History of the Upper Derwent Valley Traffic Management Scheme

The pressures of car-borne visitors to the Upper Derwent area were identified within the Peak District National Park – National Park Plan (March 1978), which went on to state that, "on a peak Sunday up to 2,000 vehicles may enter the Upper Valley above Ashopton".¹ This pressure was manifesting itself into traffic congestion, affecting junctions on the A57, and problematic parking on the road and verges. The Plan goes on to describe a joint local study of the area² to investigate improved recreational provision combined with land management policies. Amongst the topics for investigation by the study were: -

1) Improved car parking provision
2) The desirability of traffic management measures to minimise congestion problems and provide additional opportunities for recreational use.
3) The scope for improved public transport provision.

Following on from this study, the Peak Park Joint Planning Board published a Draft Management Plan for the area, this included proposals to “re-organise parking at sites related to Ladybower Reservoir, reduce motor vehicle access for visitors north and east of Fairholmes, enhance the distinctive environment and safeguard local community interests”³.

Most of the above proposals found support, leading to the formation of an Officer Working Group⁴ in 1980 whose role was to iron out the details and co-ordinate the implementation of the Plan. This Group proceeded with the agreed actions from the Management Plan (subject to Committee decisions of member authorities).

At the time of the Peak District National Park – National Park Plan’s First Review (April 1989), the Management Measures that had been put in place included: -

1) Traffic restrictions on the 10.5km of road in the northern part of the valley
2) Improved bus services from surrounding urban areas, linked to a minibus service from Fairholmes to Kings Tree on days when this section of the road was closed (Summer Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays).
3) Cycle Hire facilities at Fairholmes
4) Improvements to parking and picnic facilities
5) Provision of Information, Refreshment and Toilet facilities at Fairholmes
6) Provision of new concession routes.

In 1994 an experimental Clearway was put in place between the A57 and Fairholmes, with additional seasonal Traffic Warden Enforcement⁵.

By 1999 Capital Expenditure in the area had amounted to more than £775,000⁶.

In order to minimise the impact of traffic within the valley north of the A57, a road user charging scheme was suggested. Derbyshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, led the initiative, with the backing of other partners within the Officer Working Group. The scheme was accepted by the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) as a pilot road user charging scheme in the late 1990s⁷.

The scheme was included within the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006, which contained the following statement “In partnership with the DETR, Peak District National Park Authority, Severn Trent Water and a number of other organisations, we are proposing to implement a pilot road user charging

¹ Peak District National Park - National Park Plan (March 1978), Peak Park Joint Planning Board.
² Partners included Severn Trent Water Authority, Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Derbyshire County Council, District Councils, Forestry Commission and the National Trust.
³ Peak National Park Plan – First Review (April 1989), Peak Park Joint Planning Board.
⁵ Current additional cost of enforcement is £2,500 per annum – 2006.
⁶ Split between the following – Severn Trent Water (£451,880), Peak District National Park Authority (£122,780), Other Contributors (£184,230).
scheme in the Upper Derwent Valley in order to address visitor congestion in the National Park.\textsuperscript{8} However the scheme met with some difficulties, with regard to providing an alternative means of access to the Upper Derwent to mitigate the road user charge. The second Derbyshire Local Transport Plan refers to the scheme in the following terms “The scheme, in the Upper Derwent Valley, comprised a variety of elements aimed at encouraging alternatives to the car. Access at the nearby Bamford railway station and bus turning point has been improved, linking passengers to buses running to the Upper Derwent Valley. New cycleways also improved access to this popular cycling destination. Unfortunately, the congestion charging scheme has been delayed due to the inability to secure land for the necessary park and ride facility. However, the necessary traffic regulation orders are about to be advertised. Despite reaching an advanced stage of negotiations with the landowner, Severn Trent, we were unable to secure a suitable site that could provide car parking and bus turnaround facilities. This park and ride alternative to the “congestion charge” for driving into the Upper Derwent Valley is essential to the overall success of the scheme. Beyond the LTP1 period, we are continuing to work with partners to seek a solution to these problems.\textsuperscript{9}"

Under the current Management Scheme, a clearway operates on Derwent Lane between the A57 and Fairholmes (with seasonal enforcement), with car parking provided for approximately 470 cars (including Fairholmes). Derwent Lane, north of Fairholmes is closed to traffic on Summer weekends and Bank Holidays, and Sundays in Winter (with exemptions for access & disabled). Derwent Lane, east of Fairholmes is closed to traffic at all times except for access & disabled). A coach ban exists on both the above roads beyond the Fairholmes roundabout. On days when Derwent Lane is closed north of Fairholmes, alternative access is provided by subsidised shuttle bus.

\textsuperscript{8} Derbyshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006, (2001), Derbyshire County Council
\textsuperscript{9} Derbyshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011, (2006), Derbyshire County Council