

North York Moors National Park Authority

26 June 2017

Easy Access Routes

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on work to maintain a selection of easy access routes following a presentation to the Authority by Ian Lawson of the North York Moors Disability Advisory Group
- 1.2 To set out actions proposed to address issues relating to easy access routes

2. Background

- 2.1 The National Park Authority promotes a package of eight “easy access routes” aimed at enabling people of all abilities to access and enjoy the characteristic landscapes of the North York Moors. At the March meeting of the National Park Authority, Ian Lawson of the North York Moors Disability Advisory Group, provided a detailed critique of the routes, helpfully highlighting many issues which needed to be addressed if the routes were to remain promoted as providing “easy access”.
- 2.2 This report details works which are completed, underway or planned to address the issues raised.

3. Easy Access Routes

- 3.1 There are eight routes promoted as providing easy access. These routes are promoted on the Authority’s website as follows:

.....the walks we describe as 'easy access' are short, fairly level routes, suitable for wheelchairs, scooters capable of travelling over rough ground, trampers and robust pushchairs. Please remember that these are countryside walks, so the surface of the paths may be affected by the weather. You should also consider the suitability of your chair and strength of the person pushing, although all our promoted 'easy access' walks are designed to be easy going with no hazards.

- 3.2 There are currently eight easy access routes available (between half a mile and 3 miles in length) they are intended to provide access to a range of characteristic landscapes of the National Park and are at:

- Cawthorn Roman Camps (near Cropton)
- Esk Valley (near Grosmont)
- Forge Valley Woods (near East Ayton, Scarborough)
- Rosedale Mineral Railway (Rosedale Abbey)
- Runswick Bay
- Saltburn Valley Gardens
- Staindale Lake (Dalby Forest)
- Sutton Bank (National Park Centre)

4. Works to Maintain and Promote Easy Access Routes

4.1 Following Mr Lawson's presentation, further correspondence and on site inspections of some routes have been undertaken with Mr Lawson and an assessment of all routes has been completed. Set out below are comments on each route together with a description of works that have since been completed or are underway or planned.

4.2 Cawthorn Roman Camps

The concern related to the poor accessibility of the section of the route with a grass surface, where it crosses the middle of the western fort

When this route was first upgraded, in order to avoid damaging the archaeological remains, we were unable to construct an aggregate path on this section. The consent obtained was to build up and level the surface and lay a new grass/turf path on top. This worked very well for a number of years, providing a level and firm grassy path except in the worst of wet conditions. However, over time, the surface has become more uneven and in places eroded.

It is still considered inappropriate to propose more "invasive" route construction such as installation of plastic grid or other foundations. Therefore, the work programmed this year is to level, build up and reseed where necessary to restore the path to its original condition. This will be subject to obtaining scheduled monument consent. We will also revise route information to make it clear what to expect and signage to advise wheelchair users which route to take when ground conditions are too wet.

4.3 Esk Valley – The Rail Trail from Esk Valley to Beck Hole

Whilst this promoted route was considered not to need attention, it was highlighted that should users wish to extend it to Goathland or Grosmont some work was required. Water damage on the bank up to Goathland made it unsuitable for wheelchair / scooter users to reach the village and its facilities. The connection to Grosmont was considered appropriate for Trammer, robust scooters and wheelchair users. Further, the description of the route needs care to describe it correctly.

Goathland Incline has now been repaired to make the connection accessible. Also, some donated seats will be installed soon to provide regular stops along the trail. Further surface improvement works are planned for later this year along the section of the track past Whinstone Cottage, Esk Valley. It is expected that these completed and programmed works will address all of the expressed concerns.

Information related to the route will be checked to ensure it properly describes the route and its accessibility.

4.4 Forge Valley Woods

This boardwalk route was created to form a solid, even surface along what was previously a fairly inaccessible and muddy riverside path. Following complaints regarding the boardwalks slippery surface, caused by leaves and water lying on the surface, non-slip strips were installed along the route.

The comment relating to this route is that the non-slip strips and gaps between create an uncomfortable, uneven and noisy surface when accessed in a wheelchair. It is however accepted that they are a necessary addition and that there is currently no available remedy given the scale and nature of the route. It is proposed therefore to review the information provided regarding the route to advise potential users of this issue.

4.5 **Rosedale Mineral Railway**

The promoted easy access route is a short one, leading from Bank Top Car Park along the front of the kilns to meet the old railway line. This route is now believed to be in good condition with the main part of it having been resurfaced less than twelve months ago. The comments received related primarily to stretches beyond the promoted route where the landowner has used loose road planings to fill holes in the old railway. Whilst this is beyond the promoted route, many visitors do seek to extend their visit to the railway, we are therefore working with the landowner to see the loose surface consolidated. It is anticipated that the work will be carried out by the estate before the end of the year.

4.6 **Runswick Bay**

This route is part of the Cleveland Way National Trail. Malcolm Hodgson has visited with Ian Lawson to agree any necessary modifications. As a result, a new line is to be cut at one point, this will be higher up slope and subject to less crossfall which was the primary concern. Some additional surface improvements are also planned. Works to address all concerns will be completed this year.

4.7 **Saltburn Valley Gardens**

Following inspection, we have ceased promotion of this as an easy access route, because of safety concerns relating to the slope. Options for an alternative short circuit are being investigated.

4.8 **Staindale Lake**

Major repairs and improvements have now been made to the route, especially the section behind the lake. These address all of the comments made. Overall the route is now considered to be in very good condition.

4.9 **Sutton Bank**

The comments regarding the White Horse route at Sutton Bank were that we should seek to improve the safety of the A170 crossing, consider installation of a pelican crossing where the route crosses the A170, or that the crossing point should be moved away from the corner or advisory signage for motorists should be installed near to the top of the bank. Also, that along the path itself signs might be installed reminding disabled people of the dangerous drop.

We have recently contacted the Highways Authority regarding signage on the road and potential modifications of the crossing, however, proper highway safety considerations were built into the original plans for the route and it is considered unlikely that a pelican crossing would be considered appropriate in this location. We will consider this properly with the Highways Authority and implement any agreed measures accordingly. Any major works will be considered as part of the redevelopment proposals being prepared for Sutton Bank National Park Centre as a whole.

With regard to warning notices, as the cliff edge is clear at all points and the surfaced path is a reasonable distance from it, it is considered that the need for additional advisory notices is limited. A site visit is planned to address this point. If considered necessary, additional warning notices will be installed.

5. **Summary**

- 5.1 All issues raised regarding the condition of the routes have now been thoroughly investigated. Works already completed and further work planned will ensure that all issues are resolved within the current financial year, with the exception of the Saltburn route which has been removed from the list of promoted routes.
- 5.2 The information provided regarding each route is being reviewed, this will be completed by the end of July and then kept under review as works continue and any further issues arise.

6. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 6.1 It is intended that all necessary work be completed within the 2017/18 financial year. It is likely that all of the above works can be funded from within the access works budget for 2017/18. Should further investigation/specification reveal the need for additional funding, it is proposed that this be covered by officers agreeing virements within the 2017/18 budgets in line with financial regulations.
- 6.2 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

7. **Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report will contribute to delivery of the following National Park Management Plan Policy:

U3: Opportunities to enjoy the National Park will be available to a wide cross section of society.

8. **Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9. **Recommendation**

- 9.1 That Members approve the works set out in the report.
- 9.2 That officers vire additional funding, in line with the Authority's financial regulations should it be required to ensure that all issues are addressed during the 2017/18 financial year.

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Background papers to this Report

File ref

- 1. Minutes of National Park Authority meeting 20 March 2017