

"The route can be walked already for a good deal of its length" said Mr. Speakman, "and where it cannot we have arranged suitable diversions."

Committees of the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District National Parks have approved the scheme in principle and it is being considered by the Countryside Commission.

"Planning Officers of the West Riding and Westmorland have also shown great interest and been most helpful" said Mr. Speakman.

Under 1949 and 1968 Countryside Acts National Park Authorities (now the Countryside Commission) are empowered to create long-distance footpaths and access agreements to riversides.

Scouts first

"We aim to make use of these facilities," said Mr. Speakman. "With so much of the route right of way we believe the footpath will come into being before long, not because of the decision of the planners but because people will be travelling the route and walking on the path."

The first walking of the entire route will be made in April by Bradford Grammar School Scouts. They will take four days on the 73-mile trek, spending the nights in youth hostels.

"This is an easier walk than the Pennine Way and we hope it will attract family parties" said Mr. Speakman. "There will be some accommodation at guest houses in villages along the route, and at youth hostels in Linton, Kettlewell, Dent, Kendal and at Windermere where the footpath ends."

Beauty plus

It would be hard to imagine a more delightful route for a ramble. The path follows the Wharfe almost to its source, climbs over Cam Fell along a Roman road (joining the Pennine Way for a short time) before crossing the Ribble and entering Dentdale.

"From there," said Mr. Speakman, "the path leads to Sedbergh, up to Crook of Lune, over the Westmorland hills, along the river Kent into the Lake District National Park and so to Bowness."

Apart from its beauty the route covers many historic corners of Yorkshire: ruined Bolton Abbey; Barden Tower, originally a Clifford hunting lodge; Burnsall, where Sir William Craven, Yorkshire's Dick Whittington was born; historic Hubberholme in Langstrothdale Chase; Dent, home of the "terrible knitters"; Sedbergh with its famous school, and so over the border to Westmorland.

From cities

Most important of all is the plan to link the start of the Dales Way at Ilkley with footpaths to Leeds, Harrogate and Bradford.

"From Leeds," said Mr. Speakman, "the route would be via Meanwood Valley, Adel, Bramhope, Otley and Ilkley Moor.

"From Bradford it would be via Shipley Glen, Baildon and Ilkley Moor, and from Harrogate along the valley of the Nidd, over by Scar House and Little Whernside, joining the Dales Way at Kettlewell."

Working party

Details will have to be worked out, but a party from the Leeds branch of the Ramblers Association will shortly investigate possible routes from the city through the suburbs.

"It seems likely," said Mr. Speakman, "that a direct footpath through woodland and pleasant open spaces will be devised from Woodhouse Moor northwards.

"We shall then have a 90 mile-long path through some of the loveliest country in the North of England, linking Leeds directly with Windermere in Westmorland."