

**6. GREEN LANES IN THE PEAK DISTRICT (A7622/SAS)**

**Purpose of the report**

1. This report sets out details of the implementation of the Authority's strategy for the management of recreational motorised vehicles on unsealed highways and off-road (the Strategy) with an update on the progress in 2019/20 and action plans for green lanes, illegal use and communications for 2020/21.
2. The report also covers the approach agreed by Members last year to encourage wider engagement and understanding of green lanes and their special qualities. In this respect, Members are asked to consider the Strategy in the context of a broader recreational approach.
3. **Key issues include:**
  - The opportunities provided for recreational users and nearby communities
  - The importance of the heritage, nature and landscape value of green lanes
  - Impacts require management and a partnership approach
  - The Authority's statutory purposes and duty and its wider recreation policy.

**Recommendation**

4. **(i) That the report is noted**  
**(ii) That the requirement and scope of a follow-up report is considered in the context of a broader recreational review.**

**How does this contribute to policies and legal obligations?**

5. The work contributes to:
  - (i) Corporate Strategy 2019-24  
Outcome: A National Park loved and supported by diverse audiences  
Strategic interventions: Implement plans to increase public connection with the National park through the development of quality engagement opportunities that encourage responsible behaviours and by growing sustainable tourism products
  - (ii) National Park Management Plan 2018-23  
The relevant areas of impact are:
    - A National Park for everyone – relevant action is to overcome physical barriers to access
    - Encouraging enjoyment with understanding - relevant actions are: to balance opportunities for enjoyment with conserving a fragile environment; to ensure shared responsibility.
  - (iii) Strategy for the Management of Recreational Motorised Vehicles in their Use of Unsealed Highways and Off-road, and Procedure for Making Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), 2012.
  - (iv) Sections 5(1) and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPACA) 1949

**Background**

6. In February 2012, the Authority adopted its revised strategy for the management of recreational motorised vehicles in their use of unsealed highways and off-road (Minute 6/12). The Strategy sets out that actions for implementing this strategy will be defined and progress measured. As part of this, detailed action plans have been provided to this committee (formerly the Audit Resources and Performance Committee).

7. The aims of the Strategy are to work in accordance with statutory purposes and duties, in active partnership wherever possible, to protect the special qualities of the National Park which include its open landscapes, bio-diversity, cultural heritage and the settlements of its local communities. Where excessive or inappropriate use of mechanically propelled vehicles away from the ordinary road network threatens the existence, quality and/or enjoyment of those qualities and the sustainability of unsealed roads, the Authority will take appropriate action in line with the principles set out in the strategy.
8. In March 2019, Members considered green lane objectives and the positive promotion of green lanes as part of the annual action planning (Minute 15/19). This was based on the significance of routes for connecting; the access of today with discovering the use of the past, people and nature for enjoyment and understanding, communities to their wider area for the well-being of residents and visitors, and recreationally where part of a promoted trail or an integral link for wider access for enjoyment, escape, or adventure. Working in partnership, it includes:
  - 1) People Objectives - reducing the impact of use on local community; improving amenity and safety for route users; promoting responsible use; encouraging voluntary action; providing for exploration and escape; allowing for the enjoyment of nature.
  - 2) Route Objectives - improving the condition of the route; maintaining the character of the route; enhancing the heritage features of the route; clarifying legal status and/or the line of the route, removing barriers to accessibility; integrating with the access and rights of way network.
  - 3) Area Objectives - protecting the environment of the area, enhancing the biodiversity and wildlife connectivity of the route; minimising illegal use onto adjacent land; preventing deviation from the route.

### **Green Lanes**

9. Green lanes are routes which have or may have motorised vehicular rights in addition to other public rights, and which are not part of the normal road network. Their character varies according to their location and past and present use. Many also have important cultural and natural heritage features as well as being important for their history and biodiversity and can be significant landscape features.
10. Green lanes are an important part of the access network in the National Park. They are multi-user routes which, being tracks, can be particularly suitable for those with limited mobility. They support health and well-being, link communities, add to the bridleway network, are key routes to wider access, and provide for exploration and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park.
11. Since the adoption of the Strategy in 2012, significant progress has been made on managing recreational motorised vehicles on priority routes and dealing with illegal use to reduce impacts on the natural beauty and amenity of the National Park in accordance with our purposes, statutory obligations and the Strategy. In partnership, issues have been resolved through a combination of traffic regulation orders (TROs) to restrict recreational motorised vehicle use, voluntary restraint, route repairs, clarification of legal status, signage, and advisory and enforcement operations. For the Authority's TRO routes, surfacing improvements, improvements to structures, opportunities for dedicated disabled parking and supporting guided events have taken place in accordance with the Authority's ongoing duty under the Equality Act. This is in addition to the commitment under the exemptions within each TRO to provide access on application for disabled people who rely on road vehicles for access. A summary report of the seven routes where the Authority has made TROs is provided in Appendix 1.
12. Building on the work undertaken, partnerships developed, and knowledge gained, the following areas reflect the wider approach set out in the report considered by committee

last year in relation to the National Park's special qualities, the development of an inclusive and integrated network, the encouragement of enjoyment with understanding, the provision of access for all, and for the enhancement of routes and their environments through fostering respect and a shared responsibility.

13. **Miles without Stiles** - The Miles without Stiles easy access routes are informing the auditing of green lanes to identify barriers to access and for improvements where appropriate. Long Causeway on the North Lees Estate is being considered as a potential future Miles without Stiles route with advice and guidance being received from the Peak District Local Access Forum and Stanage Forum. Further routes and accessibility improvements are also being considered.
14. **Stay on track** – last year a campaign to keep vehicles to the tracks and for appropriate management to safeguard the verges was identified. This year it will be developed with the support of volunteers to include the identification and promotion of the conservation interest of verges and reinstatement works.
15. **Sharing the history** – this year we will be telling the story of the Peak District's packhorse trails. The Stanage Forum will be assisting at Long Causeway with a walk accessible to all proposed as part of the heritage open day planned for September 2020.
16. **#Peak District Proud** – the launch of this initiative and the social media campaign provides the opportunity for promoting responsibility on green lanes to support and revitalise the Green Lanes Code.

### **Progress 2019-20**

17. A progress report for the period March 2019 to May 2020 is provided in Appendix 2. This sets out the following actions:
  - Consultation and the making of a Traffic Regulation Order at Wetton Hills
  - Derbyshire County Council's consultations and the making of a TRO at Jacobs Ladder, Stoney Middleton
  - Permitting use for the Bemrose motorcycle trial at Washgate
  - Permitting use for cavers at Derby Lane
  - Derbyshire County Council repairs at Chapel Gate, Hurstclough Lane and Minninglow & Gallowlow Lanes
  - Facilitating voluntary restraint at Minninglow & Gallowlow Lanes
  - Staffordshire County Council repairs at Wetton Hills
  - Supporting volunteering at Washgate, Long Causeway and Rainow
  - Logging vehicle use and supporting police operations in the National Park
  - Identification of accessibility and access improvements.

### **Action Plans**

18. The Green Lanes Action Plan for the period May 2020 to April 2021 is provided in Appendix 3. This includes actions on green lanes throughout the National Park and sets out the following actions:
  - Interpretation, promotion, and celebration of green lanes
  - Surveying and auditing the network
  - Identification of accessible routes
  - Improvements to access
  - Verge protection and reinstatement
  - Identification of project funding
  - Supporting Highway Authority repairs
  - Supporting volunteer working parties

- Vehicle logging and monitoring on routes
  - Considering applications for TRO exemptions
  - Supporting voluntary restraint measures at Minninglow
  - Supporting Highway Authorities' clarification of legal status
  - Supporting police enforcement
19. The Illegal Use Action Plan identifies the actions to control illegal motorised vehicular use on routes which carry no vehicle rights, routes which are permanently restricted by way of traffic regulation orders, or on land adjacent to routes with vehicle access. All reports of alleged illegal use are investigated. On the routes where traffic regulation orders have been made, detailed monitoring is undertaken. This is set out in Appendix 1. The Illegal Use Action Plan for the period May 2020 to April 2021 is provided in Appendix 4. This sets out the following actions:
- Improvements for reporting of illegal use
  - Vehicle logging on routes
  - Identification of routes for police presence
  - Maintenance and replacement of signage
20. The Green Lanes Communications Action Plan for the period May 2020 to April 2021 is provided in Appendix 5. This details actions to promote support for green lanes. The plan identifies the roles and involvement of these different groups and the key messages. In implementing the Communications Action Plan, officers will:
- Support public involvement via the Peak District Local Access Forum
  - Interpret and promote green lanes' special characteristics to a wider audience
  - Celebrate green lanes at the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and other events
  - Liaise as appropriate with the Highway Authorities on signage, repairs and maintenance, clarification of legal status, and traffic regulation on priority routes and on other routes where issues have been identified, including those where illegal use is occurring
  - Work with the police on enforcement and education operations where illegal use is taking place
  - Liaise with landowners and communities
  - Maintain dialogue with local vehicle user groups
  - Participate in the national forum established by Defra
21. In line with government advice, the work programmes identified in the action plans will take account of Covid-19 implications. At this present time, the emphasis is not on promoting opportunities for access but on developing interpretation and understanding, alongside the support of communities for visitor/tourism provision. The impact of on-site virus mitigation measures on delivery of outcomes will be kept under review.

### **Summary**

22. The strategy for the management of recreational motorised vehicles emphasises the need to protect the special qualities of the National Park and that responsible and sustainable use and a partnership approach is inherent in doing this. The approach agreed last year takes forward the progress made on resolving issues on specific routes and proposes instilling inclusiveness, understanding and respect in line with a broader recreation approach.
23. The action plans aim to focus the officer resource, the involvement of partners, and to seek funding for the protection and enhancement of green lanes across the Peak District. Four main areas of work are identified to encourage wider engagement and understanding of green lanes and their special qualities.

## **Proposals**

24. The report be noted and the requirement and scope for a follow-up report be considered in the context of a broader recreational review.

### **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

25. **Financial**

In May 2016, Members supported an investment proposal framework which included adding £26k to the baseline budget to deliver the green lanes action plan. This funding relates to officer input to allow progress on the matters identified in the action plans. Any supplementary costs could relate to the scope, scale or mechanism of delivery and be subject to additional funding, including from external sources.

26. **Risk Management**

This report outlines the management proposals for the coming year in order to manage the risk to the Authority. The likelihood of reputational and financial damage to the Authority are considered to be medium (public reputation and possible legal challenge) and the impact of possible damage to the Authority is also medium. The overall risk as described in the risk scoring methodology is therefore assessed as Medium – ie ‘requires management effort to mitigate the risk’. Management actions are set out in the annual action plans which have been drafted within realistic parameters in terms of deliverability and the Strategy and Procedure which is grounded in respect of the Authority’s legal powers and abilities.

27. **Sustainability**

This report addresses sustainability issues in the context of both the National Park Management Plan and the Authority’s statutory purposes, duty and legal powers.

28. **Equality**

The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been met in the consideration of actions and the Authority will continue to have regard to its duties under the Act.

29. **Background papers:**

None.

30. **Appendices**

1. TRO Report 2020
2. Green Lanes Annual Report – 2019/20
3. Green Lanes Action Plan 2020/21
4. Illegal Use Action Plan 2020/21
5. Green Lanes Communication Action Plan 2020/21

### **Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

31. Sue Smith, Rights of Way Officer, 6 May 2020