



Northumberland

County Council

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 19 DECEMBER 2019

Petition requesting improvements to the bridleway from South Lane, North Sunderland to the Primary School and Nursery Side Gate, Seahouses

Report of the Director of Local Services, Paul Jones

Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Environment and Local Services

Purpose of report

To acknowledge the recently received petition and seek the views of the Local Area Council on the request of the petitioner.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members consider the report and agree to request that officers bring forward a scheme of improvements to the path to ensure that the path surface meets the needs of all path users including those taking children to and from school with buggies and children on bicycles, by providing a suitably drained sealed surface path.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the “We want you to love where you live” priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

1. Key issues

1.1 The path in question (North Sunderland bridleway no. 16) (see attached plan) is a public right of way which the County Council (as Highway Authority) is responsible for maintaining. It is not however an adopted footway and is not currently constructed with a sealed (tarmac) surface. Indeed the Council would normally avoid tarmac surfaces on public bridleways as they are generally deemed to be less convenient for horse riders.

1.2 However, the path is located in an urban area and the vast majority of its use is by pedestrians and parents/carers with buggies. It is also used by children going to and from school. Given the relatively low level of horse use on the path a sealed

surface (tarmac) treatment would provide a more suitable, lower maintenance surface solution in this instance.

2. Background

2.1 A request for an e-petition was received in September 2019 seeking support from interested people from in and around North Sunderland for the improvement of a public bridleway (North Sunderland bridleway no. 16) adjacent to Seahouses Primary School. The wording of the petition request was:

In 2017 Seahouses Primary School and Nursery "Busy Bees" were moved to the new location (old Middle school). The school was upgraded with new paths and one new entrance through bridleway to highway. Until this time this path was very rarely used mainly people walking dogs etc. Now in school times it became one of the busiest paths in Seahouses/North Sunderland used by people walking children to and from school it is 20 minutes quicker than going around through the Main Street. This path is in very poor condition covered with sharp stones, weeds, puddles. It was inspected last year and one of the officers said it's still usable. Nobody agrees with it - parents with prams, trolleys can't go over this path, when cycling two people can't pass each other without going off the bike and stopping, Children can't use their scooters little bikes, balance bikes etc as their colleagues coming from James Street can. There is no day when accidents aren't happening there. Kids tripping over cutting legs, arms hands and have to get separate shoes to walk through it. It's not council and not private but its used by hundred people and children every day and needs to be upgraded so it's safe and usable for prams bikes etc.

2.2 The petition opened on 3 September and when it closed it was supported by 245 signatories (115 on the e petition and 130 handwritten). It is therefore eligible for a formal response from the council.

2.3 The path in question currently has a hard stone surface along its full extent although it is rough and subject to puddling in places. From its western end for approximately 80 metres the route is used for private vehicular access for 13 properties. There is also private agricultural access along the first 40 metres of this section. The next 140 metres is used purely as a bridleway with no vehicle use. There is a wooden bollard at the western end of this section. A further section of 110 metres also has private vehicular access to two properties (though not used on a regular basis). There are two removable and lockable steel bollards at the eastern end of this section.

2.4 Over the last 5 years prior to the petition, the council has received 4 reports highlighting various issues on the path. These include one report of flooding, two of damage by vehicles, and one expressing general concerns similar to those outlined in the petition. Generally the path is considered to be in an adequate condition for an unadopted public bridleway, but officers consider that given its use as a route to school, a higher standard of provision would be justified in this instance.

2.5 In preparing this report consultation took place with North Sunderland Parish Council, who were supportive of the proposal that the path should be improved.

2.6 The total length of path that requires improvement is approximately 330m. The council has assessed the likely cost of the desired improvements and based on similar schemes elsewhere estimates that the cost of improving the path to make it more suitable, in terms of width and surface, for the uses described in the petition, would be in the region of £40,000 to £50,000.

2.7 No specific county council resource has been identified for such a project in the current financial year, however if supported by the Local Area Council it is proposed that the improvement will be considered for inclusion in the rights of way element of the Council's 2020-21 Local Transport Plan improvement programme with the aim of implementing the works as early as possible in the financial year.

Implications

Policy	None
Finance and value for money	The improvement will be funded through the Council's 2020-21 Local Transport Plan improvements programme with the aim of implementing the works as early as possible in the financial year.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	The path is of unknown ownership but is a public highway over which the County Council can exercise powers of improvement.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	None
Customer Consideration	The report is in response to a local petition raised through the council's e-petitions web page.
Carbon reduction	None
Wards	Bamburgh Electoral Division

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

	initials
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Service Director Finance & Interim S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Relevant Director	Paul Jones
Chief Executive	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	GS

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