

# Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum

## Position Statement on Surfaces

### Scope

This position statement sets out general advice from the Northumberland JLAF regarding the surfacing of new permissive (non-statutory) paths and routes, bearing in mind their intended use and length. It may also be relevant where extensive repairs or alterations are necessary to existing PROW i.e. public footpaths, public bridleways, restricted byways, BOATs and UCRs\*.

### Principles

- 1) New routes and/or paths should be surfaced in keeping with users' needs and catering for the full range of uses wherever possible.
- 2) Surfaces should be in keeping with the surrounding landscape and the geographical context in which they are located.
- 3) Rural and urban locations are hugely different, and the choice of surface must reflect this. Care should be given to the surface of the access network within the urban/rural fringe to avoid the further spread of urbanisation into the countryside.
- 4) The selected surface should take the ideal of shared-use into account, where shared-use is desirable, achievable, and relevant. It should be recognised that for each user group there is a preferred surface which should be used when the route is solely for that user group.
- 5) The surface for a shared-use route must inevitably be a compromise unless there is enough width to provide strips for different uses. The wider the path, the less the surface pressure on any one part of it, thus helping reduce erosion.
- 6) It should be recognised that many PROW will not require an 'engineered' surface at all, depending on their natural substrate, geographical location, and intended user group(s).

### General Guidance

- Good drainage is absolutely essential to ensure that routes and paths are usable all year round. This should be a key consideration in decision-making regarding appropriate surfacing and maintenance.
- To ensure that the need for repair is kept to a minimum, surfaces should be as natural as possible.
- Where a new shared-use route is created, it should have connections appropriate for shared use with the rest of the access network (*see JLAF Position Statement on Shared Access Routes*).
- Route width is an important consideration in decision making as, the wider the route, the easier it is to provide surfaces for shared use.
- The JLAF is aware that a wide range of materials and techniques, including new technologies, is available for route and path construction. When choosing materials and techniques consideration should be given to factors such as suitability, durability, overflow by water, drainage, cost, aesthetics, minimising environmental impact, using local materials and the surface preferences and needs of different users. The potential impacts of climate change on all these factors should also be considered.

\*PROW: Public Rights of Way; BOAT: Byway Open to All Traffic; UCR: Unclassified County Road

(Jan 2021)