

**Date: 29 March 2022**

**Report: HAWES GARSDALE MULTI-USER ROUTE**

### **Purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members' support, in principle, for development of a multi-user route using the disused railway line between Garsdale Station and Hawes and, subject to this support, to ascertain the level of public support for the proposal.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

2. That the Authority:
  - (a) supports in principle the development of a multi-user route using the disused railway line between Garsdale Station and Hawes;
  - (b) carries out a survey to ascertain the level of public support for the proposal.

### **Strategic Planning Framework**

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

#### **National Park Management Plan Objective 2019-24**

**B9** Promote and encourage responsible cycling by supporting world class events that showcase the National Park, enabling the development of four 'cycle hubs', and creating at least one further family-friendly cycling route by 2024.

### **Background**

4. The terrain of the Yorkshire Dales can be challenging for people with limited mobility, wheelchair users or those with young children because of its gradient and/or surface conditions. The current (and previous) National Park Management Plan has included a commitment to create family-friendly cycling / multi-user routes. These are bridleway routes with easier gradients suitable for horse riders, cyclists, and those with limited mobility. Three multi-user routes have been established at Malham Tarn, Greenfield Forest and the Swale Trail in Swaledale. The current Management Plan has an objective to create one further family-friendly cycling route by 2024.

5. Family-friendly cycle routes meet several aims, they:
  - a) provide a safe user-friendly environment for children to experience cycling and horse riding away from the road network, where the roads can be either too busy or narrow or steep and challenging;
  - b) enhance the tourism offer to the active family market, and in so doing boost the local economy. There is a plethora of examples of these popular trails in the UK e.g. the Camel Trail (Cornwall), Rutland Water or the Peak District Trails. The Dales is sadly lacking in such facilities;
  - c) attract younger people and families to come and live in the National Park by providing opportunities to make the most of the active lifestyle offered;
  - d) enable people, whatever their fitness, to benefit from the health and well-being offered by recreational activity and cycling in the National Park and the associated connection with their natural environment.

### **The proposal**

6. The A684 corridor west of Hawes has the potential for a 6-mile multi-user route connecting the market town of Hawes to Garsdale (with its mainline rail services) and the Pennine Bridleway National Trail. This route could be developed as an attractive bridleway for recreational cyclists, horse riders and other users. The A684 itself is busy and unsuitable for children and inexperienced cyclists.
7. Upper Wensleydale has the obvious potential to develop further as a cycle hub, with 'the king of the mountains' road cycling challenge over Buttertubs and the Pennine Bridleway National Trail close by, but the area would also benefit from a family-friendly route - away from the road to enhance the offer for mixed ability parties. While the former Wensleydale railway is an obvious choice for a traffic-free, multi-user route, and many disused railways lines have been developed in this way across the country, any development is not without its challenges, including multiple land ownership along the route and the finance required.

### **Multi-user route or re-instatement of the railway line?**

8. The former Wensleydale railway line has been protected from development by the Authority for many years. The current Yorkshire Dales Local Plan policy states:

*BE6 Development that would prejudice the reinstatement of the Wensleydale Railway, including operational land and station facilities, will not be permitted.*

*...Reinstatement of the line in stages will be permissible, if it is capable of being made reversible in the event that it is not successful. If the reconstruction of the line could also deliver a parallel recreational trail, then the joint infrastructure benefits would be much greater. The National Park Authority will therefore want to safeguard and investigate this possibility in parallel to the Wensleydale line.*

9. In November 2019, the Authority and Richmondshire District Council awarded a contract to consultants Arup, to investigate the feasibility, likely cost and economic

impact of developing a family-friendly multi-user route alongside the Wensleydale railway from Hawes to Garsdale. The [feasibility study](#) was completed in July 2020. However, it was not made public at this time because in the same month the Upper Wensleydale Railway (UWR) a separate body from the Wensleydale Railway Association (WRA) applied to the Department of Transport's 'Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund' to reinstate the section of the railway line from Hawes to Garsdale Station. The UWR's bid was unsuccessful. The UWR decided to reapply and, in case the Arup feasibility study provided any useful information, it was made available for UWR's re-submission. The report was also circulated to Authority Members at that time, with a note explaining that the report had been put on the 'back burner' with the outcome of the UWR bid awaited. In November 2021 the UWR learnt that the re-submission had also been unsuccessful. Consequently, a decision is now being sought as to the desirability of progressing the multi-user route option, following the feasibility study.

### **The findings of the feasibility study**

10. The feasibility study involved a desktop review of various potential routes, followed by extensive field survey. This included all of the sections of the former railway route where access had been agreed with landowners, with other sections viewed, where possible, from adjacent vantage points. A summary of the constraints and the benefits of the project identified by the consultants is in **Appendix 1**.

### **Legal considerations**

11. To create a multi-user route a formal legal right of way would need to be established either by completion of a Creation Agreement or Creation Order. It is likely that several Creation Orders will be required to establish the route as a Bridleway. Under the Environment Act 1995 all National Park Authorities have powers to make Creation Orders and the Authority has experience of doing so, through implementing the Pennine Bridleway in the National Park. The Authority would need to be satisfied that the statutory tests set out in the legislation (Highways Act 1980) for Creation Orders were met and if any objections to the making of the Creation Order were received, then the Secretary of State would decide whether or not to confirm the Creation Order, probably by convening a Public Inquiry. Compensation is payable to a landowner if the Order is confirmed and the landowner can establish that the value of their interest in the land is depreciated or that they have suffered damage by being disturbed in their enjoyment of the land as a consequence of the Creation Order.

### **Financial considerations**

12. The feasibility study outlines the indicative costs. The key financial consideration will be finding funding for the resource required for the legal work and any landowner compensation. Once this setup phase is complete, finding funding to build a multi-user route should be relatively easy. The Department of Transport have several funding streams that could be accessed when the outputs are guaranteed, and as such there has never been a better time to see a project of this kind developed.

### **Next steps**

13. Following on from the feasibility study it's clear that the options for the former railway line between Garsdale station and Hawes are now: **either** continue to protect the former line in the hope that the railway may be re-instated **or** examine the possibility of developing a multi-user bridleway route. Sadly, with the recent failure of two successive funding bids, the chance of reinstating the railway now seems very unlikely. It is recommended the next step should be to seek views from the public to gauge the demand for a multi-user bridleway route.

**Kathryn Beardmore**  
**Director of Park Services**

11 March 2022

### **Background documents**

None

## Appendix 1

### Summary of findings

The study estimates that the route could generate 15,000 additional visitors to Hawes who in turn will generate direct and indirect benefits of approximately £1 million per annum. Given the likely cost of the scheme is in the £5 million range, this presents a good investment. The benefits of the scheme could be further enhanced through proactive promotion and partnership working to encourage use including social prescribing of walking and cycling.

Several constraints were identified (**see map below**), which can be summarised as:

- **Condition of structures** such as Mosssdale Tunnel, and a number of missing structures (such as bridges)
- **width of the original single track railway line** between Hawes and Garsdale (4.5 metres). This means it is not wide enough to accommodate both a railway and a multi-user route in future. Widening the route would be uneconomic due to the structures along the route.
- **gradients** along the former railway line itself are gentle. However, there are a few locations e.g. where the former railway line crosses the A684 where bridges are missing, resulting in steep gradients to access or leave the trail; these will impact on the accessibility of the route for all.
- **Lack of development** or “garden grabbing” along the route, but a barn has been erected at one location, and cattle are fed on the line.
- **barriers across the route** including fences and a drystone wall either marking a change in ownership; preventing public access to structures, or controlling the movement of livestock. Installing gates or cattle grids across the route would make it less attractive and accessible for cycling or horse riding, therefore fencing along the route will be necessary.
- **lack of support from landowners**: seven landowners refused to give permission to access their land for the feasibility study. A further 13 landowners did not respond to the letter seeking permission. Only four landowners expressly gave permission to access their land. Most of the landowners who are not supportive of the scheme are at the Hawes end of the former railway route. While they only account for a very short distance of the overall route, securing this end of the route is preferable to ensure it can be accessed from the Dales Countryside Museum and avoid the need to cycle on busy roads.

# Map of former Hawes- Garsdale railway line

