YORKSHIRE DALES ACCESS FORUM

Meeting of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum
To be held on Tuesday 20th May 2003
1pm at Council Chambers, Craven District Council, Skipton

Agenda

Tea and Coffee available from 1pm.

Meeting to Commence at 1.15pm

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Approval of minutes
4. Public Question time – three minutes per speaker (items must be submitted in writing to the Chair five days in advance of the meeting)
5. Standard Procedures
6. Countryside Agency response to the draft maps.
7. Access for All
8. Closures and Restrictions
9. Grinton Access Trial
10. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority update
11. Update on members activities (Brief reports of activities relating to the Forum)
12. Any Other Business (items to be included at the discretion of the Chair and discussed with him prior to the meeting)
13. Future Forum Meetings
    - Agenda Items
    - Locations
    - Dates

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Meeting of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum
Held on Tuesday 20th May 2003 at Craven District Council, Skipton

Present: Jon Beavan (JB); ; Graeme Hall (GH); Veronica Boulton (VB); Gerald Light (GL); Andrew Mackay (AM); Mark Sandamas (MS); John Goss (JG); Geoff Wilson (GW); Roger Harrison-Topham (RHT); Richard Spensley (RS); Michael Bartholomew (MB); Margaret Thomas (MT); Ben Heyes (BH); Phil Woodyer (PW); .

1. Welcome

JB introduced and welcomed RM as the new secretary to the Access Forum
Jon Avison (JA) Head of Park Management, Mark Butler (MSB), Access Information Officer and Kathryn Beardmore (KB), Regional Manager (North) attended from Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.
David Slater (DS) attended from English Nature
Sue Hogg attended as an official observer for Lancashire Local Access Forum and Lynne Evans for the Countryside Agency

2. Apologies

Matt Mason is resigning due to time commitments
Apologies were received from John Sayer, Wilf Fenten and Jane Uzzell

3. Approval of Minutes

JB read through the action list and checked that everything had been completed after the last meeting.

MT raised the point that the Action at the foot of page 5 should read “statutory guidance” and not “regulations”.

The presentation from the Definitive Map Officer was carried forward to the next meeting

JB explained that the YDNPA solicitor could not be made available to the forum as the solicitor represents the NP and as the Forum may advise against the NP, he may not attend.

There were no further comments on the action points

4. Public Questions

No questions were put forward.

5. Standard Procedures

The working group set up at the previous meeting had met. A draft had been produced and was provided at the meeting.
JB suggested the following changes:

2.3(a) – delete “and other interests”

2.8 – (with MT) insert “the forum will strive to reach agreement and consensus at all times. Where it is not possible to reach consensus, then a vote will be cast”
3.3 – Add “Unless already declared” and remove the italics
Section 5 – delete section

All changes were agreed.

VB raised that the agenda and papers should be made available 5 days in advance. Agreed that this should go into the members handbook.

6. Countryside Agency response to the draft maps

JB expressed his disappointment in the Countryside Agency (CA) response to the forums comments on the draft maps and raised a concern that in communication he had established that they had no structure or funding in place to deal with the Access Forums.

Lynne Evans pointed out that the CA can send representatives when issues are being discussed which they feel they should be involved with. She suggested that direct requests should be made to the relevant department if the forum required their attendance.

GW pointed out the lack of consistency in the response by comparing the letter to that received by the Lake District Access Forum in which the CA requested comments on the provisional maps.

Lynne Evans happy to receive the forums comments on the provisional maps, but explained that there was no process in place to respond. However, the comments would be reviewed in due course and she suggested that submitting comments would be advisable anyway.

There were general concerns that the forums questions had not been answered, especially those concerned with land types. It was agreed that the forum would comment on the provisional maps and also ask for further clarification on land types. MT added that clarification ought to be sought on the commencement date as the letter mentions 2005, whereas it was understood that it would take place in Autumn 2004.

Action: Forum to respond to the provisional maps when available, with additional comments on land types and time scales.

7. Access for All

JG presented his paper and pointed out that there are many inaccuracies in the information which is provided to disabled users. The booklet produced by the North York Moors was held up as a good example to follow, as were the leaflets provided in Harrogate.

A number of issues were discussed and it was agreed that the Authority should bring a paper to the forum to start discussions in around 6 months, with the view to the forum providing advice to the Authority on an overall strategy.

Action: JA (or Sue Hilders replacement) to develop a structure to start discussion on Access for All with the forum

8. Closures and Restrictions

MSB gave a presentation on the progress so far, highlighting that we were still awaiting the regulations and guidance on this issue.

DS explained English Nature's views, pointing out that they were very proactive on open access and would not be looking for many restrictions. English Nature would be working in close consultation with the Authority and will be available to advise the forum. DS requested that minutes were sent to him to keep him updated on the issues which were being discussed. He is happy to return and give a presentation when the guidance is published.

9. Grinton Access Trial

KB gave a presentation on the work that has been carried out on the Grinton Moor access trial and what is planned in the future.

JB thought the forum could benefit from having as list of the sites we might expect to see increased access on.

GW raised the possible additional liabilities and insurance costs under CROW. DS to provide GW with insurance information from the Peak District on this matter.

10. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority update

JA covered the following points:

- NYCC have endorsed 4 ETRO's on Horsehead, Mastiles Lane, Long Lane and Topmere Road/Starbotton Cam. The Authority will be working with NYCC on signage, compliance and monitoring, but no date has been set for their commencement. There is also a need to begin consultations with the user groups on 'Green Lanes' and their management.
- Staffing in Park Management. RM has replaced Cat Kilner smoothly. The Access and Recreation Officer position is still being assessed against the current needs of the Authority.
- Paper going to the Authority on the 27th May about the review of the definitive map, which proposes an increase in resources in this area.
- Also a paper on this date covering ad-hoc LAF appointment procedures. Following this, the appointment of the 2 vacant positions on the forum will be looked at, with probable advertisement in June with a view to appointing in July.
- There is an integrated rural development pilot project now running, looking at linking access and businesses in the Craven area.
- The Pennine Bridleway Officer is in post and currently talking to landowners and parish councils about the line of the route.
- We have secured aggregate tax funding from the Countryside Agency for habitat enhancement in the three peaks area. A member of staff has been appointed and funding has also been allocated to Area Action projects as well as walling work on the Settle to Carlisle railway line.
- The bike bus will be running again this summer on a revised timetable from June to September.
- We are running a volunteering initiative called "Hands On", which we are promoting at the moment. Please contact RM if you know anyone who would be interested in taking part in this.

MT asked whether the resourcing in the definitive map review looked at the inclusion of the Lost Ways project. JA explained that the paper going to the Authority didn't go into that level of detail, but the Lost Ways project was to be used as a research tool.

11. Members Activities

Members were asked to briefly give details of any work they had been involved in relating to the work of the Forum since the last meeting.
BH – has been submitting draft map comments to the CA, arranging closures of the moors for fire, attended a National Access Forum meeting, a West Yorkshire Pennine Access Forum meeting and a Moorland Association meeting.
RHT – nothing specific to the Forum

VB – nothing specific to the Forum
MT – attended the National Access Forum meeting and has been putting information in the Ramblers newsletter, raising awareness of the Forum and encouraging involvement.
MB – attended a DEFRA meeting on 'Making the best of Byways'.
GL – nothing specific to the Forum
GH – nothing specific to the Forum
AM – raising awareness about the Forum with the Dales Archaeology Group and the Dales Landscape Trust
PW – providing information to various user groups
RS – meetings to discuss the Responsibility of Access to users
GW – attended ETRO meeting, DEFRA meeting and has been in contact with Track, the motorcycle trail group in Craven
JG – attended the ETRO meeting
JB – attended the National Access Forum meeting. Was concerned that there was no support in place for Access Forums. Drew attention to a meeting on the 17th July for all the chairs of Northern Access Forums.

12. Any Other Business

Training Needs

JB has been discussing this with JA and suggested a visit to Grinton Moor as a possible site visit. Also, the YDNPA would be running a training day on the current ROW Law. It was suggested that the morning before the next meeting would be a good time for this.

13. Future Meetings

Agenda Items

A presentation by the Definitive Map Officer and the YDNPA solicitor on Public Rights of Way Legislation.

Dates of Future Meetings

Tuesday 2nd September, 1pm at Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes
Tuesday 18th November 1pm at the Middleham Key Centre

Items for future meetings

Presentations on regulations and guidance on closures, restrictions and management, including a contribution from English Nature
A presentation by NYCC & CCC on ROW improvement plans.
A presentation by the Access and Recreation Manager on Access for All (18th November).

Actions: Access Development Officer to inform Forum Members when regulations come out. JB to invite NYCC and CCC to do a presentation to the Forum on ROW improvement plans.

ITEM 7

Access for All within the National Park.

A great deal of time and effort has been given over to the new Countryside Rights of Way Act. No firm date has yet been published as to its implementation however a fair estimate will be around 2 years. This act gives the fit and healthy freedom to roam over upper expanses of land that have hitherto been restricted.

However there is another act regarding Access that does not appear to feature as highly on the Park Authorities agenda. It is the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the fourth section will come into force in October 2004. This will require the Park Authority to make “reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises and services to overcome barriers to access”

I have visited two Visitor Centres and telephoned another, in the park to see what was available for me, as a person with disabilities, to see and do.

Aysgarth Falls Visitor Centre

I visited this centre with the idea of taking a “walk” to the falls and found that were a number of problems for wheelchair users.

- The ramp to the visitor’s centre was at the maximum gradient with no hand rails.
- The doors at the centre were not labelled pull or push.
- The route to the start of the walk was out of the very steep car park entrance. Both dangerous and impossible on ones own.
- The path to the falls was acceptable but it would have been very different on a wet day.
- Access was possible to the middle force, however careful pruning will be needed to ensure the bushes and trees do not obscure the view during the Summer months.
- Access to the lower force was not possible due a series of shallow steps.

Malham Visitors Centre?

I telephoned and asked about wheelchair accessible walks and was told that I could access Malham Cove. The assistant however had no first hand knowledge regarding wheelchair access.

I asked if I could go to Ingleborough Cave and was told I would need to ring and book 48hrs in advance. Later I received a leaflet saying it was fully accessible!

Hawes Visitors Centre.

- The two parking bays are very poorly signed and are shared with a loading bay which is often blocked.
- The disabled toilet is not signed and is difficult to find tucked round the back of the main toilets.

- The main entrance has no sign for wheelchair access and is not lit in the dark!
- Information was given about Cotter Force. However it is difficult to find due to poor signing and there is little parking. But in dry conditions it is wheelchair accessible.

General Notes

- Accessibility issues include the needs of people who can walk but with limited mobility
- A vast number of footpaths have stiles and some need to be converted to gates for the less able walkers. It can take four adults to help a person with learning difficulties over a stile.

What is needed

- The Park needs to carry out a complete audit of their buildings, visitor centres and “honey-pot” attractions and publish a complete guide.
- This should be carried out by trained personnel who have experience of all disability issues.
- The park should standardise information and attempt to eliminate inaccurate information.
- A complete booklet should be produced and available to every one describing attractions and walks for people with disabilities.
- The Park Authority should investigate and access available grants for such projects, along with possible advertising revenue and commercial sponsorship.

This Forum Group is asked to support this proposal that the Park should undertake such a survey and develop a new complete guide to accessible attractions within its boundaries

John Goss
May 2003

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

ENGLISH
NATURE

Grinton Moor Desktop Pilot Study
Implementing Open Access

The
Countryside
Agency

The Moorland Association

Why do we need a desktop study?

- Many questions still remain as to how the new right of access will actually work on the ground.
- Aspects still to be worked through include:
  - Closures for land management and nature conservation reasons
  - Restrictions on dogs
  - Disseminating information to users
  - Identifying and managing access and egress points
  - Public liability and landowners H&S commitments including archaeological features such as mine shafts
  - Promoted routes through access land
  - Traffic Management

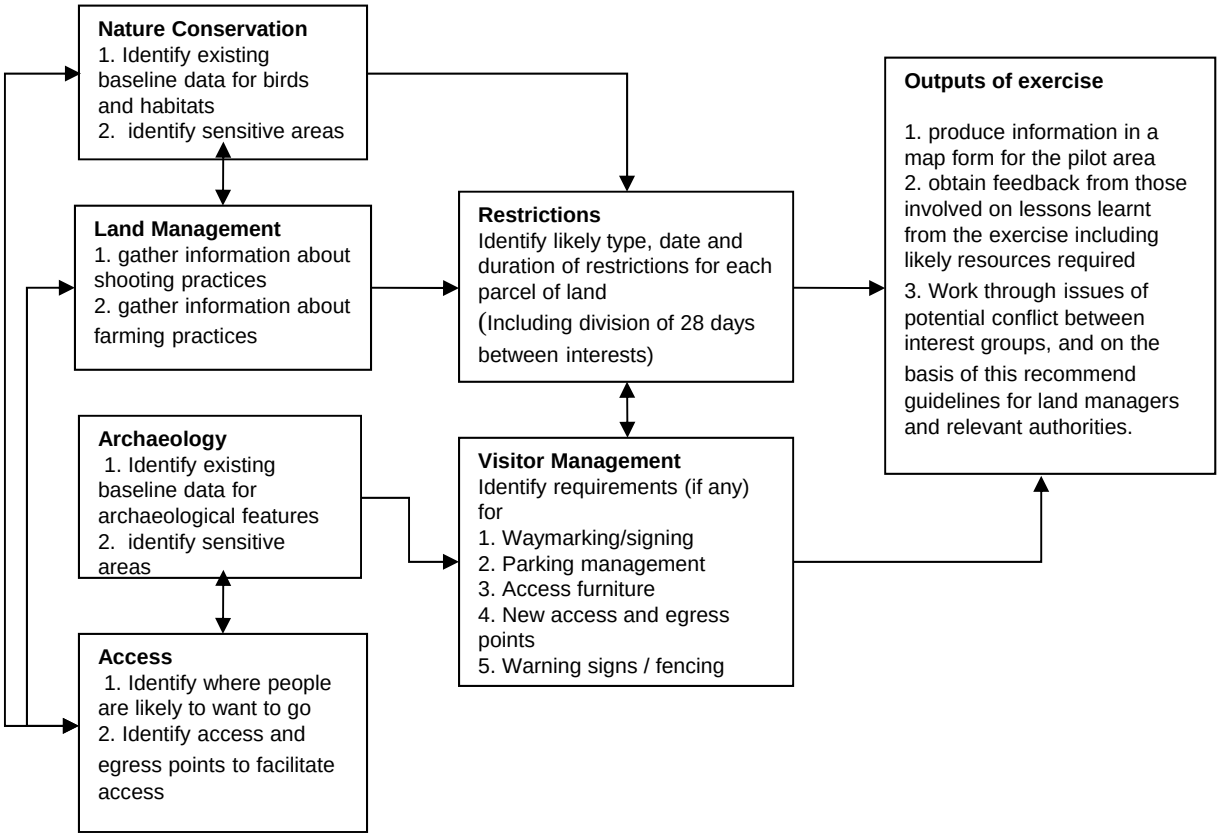
Why Grinton Moor?

- Area of land in the Yorkshire Dales, which currently does not have open access.
- Moorland Association very supportive of the idea
- Earl Peel offered the Grinton Estate for this purpose
  - The estate is approximately 2200ha
  - includes two commons, moorland and in-bye land,
  - footpaths bridleways and roads cross the area;
  - easily accessible from nearby honey pot area of Reeth
  - less than an hours drive from a large centre of population at Teeside
  - European designation for wildlife (SAC and SPA)
  - Archaeological features including Scheduled Ancient Monuments

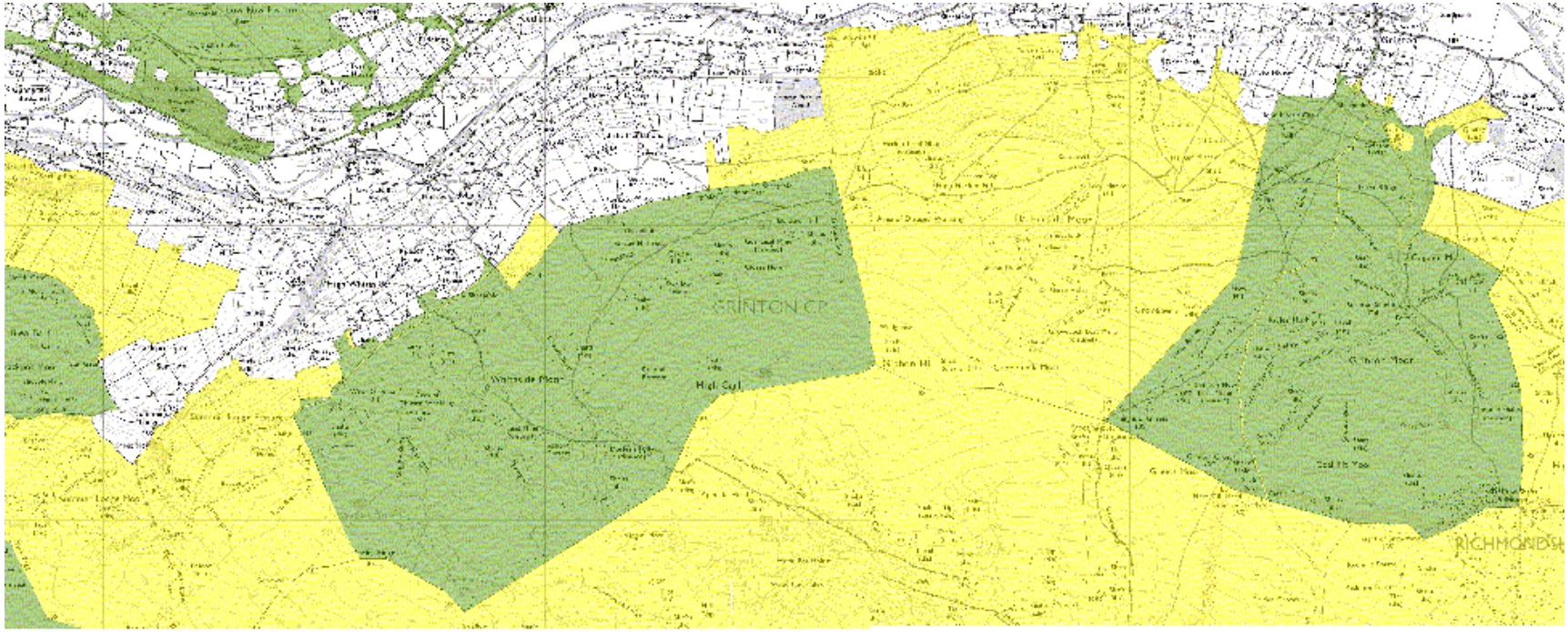
Key questions to be addressed

- Identifying Access and egress points into the area and whether these are adequate?
- Desire routes through the open access land, and issues relating to access over walls, way marking and likely erosion.
- Access for all, needs to be considered can it be accommodated?
- Responsibility for closures, how would this actually be done for nature conservation, farming practices and shooting?
- Safety aspect for shooting, burning, and other H & S issues
- How and when to notify users of any restrictions including web sites, NPCs and on site signage.
- Fire risk can/should this be managed?
- Car parking, how can/should this be managed?
- Public liability - in general

The Approach



Provisional Map of the Area



What we have done so far

- collated available information on wildlife, archaeology and access
- met with the game keeper and tenant farmers
- identified where people are likely to go when ‘open access’ is introduced (with the help of the Ramblers Association)
- started to identify issues which need to be considered further
- started to use GIS to identify areas of potential conflict

General response

Gamekeeper concerns:

- Disturbance to breeding grouse
- Disruption of shooting days
- Management of ‘wildfire’ fire risk
- Lamping - vermin control at night
- Burning

“Impracticality 28 day restrictions on moors”

Tenant Farmers

Wildlife - Issues

- Damage to habitat
  - Blanket bog on Summer lodge moor
  - Flushed vegetation amongst dry heath
  - Metallophytic vegetation on spoil heaps

- Disturbance to breeding birds
  - Eg Hen Harrier, Golden plover, Merlin (throughout site)
  - Eg Ring Ouzel, Winchat (gills)

Archaeology - Issues

- Archaeological features are not seen as ‘sensitive’ to disturbance from walkers
- Many mining remains in the area and clarification required on liability and responsibility (through DEFRA guidance?)
  - fencing of remains worked post 1872 not practical
    - difficult to know exactly when mining ceased
  - fencing not desirable
    - undue burden on landowner - cost significant
    - landscape impact - many features are prominent
    - assessment of any ‘risk’ on the ground to be fenced would be difficult to determine

Access Issues

- Management of car parking along Redmire - Grinton Road
  - possibility of bunding? subject to
    - views of local parish councils/community
    - funding from the local transport plan
- Promoted routes eg to tarns?
  - Where would responsibility for surface condition lie?
- Additional access and egress points
  - Browna Gill, Hooker Gill
- Overall use of area unlikely to increase

Possible Restrictions

- Restrictions on dogs
  - grouse moor for 5 years
  - lambing time for up to 6 weeks

- No other possible restrictions identified at this stage

Informal Management

- Information to users
  - website, on site signs, national park centres, accommodation providers (eg with ‘the visitor’)
- Promoted routes
  - through sensitive areas
  - to popular desire points
- Car parking
  - restrictions on any new car parking
  - management of existing informal car parking

GIS mapping

- Mapping information gathered :
- Current visitor pattern
- Predicted visitor pattern
- Sensitive habitats
- Sensitive species
- Land management conflicts with walkers
- Car parking
- Access points

Next Steps

- Discussions continue between CoAg, English Nature, & NPA landowner and those with an interest in the land to clarify points eg liability and mining features.
- CoAg to run local access use model?
- informal management techniques to manage the area to be identified
- Appropriate use of section 26 restrictions to be identifed
- NPA to set up internal working groups to look at specific issues such as disseminating information
- Await the publication of DEFRA Guidance (expected August)