on the Pennine National Trails in 2023-24 was £473,405.

13. The Authority received £84,165 (100%) grant for the Partnership Manager post including £16,159 income for hosting of the Partnership Manager and its role as Lead Partner.

Coast to Coast path

14. On 12 August 2022 it was announced by the Secretary of State that the Coast to Coast path stretching from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in the North York Moors National Park passing through the Yorkshire Dales National Park would become a new National Trail.

15. Natural England are working alongside partners to improve the popular route, with £5.6 million committed to upgrade the 197-mile path. The announcement, which delivered on a Government commitment to develop the route, will also ensure long-term support for the National Trail and achieves the National Park Management Plan objective B2 and specifically in relation to the Coast to Coast route:

Maintain and promote the Pennine Trails and other recognised long-distance routes, identify opportunities for new multi-user routes, and campaign for the Coast-to-Coast path to become a National Trail by 2024.

16. The necessary legal and establishment work will be undertaken by the YDNPA to ensure that in due course the path is fully open through the Dales and available for public use, and meets the National Trail Quality Standards has commenced.

17. Natural England and partners have engaged with local communities as work begins on the path. Further enhancements will be undertaken over the next two years with the upgraded path expected to be fully open by Dec 2025. It is intended that the new National Trail will closely follow the existing route.

18. In addition to the implementation and enhancement of the route, the Authority was contracted by NE to scope the 'wider benefits' National Trail designation could bring. The Coast to Coast path has existed for many years, but has not benefited from the promotion and status of a member of the National Trial family. Natural England and partners are in the process of implementing; opportunities to develop link routes and circular routes; engagement with local communities and businesses; improving nature connectivity; information provision; and tourism opportunities for which funding has been secured.

19. During 2023/24 the Authority appointed a Project Team to implement the Coast to Coast path within the National Park. The team consists of a Project Manager, Senior Rights of Way Officer and an Administration Support Officer.

Three Peaks

20. During 2023/24 implementation of the 3 Peaks Project has continued, including carrying out further works at Brackenbottom, Horton in Ribblesdale by extending the pitching a further 200m.

21. The Three Peaks Project raised £27,282 towards the cost of the Three Peaks Ranger. The main streams of income are through Donations £13,134 and Merchandise £7,782, with Membership of the Friends of the Three Peaks and App Sales generating another £6,366. In addition, the project received £26,000 in legacy donations

Path Orders and Definitive Map

22. During 2023/24 progress has continued on Public Path Orders. The following Orders were completed by the Authority:

Public Path Orders:

North Yorkshire Council	Order Process
Hetton, Diversion Town and Country Planning Act	Confirmed
Dry Rigg Quarry, Helwith Bridge, Diversion Town and Country Planning Act	Conifmed
Reeth Bottoms, Diversion Highways Act	Confirmed
Marrick Park, Diversion Highways Act	Confirmed
Marrick Park, Bridleway Creation Agreement	Confirmed
Westmorland & Furness Council	
Tebay Footpath Creation Order	Confirmed

Temporary and Emergency Closure Orders:

North Yorkshire/Cumbria	Order Process
1 Emergency Closures	Completed
4 Temporary Closure for 6 months	Completed
1 Further extensions on current Temporary Closure	Completed

Resources

23. In 2023/24 there were 8.2 full time equivalent (FTE) members of staff working on rights of way maintenance, and 1 Rights of Way Officer undertaking Path Orders. The Authority's rights of way maintenance budget was £131k a reduction of 30k on 2022/23.

24. In addition, there were a further 4.2 FTE externally funded posts. These were:

Pennine Way Ranger (1.0 FTE)
The Authority received 63% funding from Natural England for the Pennine Way Ranger.

Pennine Bridleway Project Officer (0.6 FTE)
The Authority received 63% funding for their maintenance role.

Three Peaks Ranger (0.8 FTE)
The Three Peaks Ranger post, during 2023/24 collected £28,908 through the Friends and Corporate Members, merchandise and event donations to fully cover costs for the coming year 2024/25.

Coast to Coast Path National Trail
The Authority received 100% funding from Natural England for the Coast to Coast Project Team.

Coast to Coast Path, Project Manager (0.6 FTE)

Coast to Coast Path, Senior Rights of Way Officer (0.6 FTE)

Coast to Coast Path, Administration Support Officer (0.6 FTE)

25. The Authority is also supported by the Dales Volunteers and other volunteers. In total 1193 days of practical work, and 470 days of surveying, were undertaken on the rights of way

network by volunteers, in year. This equates to approximately 8 full time staff equivalents. The surveying of all the rights of way in the National Park is a significant achievement, and means the Authority is in an excellent place to know exactly what work is required for the coming year.

Corporate Plan 2023/24

26. The National Park Authority's Corporate Plan, 2023/24, sets out a programme of works and measures to assist in achieving the aims of the National Park Management Plan.

    Specific performance indicators identified for 2023/24:

Performance Indicators	19/20 Actual	20/21 Actual	21/22 Actual	22/23 Actual	**23/24 Target**	**23/24 Actual**
% of public rights of way that are signposted where they leave a metalled road	(97%)	(98%)	(98%)	(99%)	**98%**	**99%**
% of rights of way that are easy to use but may not follow the definitive line	(90%)	(88%)	(90%)	(91%)	**90%**	**89%**

27. Specific Corporate Plan actions for 2023/24 were:

Action	**NYC** In the park	**W&F** In the park	**LCC** In the park	**Total**	**Achieved**
Conduct repair works across the National Park so that 90% of routes are 'easy to use'	**89%**	**80%**	**19%**	**89%**	No
Maintain existing roadside signs so that the number of places where a right of way is signposted from a metalled road remains at 98%	**99%**	**97%**	**100%**	**99%**	Yes
Carry out engineering works to 800m of public rights of way, including landscaping and drainage works along the bridleway at Bowderdale.	200	600	0		Yes
Repair 2.5km of previously engineered routes, including repairs to footpath surfacing at Havera, Sedbergh and Gunnerside Bottoms	2375	130	0		Yes
Review with Unitary Authorities the delegated statutory duties provided by the Authority					Ongoing

Performance Indicators by area

28. The table below breaks down the performance indicators further. The individual county figures are given in relation to the network of rights of way within each individual area. (Results are taken from the Yorkshire Dales Access Recording Database, rather than field survey, and for the whole National Park area unless stated).

Performance Indicator	Target	NYC In the park	W&F In the park	LCC In the park	YDNPA
% of Rights of Way that are Easy to Use by members of the public (but may not follow the definitive line) (Field Survey)	90%	89	80	19	89%
% of Rights of Way that are signposted where they leave a road	98%	99%	97%	100%	99%
% of infrastructure - stiles gates and signs in 'condition 1'	95%	94%	92%	91%	94%
% of rights of way that are accessible for people with limited ability	266km				266km

Ease of Use results

29. The Authority's 2023/24 objective for Rights of Way maintenance is based on the National Park Management Plan 2019/24. The objective for 2023/24 was 90%:

Target *Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023.*

30. In 2013, the English National Park Authorities Joint Improvement Group (JIG) agreed to collect one indicator, across all the English National Parks. The indicator for 'Ease of Use' for the English National Parks is:

- % Percentage of rights of way that are 'Easy to Use' but may not follow the exact definitive line.

31. Each year's survey selects, randomly, a number of paths making up a minimum of 5% of the overall network. In total, approximately 135km were surveyed (110km NYC, 22km W&F & 2km LCC) in the National Park in 2023. The 'Ease of Use' figure is then calculated from the length of routes which pass the 'Ease of Use' definitions as agreed by the English National Parks Joint Improvement Group.

2023 Ease of Use Results	NYC In the Park	W&F In the Park	LCC In the park	YDNPA
% Percentage of rights of way that are 'Easy to Use' but may not follow the exact definitive line in the National Park	89	80	19	**89%**

Signing

Target. *Maintain at 98% the proportion of public rights of way that are signposted where they leave a metalled road in 2023/24.*

32. The Authority's 2023/24 objective for 'signing' is based on the whole of the National Park and the 5 Year Maintenance Plan 2019/24 and Corporate Action Plan targets. The calculations below give a true picture of the situation across the National Park.

33. The Access Recording System indicates that there were 2,309 places in the National Park requiring a signpost at the roadside. There were (99%) actually insitu with 33 (1%) missing. During 2023/24, 134 directional signs were replaced or repaired where they leave metalled roads, indicating designation (footpath/bridleway), distance and destination. In addition, 77

signposts have been replaced or repaired indicting direction, distance or status along public rights of way in the National Park.

34. Signposts from a Metalled Road based on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Access Recording System:

	Total	Present	Missing	% in situ
YDNPA	2309	2276	**33**	**99%**
NYC	1469	1458	11	99%
W&F	812	790	22	97%
LCC	28	28	0	100%

General Maintenance

35. The following section provides a brief breakdown of the main areas of works carried out, during 2023/24, in relation to the maintenance of stiles, gates and signage along the rights of way network.

Infrastructure

Type	**Total improved 2023/24**
Ladder Stile	20
Timber Step Stile	69
Stone Step Stile	76
Stone Squeeze Stile	87
Fieldgate > 5ft	144
Handgate < 5ft	104
Kissing Gate	10
Boardwalk	4
Signpost (directional on route)	77
Waymarker post	43
Information Sign	12
Roadside Signpost Present	134
Steps	14
Culvert	21
Total	815

River Crossings (includes bridges and stepping stones)

TYPE	**W&F**	**NYC**	**YDNPA**	
	repair/replaced/ erected	repair/replaced/ erected	Total improved	Total in Park
Bridges	16	33	49	906
Stepping Stones	0	0	0	35
Total	16	33	49	941

Miles without Stiles (access for those with limited ability)

36. Wherever an existing right of way is being maintained, every opportunity to replace difficult barriers with more accessible features will be considered, e.g. replacing a ladder stile with a gap or gate. The less remote a route, the more stringently this criterion will be applied.

37. The Authority also continue to measure two 'access for all' indicators against very strict criteria as laid out by The Sensory Trust in its document 'By All Reasonable Means'. The first was originally based on the Countryside Agency 'Zone A' national standard (equivalent to BT Access for All Standard 3), that is routes designed for wheelchair users. The second was more challenging routes capable of being used by wheelchair users with a strong pusher.

38. The length of rights of way that are accessible for people with limited ability is 266km, an increase of 18km on the previous year. Physical barriers along rights of way continue to be reduced by removing stiles and replacing with gates.

Major Projects

39. Under the Delegation Schemes the Authority has responsibility for the surface condition of rights of way. Each year projects are identified, by Rangers, for specific works which either improve 'Ease of Use' or enhance a route. The projects listed below are those with a capital expenditure greater than £1,000, and in most cases significantly more.

Route	**Works Undertaken**
North Yorkshire Council	**Maintain Previously Engineered Routes**
Stubbins, Healaugh	135m
Buckden Pike	220m
Swale Trail, East Gill to Swinner Gill	1500m
Linton Moor, Bridleway	440m
Gunnerside,	80m
Westmorland & Furness Council	
Havera, Sedbergh	130m
TOTAL	**2,505m**
North Yorkshire Council	**New Engineered Routes**
Brackenbottom, Three Peaks, Horton	200m of stone pitching
Westmorland and Furness Council	
Bowderdale, Sedbergh	600m of landscaping and drainage
Total	**800m**

Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads

40. In the National Park there is a significant network of unsurfaced unclassified roads (UUR) these routes often provide connections into and within the existing network of footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). This network consists of over 120km of routes that are available to a wide range of users. However, these are not recorded on the Definitive Map and are therefore not part of the delegation agreements with NYC or W&F. They are however, recorded on the 'list of streets' which the county councils have responsibility for maintaining.

41. Over the years, the Authority has worked in an ad-hoc manner (mainly with NYC) on a number of these routes because of their significance. Three years ago more formal working relationship was established with the appointment of a UUR Officer at NYC. This has led to the Authority receiving funding for works to help maintain these routes.

42. During 2023/24 the following projects, funded by NYC, have taken place in the National Park at a total cost of **£45,740**:

UUR Code	UUR Name	Location	Description or work
Craven			
U1946/2/60	Edge Lane/ Mitchell Lane	Long Preston	Surface repairs
Richmondshire			
U228/9/30	Cam High Road	Bainbridge	Surface repairs
U3577/9/30	Gale Lane, Swaledale	Low Row	Surface repairs
U230/9/70	Busk Lane, Marsett	Marsett	Concrete flagging extension
U230/9/70	Busk Lane, Stalling Busk	Stalling Busk	Resurfacing aggregate

Conclusion

43. Rights of way maintenance continues to be a 'priority programme' and an area of work where the Authority makes a clear visible difference to the National Park. The Authority helps farmers and landowners maintain their stiles and gates, whilst users of the network (both visitors and residents) have certainty about where they can go, and an enjoyable experience of the area. Businesses benefit because access to the area's special qualities, through the rights of way network, underpins the local tourism economy.

44. We continue to seek external income to help resource this priority work programme. During 2023/24 we were successful in being able to secure a total of £386,682 external funding and in-kind contributions to support rights of way work across the National Park. In addition, the work with Dales Volunteers and other volunteers goes from strength to strength, with once again all the rights of way in the National Park surveyed by volunteers.

Looking ahead to 2024/25

45. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan for 2019-24 established an objective for Public Rights of Way to:

> B1 Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023.

46. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority now manages the entire network of 2,637km of rights of way in the National Park. The ease of use figure over the period of the National Park Management Plan has averaged 90%, which is very pleasing.

47. The confirmation of the Coast to Coast path to join the family of National Trails by the Secretary of State, is welcomed and comes with financial resources for implementation and future maintenance as well as for 'wider benefit' opportunities. We look forward to implementing the route through the Yorkshire Dales over the next 2 years.

Further Information

Further information regarding the report is available from:

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