

STRATEGY TO MANAGE RECREATIONAL VEHICULAR USE OF UNSURFACED HIGHWAYS AND OFF-ROAD

Introduction

The Peak District National Park Authority has great concerns about the effects of recreational motor vehicles on public rights of way and off-road. We believe that it is appropriate to seek ways to positively manage the situation that:

- Are sustainable
- Minimise possible future and inappropriate development
- Recognise existing legal rights

We will manage vehicular access proactively in the context of the special qualities of the National Park. Our aim is to ensure that the National Park will not be damaged for future generations. Where the valued characteristics of the National Park are threatened, conservation will take priority.

We recognise the need to work in partnership to address the concerns of landowners, farmers, residents, visitors and other users of the rights of way network.

Where there is legitimate recreational vehicular access we will work in a spirit of co-operation to manage those routes in a sustainable way and implement controls as appropriate.

Our Vision

We will work with partners to:

- Manage the vehicular rights of way network with a view to minimising the impacts on natural beauty, wildlife, tranquillity and cultural heritage
- Ensure that where vehicular rights exist, routes are pro-actively managed, signed and widely recognised by all interested parties
- To work with others to address safety issues

- Promote a spirit of co-operation with motor-vehicle user groups to try to minimise damage and disturbance, and develop and apply voluntary codes of conduct as appropriate
- Consider the use of temporary or permanent Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate
- Gather information regarding illegal motor vehicle activity and pass this to the police

Existing National Park Policy

National Park Management Plan 2006-11

Part 3, Chapter 7 Recreation and Tourism

'By 2011, all people, visitors and residents alike, especially those from under represented groups including disadvantaged communities, children and young people and the elderly should:

- Feel welcome in the National Park; and
- Have the opportunity to participate in diverse recreational activities that enhance the quality of their lives.'

Issues

Whilst the Government challenges us to do more, some sports and activities may already come into conflict. For example walkers, horse riders and motorbikes can all use some routes and there is anecdotal concern from horse riders and walkers that the numbers of motorbikes and groups of riders has significantly increased over the last few years. The noise intrusion affects other users' enjoyment of the National Park. The physical impact of the vehicles can damage wildlife, habitats and valued cultural heritage features. Motorbikes however often have equal rights of access and the challenge is to accommodate legal use without damaging the special qualities of the National Park, or other people's enjoyment of of the special qualities

Action

The action proposed in the National Park Management Plan is to:
'Develop ways to positively manage motorised recreation in ways that are legal and sustainable.'

Strategy

The Scale of the Issue in the Peak District National Park

Number of routes

- There are approximately 354 routes that have, or may have, vehicular rights of access in the National Park.
- This figure consists of 235 Unclassified County Roads (also known as Non-classified County Highways) - 180 in Derbyshire and 55 in other constituent counties.
- Additionally there are 111 routes that have legal claims to be resolved which may establish them as a Byway Open to All Traffic. (106 in Derbyshire, 5 in other counties)
- There are also 8 established Byways Open to All Traffic.

There are also a number of public footpaths and bridleways used illegally by motor vehicles, data for which are not yet available.

Public Rights of Way Network in the National Park

The overall length of the rights of way network in the National Park (all figures approximate and in kilometres):

Public Footpath	2136
Public Bridleway	293
Byway Open to All Traffic	30
Unclassified Road	546
Concessionary Paths	210
Total Length	3005 kilometres

Sustainability

Initial sustainability surveys by National Park Rangers and the Rights of Way Officer on about 180 'other routes with public access' (generally recorded as Non-classified Highways) in Derbyshire indicated that around 30 routes may have sustainability issues which will need to be addressed. A further 30 routes may also have issues if usage is increased.

Across the Peak District National Park as a whole it is therefore possible to estimate that around 53 routes may have sustainability issues, and a further 53 may have issues if use of them is increased.

Proposed Actions

Action 1 – Work with Derbyshire County Council on its framework of proposals for defining sustainable and unsustainable routes in Derbyshire and assist in implementing its Code of Conduct for Vehicle Users in the Countryside.

Review the effectiveness of these actions, after a period of 12 months, with the Local Access Forums for Derbyshire and the National Park. Where the actions are judged to have been successful we will work with other authorities within the National Park with the aim of applying the actions across the whole of the National Park area.

Action 2- Prioritise and influence the Highway Authority-led review of rights

Develop a list, in conjunction with user groups and local people, of priority routes for Highway Authority staff to consider in reviewing claims for Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs).

Action 3 – Provide more and improved information to the public

An area of the Authority's website will be set aside for the latest information relating to unsurfaced highway use. It will show all sites used illegally and also flag up routes that concern us, asking that they are avoided. A code of conduct will also be on the site.

www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/vehicles

A variety of information is also being published:

- A leaflet aimed at bikers, detailing a code of conduct.
- A leaflet for the public telling them of our actions.
- A credit card sized print giving links to the website, designed to be handed out by police and rangers.

Action 4 – Work in partnership to manage the situation

Meetings will be convened to bring together the Peak District National Park Authority, Highway Authority, police and users to ensure transparency in the process. An e-group of interested parties will be established and minutes and notes from meetings circulated.

Action 5 – Address illegal use of routes

Authority staff, in conjunction with user groups such as the Ramblers Association, will co-ordinate a list of hotspots where criminal offence involving off-road motor vehicles occurs or is suspected of having occurred. Vehicular use will be logged and information passed to the Police.

Action 6 – Traffic Regulation Orders – policy consultation

Make the draft TRO policy available for consultation to statutory consultees, parish councils, the public, user groups and their representatives.

Action 7 - Safety and signage

The Authority will work with Derbyshire County Council to investigate funding for the provision and maintenance of a variety of signs as appropriate for routes where safety issues are identified.

Action 8 – Tranquillity

We will work in partnership with other National Park Authorities to identify a way forward, both in terms of tranquillity mapping, and how it can be built into future proposals.

Summary of Current Action

Sustainability Analysis

The Derbyshire County Council (DCC) - Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - Sustainable Communities/Cultural and Community Services, (15 March 2006) examined the issue of the use of unsurfaced highways. The key recommendation of the Committee was that each non-classified highway in Derbyshire would be surveyed to define whether it is sustainable or unsustainable. The methodology was considered and approved by the Peak District Local Access Forum in December 2005.

National Park staff are acting on behalf of Derbyshire County Council to conduct a baseline survey in the National Park. So far, a full condition survey of all 180 'other routes with public access' has been completed which amounts to over half the total network of unsurfaced routes in the National Park.

Upon completion of the surveys, it is proposed that there will be two Local Access Forum Panels, one for the Peak District and one for the rest of Derbyshire and Derby area, made up of an appropriate range of interests to

include representatives of motor vehicle users, other users, landowners and conservationists.

The baseline survey will be reassessed on a more detailed basis with the benefit of a site visit and informed advice. Any route which is still considered to be unclear or clearly unsustainable will be recommended for appropriate remedial measures, such as

1. Physical improvements
2. Voluntary restraint
3. Traffic Regulation Orders
4. Permit system
5. Signs

All recommendations to be considered by the Highway Authority and, subject to their acceptance and availability of necessary resources, included in their work programme.

Frequency of Use

The National Park Authority, in partnership with Derbyshire County Council, has purchased six electronic vehicle loggers which have been in use since February 2007.

They are placed on site for a period of approximately one month and are able to count and differentiate between motorbikes and other motorised vehicles. The information is provided by the second so very accurate pictures of use can be established. Their long-term continued use is vital to assisting in progress on this issue. To back this up manual counts are also taking place in other parts of the National Park.

This information will inform management decisions outlined in this strategy and establish precise figures of illegal use of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways.

The Police have welcomed the use of the loggers as it gives them a realistic view of the scale of the issues. All counts are passed to the police, which will enable them to pursue intelligence led operations on such sites.

The loggers will also, provide precise information on what is, and what is not, working in terms of actions.

Other Work

In addition to working with partners on the routes mentioned above, we have carried out the following work during the past 12 months:

- Discussions have taken place between the National Park and Highway Authority Countryside, Highways and Rights of Way Departments on how to progress the issue.

- On-site meetings with Defra officials enabled the Authority to have a direct influence on the proposed TRO legislation, ensuring it is as clear and workable as possible.
- countryside posts and assign an officer to deal specifically with unsurfaced highways.
- We are working with rangers and the Ramblers Association to identify 'hotspots' of illegal use, these routes will be logged for use and the information forwarded to the police.
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has been carrying out some work in the field of 'tranquillity mapping', to establish how the use of unsurfaced highways affects the tranquillity of the National Park. Their work is being closely monitored by officers of the Peak District National Park Authority.

Taddington

For some time the village of Taddington has had issues with motorbike riders using a number of lanes through the village, the vast majority of which did not carry any vehicular rights. Derbyshire County Council have installed a number of robust, highly visible signs through the village at these lane entrances to warn vehicle users that to proceed is illegal. Parish Chair Jim Whitby recently commented that there is 'no question that the provision of signs has had a noticeable effect on motorbike use' and that he was delighted with the work. He made the point however that the signs must be maintained and that it was vital to keep the matter under very close surveillance. Use loggers have been installed at Taddington to assist the parish council and the lanes will continue to be monitored.

Long Causeway

The Authority has also been instrumental in drawing up a voluntary Code of Respect for the Long Causeway across Stanage Edge. The Code was agreed through the Stanage Forum, which includes all interest-groups, and it will be piloted this summer.

It includes:

- Group-sizes limited to four 4x4s or six trail-bikes
- Speed-limits of 5mph for 4x4s and 20mph for trail-bikes
- Sensitivity to wildlife breeding and archaeological sites
- Giving way to other users
- Users to be fully road-legal
- A voluntary one-way system
- Keeping to the track
- Limited use in wet weather
- Voluntary repair-work on erosion
- Spreading the message about responsible use.

Moss Road

This public bridleway is subject to our first 'action plan' for dealing with illegal use. We hope that future issues will be dealt with via a similar approach, where the duties of all parties and a clear positive statement of works is presented in a transparent way.