Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Public Rights of Way
Delegated Highway Authority

Annual Report 2024/25

April 2025

Introduction

1. For the period of this report, April 2024 to March 2025, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (the Authority) held the 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 and Lancashire County Council (LCC) 16km.

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 2024/25. 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)

Key Achievements 2024/25

Public Rights of Way Maintenance

6. During 2024/25 the following maintenance work was undertaken:

- 794 improvements to rights of way infrastructure: stiles, gates and signposts;
- 34 river crossings and 2 sets of stepping stones maintained or replaced;
- 1.14km of new engineered paths constructed;
- 1.4km of engineered paths repaired.

7. A total of **£1,539,838** 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
£ 33,400	Westmorland and Furness Council contribution
£ 250,000	Farming in Protected Landscapes, Cross Keys Bridge, Cautley
£ 94,255	National Trails Partnership Manager (inc £14,917 Lead Role income);
£ 33,734	Pennine Way Ranger;
£ 2,108	Pennine Way, maintenance;
£ 8,221	Pennine Way, Pen y Ghent, Miners Track works;
£ 21,711	Pennine Bridleway Officer;
£ 2,100	Pennine Bridleway, maintenance;
£ 29,455	Three Peaks Project (£29,455 staff);
£ 116,792	Freeholders Wood, Aysgarth, Access Improvements
£ 853,016	Coast to Coast Path Initial implementation of route (inc £83,745 staff);
£ 23,208	Path Orders, (£23,208 staff);
£ 39,793	Works to Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads, (NYC) (inc £9.332 staff);
£ 2,500	Donation, Trail Riders Fellowship;
£ 2,500	Ramblers Association, Harrogate
£ 18,900	Production of signs from workshop; (inc £14,000 staff)
£ 1,895	Donations various for projects across the park.
£1,533,588	**Total**

Contribution in kind:

£ 6,250	Brackenbottom Stone, Heidelberg (Stone blocks and 232t aggregate)
£1,539,838	**Grand Total**

Pennine Way

8. Total funding secured for the Pennine Way, for 2024/25, was £44,063:

£ 33,734	Pennine Way Ranger;
£ 2,108	Pennine Way, maintenance;
£ 8,221	Pennine Way, Pen y Ghent, Miners Track.

Pennine Bridleway

9. Total funding secured for the Pennine Bridleway, for 2024/25, was £23,811:

£ 21,711	Pennine Bridleway Officer;
£ 2,100	Pennine Bridleway, maintenance.

Pennine National Trails Partnership

10. During 2024/25, the Authority was the lead partner and accountable body 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 2024 to March 2025, the partnership has met on two occasions once by video conference and once face-to-face. Through the Partnership, the Authority has:

- Received from NE an initial grant of £398,763;
- Distributed 27 grants to 11 different partners;
- Total expenditure on the Pennine National Trails in 2024-25 was £399,015.

13. The Authority received £94,255 (100%) grant for the Partnership Manager post including £14,917 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 by March 2026.

15. Natural England are continuing to work 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 is being undertaken by the YDNPA to ensure that in due course the path is fully open through the Dales, available for public use, and meets the National Trail Quality Standards. To date 6 Path Orders have been completed and 7 creation agreements are nearing completions

17. During 2024/25 the work has commenced on flagging the route over White Mossy Hill to access Nine Standards Rigg. In addition, the Project Team consisting of a Project Manager, Senior Rights of Way Officer and an Administration Support Officer have implemented a number of minor enhancement projects, including signing of various sections of the route through the park.

Three Peaks

18. During 2024/25 implementation of the Three Peaks Project has continued, including carrying out repairs to 464m of public footpath at Beecroft, Horton in Ribblesdale.

19. The Three Peaks Project raised £29,455 towards the cost of the Three Peaks Ranger. The main streams of income are through Donations £17,851 and App sales £6,405, merchandise generating another £5,199.

Path Orders and Definitive Map

20. During 2024/25 progress has continued on Public Path Orders. The following Orders were completed by the Authority:

Public Path Orders:

North Yorkshire Council	**Order Process**
Rampsholme, Reeth, Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed
Cleasby, Reeth, Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed
Crackpot, Muker Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed
Ney Gill, Muker, Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed
Lowanthwaite Mea. Melbecks, Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed
Westmorland & Furness Council	
Foxhole Rigg, Sedbergh. Town & Country Planning Act 1990	Confirmed
Crosby Hall, Crosby Ravensworth. Highways Act 1980	Confirmed
Bleaflatt, Ravenstonedale, Highways Act 1980	Confirmed
Castle Rigg, Sedbergh, Highways Act 1980	Confirmed
Bramhaw, Sedbergh, Highways Act 1980	Confirmed
Tarn Moor, Orton, Bridleway Creation Order, Highways Act 1980 (C2C path)	Confirmed

Temporary and Emergency Closure Orders:

North Yorkshire	Order Process
Aysgarth Falls Hotel, to allow for development	On-going
Freholders Wood, Aysgarth to allow for footpath improvements	Completed
Carlton Town, to allow for development	Completed
Cotterdale Bridge, to allow for replacement works	On-going
Riverside path, Kettlewell to allow for repair works	Completed
Hebden Suspension Bridge to allow for emergency repairs	Completed
Reeth & Arkengarthdale, multiple closures	Completed

Resources

21. In 2024/25, 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 £114.4k; a reduction of 16.6k on 2023/24.

22. 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 £29,455 through the Friends and Corporate Members, merchandise and event donations to fully cover costs for the coming year 2025/26.

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)

23. The Authority is also supported by the Dales Volunteers and other volunteers. In total, 875 days of practical work, and 480 days of surveying, were undertaken on the rights of way network by volunteers, in year. This equates to approximately 6.5 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 2024/25

24. The National Park Authority's Corporate Plan, 2024/25, 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 2024/25:

Performance Indicators	20/21 Actual	21/22 Actual	22/23 Actual	23/24 Actual	**24/25 Target**	**24/25 Actual**
% of public rights of way that are signposted where they leave a metalled road	(98%)	(98%)	(99%)	(99%)	**96%%**	**96%**
% of rights of way that are easy to use but may not follow the definitive line	(88%)	(90%)	(91%)	(89%)	**88%**	**92%**

25. Specific Corporate Plan actions for 2024/25 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 88% of routes are 'easy to use'	**88%**	**98%**	**49**	**92%**	Yes
Maintain existing roadside signs so that the number of places where a right of way is signposted from a metalled road remains at 96%	**99%**	**97%**	**100%**	**96%**	Yes
Repair 1.4km of previously engineered routes, including repairs to footpath surfacing at Beecroft and Long Lane (BOAT), Horton in Ribblesdale	1400m				Yes
Install a bridleway bridge at Cautley/Cross Keys.					Yes

Performance Indicators by area

26. 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)	88%	91%	98%	49%	92%
% of Rights of Way that are signposted where they leave a road	96%	99%	97%	100%	98%
% of infrastructure - stiles gates and signs in 'condition 1'	95%	93%	92%	90%	93%
% of rights of way that are accessible for people with limited ability	266km				266km

Ease of Use results

27. The Authority's 2024/25 objective for rights of way maintenance is based on the National Park Management Plan 2019-24. However, the objective for 2024/25 was set at 88%, recognising the reduction made to the Public Rights of Way maintenance budget:

    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 2024.*

28. 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.

29. Each year's survey selects, randomly, a number of paths making up a minimum of 5% of the overall network. In total, approximately 133km were surveyed (102km NYC, 29km W&F & 2km LCC) in the National Park in 2024. 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.

2024 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	91	98	49	**92%**

Signing

Target. *Maintain at 96% the proportion of public rights of way that are signposted where they leave a metalled road in 2024/25.*

30. The Authority's 2024/25 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.

31. The Access Recording System indicates that there were 2,312 places in the National Park requiring a signpost at the roadside. There were (98%) in-situ with 36 (2%) missing. During 2024/25, 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, indicating direction, distance or status along public rights of way in the National Park.

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

	Total	Present	Missing	% in situ
YDNPA	2312	2276	36	**98%**
NYC	1468	1454	14	99%
W&F	816	794	22	97%
LCC	28	28	0	100%

General Maintenance

33. The following section provides a brief breakdown of the main areas of works carried out, during 2024/25, in relation to the maintenance of stiles, gates and signage along the rights of way network.

Infrastructure

Type	Total improved 2024/25
Ladder Stile	16
Timber Step Stile	46
Stone Step Stile	70
Stone Squeeze Stile	79
Fieldgate > 5ft	131
Handgate < 5ft	103
Kissing Gate	21
Boardwalk	8
Signpost (directional on route)	73
Waymarker post	44
Information Sign	8
Roadside Signpost Present	123
Steps	15
Culvert	14
Cross drains	43
Total	794

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	18	34	906
Stepping Stones	0	2	2	35
Total	16	20	36	941

Miles without Stiles (access for those with limited ability)

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

35. 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 someone strong assisting.

36. The length of rights of way that are accessible for people with limited ability is 266km. Physical barriers along rights of way continue to be reduced by removing stiles and replacing with gates.

Major Projects

37. Under the delegation agreements, 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**
Beecroft, Horton in Ribblesdale (3 Peaks route)	460m surfacing repairs
Long Lane (BOAT), Horton in Ribblesdale	940m surfacing repairs and drainage
TOTAL	**1,400m**
North Yorkshire Council	**New Engineered Routes**
White Mossy Hill, (C2C path)	900m Flagging
Reeth Bottoms, (C2C path)	20m Flagging
Buckden Pike	220m Flagging
TOTAL	**1,140m**

Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads

38. 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. These are not recorded on the Definitive Map and are therefore not part of the delegation agreements with NYC or W&FC. They are, however, recorded on the 'list of streets' which the councils have responsibility for maintaining.

39. 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. In 2021, a more formal working arrangement 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.

40. During 2024/25 the following projects, funded by NYC, have taken place in the National Park at a total cost of **£39,793**:

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

41. Rights of way maintenance continues to be a 'priority programme' and an area of work where the Authority makes a clear and 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.

42. We continue to seek external income to help resource this priority work programme. During 2024/25 we were successful in securing a total of £1,539,838 of additional external income 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 all the rights of way in the National Park once again being surveyed by volunteers.

Looking ahead to 2025/26

43. The new (draft) Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan for 2025-30 seeks to establish the following objectives for Public Rights of Way and green lanes to:

    B1. Manage and maintain the standard of all public rights of way, so that, on average, 90% remain 'easy to use' and create 5 new 'miles without stiles' routes that are suitable for a diverse range of ages and abilities.

    B2. Manage and promote the Pennine Way, Pennine Bridleway and Coast-to-Coast National Trails and other established long-distance routes, and improve linkages from the Coast-to-Coast route to 5 nearby settlements by 2030.

    B6 Enhance at least five 'green lanes' by 2030 and manage use by recreational motor vehicles and motorcycles - encouraging and supporting responsible use and enforcing restrictions where necessary.

44. During 2024, a Member/Officer working group reviewed the Authority's delegated statutory highway duties and reported back to the Audit and Review Committee (November 2024). The report made the following recommendations which will be addressed in 2025/26:

    I. Conduct an internal exercise to further investigate the establishment of a new approach to management of Rights of Way, based on a hierarchy of routes.

    II. Further investigate opportunities to raise additional external funds to support management and maintenance of Rights of Way through a donation scheme e.g. Donate-A-Gate.

    III. Work with Communications team to develop information (both online and print) for landowners on their and the Authority's roles and responsibilities in management and maintenance of Rights of Way.

45. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority continues to manage the entire network of 2,637km of rights of way in the National Park and secured funding during 2024/25 from W&F and NYC for a 3-year and 5-year period respectively which will aid delivery. The ease of use figure over the period of the current National Park Management Plan has averaged 90%, which is very pleasing and we will continue to seek to maintain this level for the future.

46. The confirmation of the Coast to Coast path to join the family of National Trails by the Secretary of State, comes with financial resources for implementation and future maintenance as well as for 'wider benefit' opportunities. We look forward to continuing to implement the route through the Yorkshire Dales over the coming year and prepare for the role of the Authority in the future maintenance of the route.

Further Information

Further information regarding the report is available from:

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