

PROW consultation questions and answers

January 2017

Q: What are the implications of a path being categorised as high or low priority?

A:

- Proactive maintenance will be focussed on high category paths and issues will be addressed on these routes ahead of those categorised as low priority.
- The categorisation of the path will also affect how quickly issues are resolved, with an issue on a high priority route being addressed faster than the same issue on a low priority route.
- Within our detailed work processes we are likely to take a different approach to an issue depending on the category of the path. For example we are likely to make more effort to require landowners to reinstate a higher category path after ploughing or cropping including taking enforcement action. We are less likely to move to enforcement action on ploughing and cropping on a low priority path.

Q: The focus seems to be on paths near towns and villages. What about routes in rural parts of the county?

A:

- Some of the highest category paths are in deeply rural parts of the county. The aim of categorising routes is to make sure that we focus our resources onto paths that are likely to get more use regardless of whether they are in urban or rural parts of North Yorkshire.

Q: When will you start to do the community value scoring?

A:

- Depending on the outcome of this consultation we want to agree an approach to categorisation and then implement it on the basis of path characteristics by the end of spring 2017.
- If the responses to the consultation are broadly positive then we will map the network on characteristics alone, and start to use the new model to guide our work programme.
- We aim to develop detailed proposals to measure community value during the winter of 2017/18 and start to bring that measurement into place within the categorisation model in 2018.

Q: There is no point in community value scoring as all the Parish Councils and user groups will rate their paths as top priority. How will you deal with that?

A:

- Any measurement system that we develop will need to require the Parish Councils or user groups to prioritise their paths to avoid this happening.
- If some Parish Councils cannot or choose not to provide community value information then we would expect to continue to use the categorisation based on characteristics alone in that area.

Q: What are your service standards? How quickly will you fix things that are reported to you?

A:

- We're not able to set and publish service standards at this point in time but we aim to do this before the summer of 2018.
- Once the new categorisation model and new processes are implemented then we will be able to measure our capacity and understand how long it takes us to deal with different types of issues using the new processes.

Q: You have a statutory duty to keep all paths clear and usable. Does this proposal mean that some paths will not be maintained and will be lost?

A:

- Given the reductions in funding to local government, we feel that prioritising our resources is a reasonable approach to meeting our statutory duties.
- The proposed approach will see us focus resources onto the most used and valued paths although issues concerning safety will be prioritised regardless of category.

Q: Why not make use of volunteers to help you maintain the network?

A:

- We have a group of dedicated countryside volunteers who help us already and we are always keen to recruit more people.
- Within the new ways of working volunteers will help the PROW team deal with issues reported to us. This will save significant amounts of officer time and will allow us to progress issues much more quickly.
- We are running a pilot at the moment with a third party group of volunteers in the Lower Wharfedale area who have offered to work to maintain and improve the network across an area of 17 parishes. If this pilot project is successful then we will aim to roll it out further. This would ensure that there was a continuing opportunity for volunteers who wanted to do physical work on the network.

Q: How are you going to improve the network if these changes are implemented?

A:

- Given the reductions in resources we will need to prioritise maintenance of the network over improvements.
- However, we will bid for improvement funds whenever these are available, and we can make a strong business case for doing so. In addition we will also encourage landowners to improve the network where appropriate.