



# Dedicating our freehold NNRs

# Dedication the Background



- In November 2011 the Natural England board said;
  - *that all parts of our eligible NNRs and similar holdings should be dedicated for permanent public access unless there are compelling reasons on particular sites not to do so.*
- The programme of dedication will cover **all** of our freehold NNRs
  - even if already mapped as CRoW
  - only in exceptional circumstances will we not dedicate.
- Consistent with the Forestry Commission's dedication of its freehold estate



# Dedication – the legislation



- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)
- Section 16 allows for owners\* of land to dedicate it for public access in perpetuity.

# Why?



- Consistent with our role as an ‘integrated agency’ under our general statutory purpose and with our wider objectives
- Additional public enjoyment
- Support the message people and wildlife are able to co exist on many sites.
- Promote public engagement
- Example to other landowners

# Access on NNRs - The current situation



## Current levels of access on all NNRs

- Some 40% of the total NNR area already has open access rights under the CRow Act (mapped or dedicated).
- Three quarters of NNRs have rights of way over them, amounting to some 770 km.
- A significant number of NNR also have permissive paths or self guided trails.

There are;

- eligible NNRs across 32 counties
- consisting of 82 freehold (whole or part) reserves



# Dedication; what will change?



- Dedication will often be the formalisation of existing access and access management.
- The existing network of paths and information will remain as the biggest influence over where people go on the NNR.
- Dedication does not mean making every part of the NNR physically easy to reach or use.



# Dedication; how will the process work?



- There are five basic elements to the dedication process
  1. Legal check and review
  2. Initial site meeting
  3. Assessment meeting
  4. Proposal to the Chief Executive (in batches)
  5. Dedication
- 1 happens during 2 and 3 and is undertaken by land agent
- 2 and 3 can be done together on less complex sites
- It all comes together at 5



# Stage 1 – Initial site meeting



- Familiarisation visit to the NNR
  - Open Access lead advisor
  - Project manager
  - SRM and RM
- The agenda includes;
  - Understanding the special features of the NNR
  - Understanding current access on the NNR
  - Opportunities and constraints
  - Higher rights
  - Neighbours
  - Byelaws
  - The Nature Conservation Assessment process



## Stage 2 – Assessment meeting

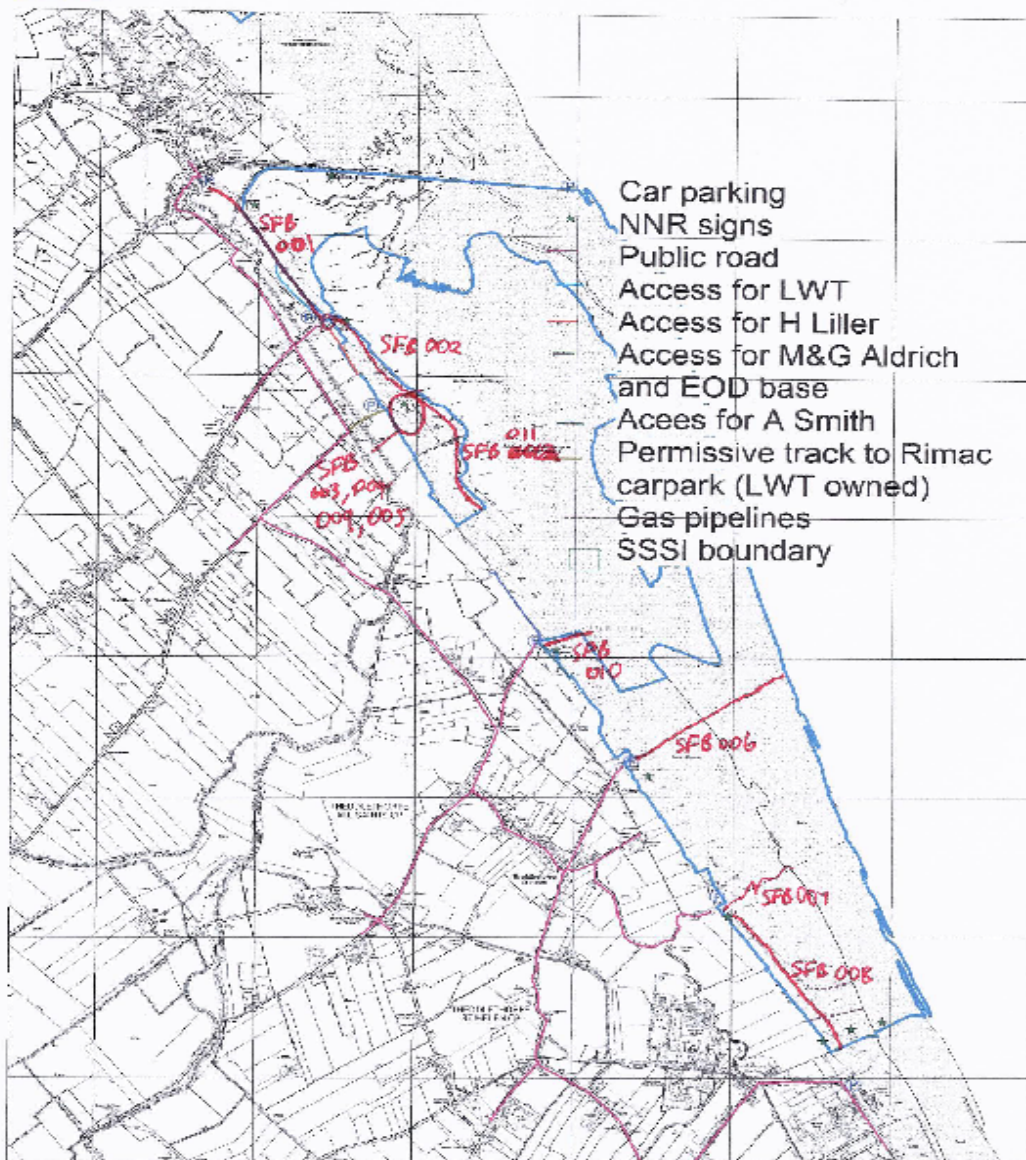


- Each NNR will undergo an ‘initial assessment’ that respects the primacy of the nature conservation value of the site.
- The assessment will look at implications for the whole site and neighbouring land.
- Higher Rights
- Access management approaches.
- Restrictions if needed.
- If no satisfactory solution can be found then we will not dedicate
  - this will be an exceptional circumstance and will need to be justified to the Chief Executive.

# Higher Rights



- Each path and track assessed for its potential to withstand HR.
- Senior Reserve Manager scores it for management issues
- Responsible officer scores it for Nature Conservation issues.
- Scores 1 -3



Scale 1:25000 Sheet 1 of 1

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