

**NPA MEETING 24TH MAY, 2019  
LOCAL PLAN ADOPTION ITEM - NO 9  
MONSAL TRAIL AND INTEREST IN OPENING A RAILWAY**

**Good morning Chair and Members - My name is Charlotte Gilbert.**

**I am speaking as a Co-Vice Chair of the Peak District Local Access Forum which has 22 volunteer members drawn from a range of interests. The Forum is a statutory advisor to this Authority and Derbyshire County Council on the improvement of public access for the purpose of open-air recreation and enjoyment. I am also the LAF representative on the Authority's Trails Management Plan Advisory Group and am a horse rider, being Chair of Peak Horsepower.**

**At the last meeting of the Local Access Forum on 14th March we were pleased to welcome Brian Taylor, Head of Policy and Communities, to make a presentation on the emerging proposal to re-instate the Monsal Trail as a railway.**

**The Forum supports the National Park Management Plan and policies related to Rights of Way proposed for adoption by the Authority today as part 2 of the Local Plan. Having looked at the Transport Chapter with LAF colleagues and developments affecting public rights of way, we note that in summary policy DMT4 may permit a new railway where it represents a sustainable transport approach where the overall benefits stack up.**

**“DMT 4E states that: Any heavy rail, light rail or guided bus development that impinges on existing footpaths, bridleways or major trails must comply with the policy approaches in policy DMT5A, ensuring equally good alternatives and maintaining their continuity.”**

**This is helpful in relation to protecting trails, but we ask Authority members to consider adding a further layer of protection by designating the Monsal Trail a bridleway like the Tissington and High Peak Trails.**

**The Monsal Trail provides a safe family friendly route through the National Park, and helps to promote the understanding of its special qualities as well as providing health benefits. It is also a very popular route for cycling, horse riding, and walking and is ideal for less able users. As well as providing a positive contribution to the local economy. Since 2011 there has been a huge**

**investment, through the Pedal Peak District Project in opening the trail and the Victorian tunnels.**

**The Monsal Trail is an entry point for a lot of people coming into the National Park and its annual usage figure is around 300,000 and it was voted the best National Trail by Sustrans. The Authority has been a pioneer in establishing and improving this Trail, and must retain this vital resource with its exceptional opportunities for enjoyment in this very Special Place.**

**We gather that two main groups, Peak Rail and the Manchester and East Midlands Rail Partnership are interested in re-opening the line again, not just from a heritage point of view, but to enhance the railways generally, and the Transport for the North Group have ambitions for the next decade which include:-**

- Upgrading trunk roads**
- Re-instatement of Monsal Trail as a railway**

**It is vital that the Authority clearly states at every opportunity the huge importance of and benefits arising from this Trail following the pioneering work done to establish and improve it since the railway closed in 1968. There is no suitable alternative to this Trail and it should be safeguarded and retained in the National interest as a major recreation asset. This view gained much support from members of the Local Access Forum Regional Chairs meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March.**

**We urge the authority to work with Derbyshire County Council to give the Monsal Trail extra protection by designating it as a public bridleway.**

**Thank you.**