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**9. FULL APPLICATION – A RESTORATION SCHEME FOR THE GREAT RIDGE COMPRISING THE LAYING OF FLAGSTONES, PITCHING AND AGGREGATE ALONG WITH ASSOCIATED GROUND PREPARATION, DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT AND LANDSCAPING AT HOLLINS CROSS, EDALE (NP/DDD/0420/0307 AM)**

**APPLICANT: MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP**

**Summary**

1. The application site is part of a popular unadopted footpath located on top of the “Great Ridge”, between Mam Tor and Losehill. The application covers the section between Hollins Cross and Back Tor. The path is within open access also designated as Natural Zone (Section 3 Moorland).
2. Sections of the footpath and adjacent vegetation have been eroded down to bedrock causing areas of bare and eroding soil. The application proposes to create a new pathway along the route and restore the adjacent land.
3. The development would result in enhancement to the landscape, local biodiversity and archaeology justifying development within the Natural Zone.
4. The development is in accordance with our policies and the application is recommended for approval subject to planning conditions.

**Site and Surroundings**

5. The application site is located on top of the great ridge, on the unadopted footpath between Hollins Cross and Back Tor. The site straddles the Edale and Castleton parish boundaries and is approximately 1.4km south east of Edale and 2km north west of Castleton.
6. The path is within open access also designated as Natural Zone (Section 3 Moorland).
7. The route is very popular with walkers and is heavily used. Sections of the footpath and adjacent vegetation have been eroded down to bedrock causing areas of bare and eroding soil.

**Proposal**

8. A footpath restoration scheme along the length of the application site from Hollins Cross to Back Tor. Engineering operations are proposed along the route of the footpath to create a more durable surface along with landscaping to restore the land either side of the footpath. The footpath would have a width of between 1m to 1.5m along the route
9. A variety of techniques would be used to surface the path. Stone flags would be used on inclined sections with stone pitching used for particularly steep sections. An aggregate surface would be laid along flatter sections.
10. Drainage across the path and drainage ditches to disperse drainage away from the path would be created along the length of the route where necessary. Revetment walls would be constructed where necessary to support the lower path edge or stabilise the slopes or banks adjacent to the route.
11. The land adjacent to the path would be re-vegetated using soil and turves excavated from path construction and drainage ditches.
12. A detailed set of drawings and specifications have been submitted showing the location and precise nature of the proposed works.

13. Natural gritstone will be sourced for the proposed works with any existing stone along the route incorporated into the construction. All materials will be flown into the site using helicopters from a lift site on fields near Dunscar Farm in Castleton (414086, 383051). The works will be done by hand. Some excavator work will be required with any excavator fitted with low pressure tracks and left on site to avoid unnecessary tracking to and from site. No fuel will be stored on site.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions or modifications.**

- 1. Three year time limit for implementation.**
- 2. In accordance with submitted plans and specifications.**
- 3. No development shall take place until a detailed timescale for construction and land restoration works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority. Thereafter no development shall take place other than in complete accordance with the approved timescales.**
- 4. No development shall take place until a written method statement for the protection and safeguarding of known heritage assets, and the preservation in situ of previously unknown archaeological remains and features, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority. Thereafter no development shall take place other than in complete accordance with the approved method statement.**
- 5. A. No development shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological monitoring and supervision has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and**
  - 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;**
  - 2. The programme and provision to be made for post investigation analysis and reporting;**
  - 3. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;**
  - 4. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;**
  - 5. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organization to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.****B. No development shall take place other than in accordance with the archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation approved under part A.**  
**C. Within a period of 12 weeks from completion of the development the archaeological site investigation and post investigation analysis and reporting shall have been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under part A and the provision to be made for publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition shall have been secured.**
- 6. Agree stone and aggregate samples prior to construction.**

### **Key Issues**

- Whether the proposed development is essential for the management of the natural zone.
- The impact of the proposed development upon the landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity of the National Park.

## **Relevant Planning History**

14. 2019: NP/HPK/1019/1169: Planning application for restoration scheme along two sections of the great ridge.
15. The application was withdrawn prior to determination on our advice so that a heritage statement could be prepared and so that the scheme could include an additional section of the route.

## **Consultations**

16. Edale Parish Council: Support application.
17. Castleton Parish Council: No response to date.
18. High Peak Borough Council: No response to date.
19. Highway Authority: Raise no objection in principle. Notes that the works are to an unadopted footpath but a number of footpaths are likely to be affected by the scheme. Therefore the Highway Authority recommends a planning condition to remind the applicant of the relevant legislation and applications required for works affecting a public right of way.
20. Natural England: No response to date.
21. PDNPA Archaeology: No objection subject to planning conditions and makes the following comment:  
  
There are a number of sites and features along the route of the Great Ridge footpath that are of archaeological and historic interest. The works proposed in this application will result in a more sustainable path, and in the long term it will make the surviving non-designated heritage assets less vulnerable to future erosion. This is welcomed.
22. In accordance with pre-application advice and discussions, the submitted heritage statement demonstrates that the possible impacts to heritage assets that could result from the footpath restoration works have been considered, and every attempt made to minimise or remove harm to heritage assets. The proposed methodology needs to be secured by planning condition.
23. In many places that path along the Great Ridge has already eroded to bedrock, so the works upgrade the route and infrastructure of the route itself are unlikely to result in harm to the archaeological interest of significance of the sites.
24. However, there are areas where ground disturbance are required for the creation of the path infrastructure (the path, water management features etc.) and in the associated landscaping works, and where the possibility that previously unknown and unrecorded remains and features of archaeological interest could be encountered. Should the works proceed these would then be damaged or destroyed, resulting in permanent harm to the archaeological interest of the sites.
25. The heritage statement makes provision for this possibility, with a commitment for archaeological monitoring throughout the project in order to ensure that any previously unknown or unrecorded archaeological features encountered are identified, and preserved in situ. This is welcomed. This also needs to be secured by planning condition.
26. PDNPA Ecology: No objection and makes the following comment:

28. Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) quality acid grassland is present immediately to the north of the proposed works. Measures should be taken to avoid damaging this habitat, for example, machinery could work from the south side along with storing materials on this side.
29. Borrowing of turfs should also be restricted to the south, where there is limited interest (it is noted that measures are included in the spec to avoid damage when sourcing turfs). If the works are not to be undertaken in autumn then measures would need to be put in place to maximise turf re-establishment (i.e. measures for watering).
30. PDNPA Landscape: Supports the application.

### **Representations**

31. Two letters have been received to date from the Friends of the Peak District and the British Mountaineering Council. The letters are in support of the application and make the following comments:
  - The Great Ridge is a high profile and extremely popular route in the Dark Peak. In many places the path is steep, worn and eroding, with loss of vegetation and soil, and can be seen as a visible scar in the landscape.
  - Repairs would enhance the amenity and the aesthetics of the route, and create a sustainable surface suitable for all levels of use. The restoration would be consistent with the upland landscape and the materials would be consistent with the local geology. However, the detailed works will need to be agreed with relevant bodies, including the landscape team at the PDNPA, Natural England and affected landowners.
  - The proposal meets all the relevant policies. The scheme aims to conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the area, which lies in the Natural Zone, by reducing the impact that erosion is having on the path and its surrounds – Core Strategy Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1 and DMP policies DM1, DMC, DMC2, DMC3 and DMC11. It would also improve recreation facilities (Core Strategy Policy RT1).
  - The proposed scheme of work, materials and techniques to be used, as detailed in this application, are entirely suitable for the location and the nature of this particular path. We believe this work will lead a more sustainable and safe surface to traverse that will lead to fewer walkers straying off the path thereby allowing surrounding areas of presently damaged vegetation to recover and so lead to the path becoming a much reduced visual intrusion when viewed from afar.

### **Main Policies**

32. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, L2, L3, CC1
33. Relevant Development Management Plan policies: DM1, DMC1, DMC2, DMC3, DMC5, DMC11 and DMT5

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

34. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales: Which are; to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public. When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to; seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Parks.

35. The latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 19 February 2019. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and policies of the Development Management Policies document 2019. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application.
36. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF. Our development plan policies should therefore be afforded full weight in the determination of this application.
37. Paragraph 172 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage should also be given great weight in National Parks.

#### Core Strategy policies

38. GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving our objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle. GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential.
39. GSP2 states that opportunities for enhancing the National Park will be identified and acted upon. Proposals must demonstrate that they offer significant overall benefit to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area and must not undermine the achievement of other core policies. When development is permitted a design will be sought that respects the character of the area along with appropriate landscaping.
40. GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
41. L1 states that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan and other valued characteristics. Development will not be permitted in the Natural Zone other than in exceptional circumstances.
42. L2 and L3 state that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance biodiversity and cultural heritage unless there are exceptional circumstances.

#### Development Management policies

43. DMC2 A. states that the exceptional circumstances in which development is permissible in the natural zone are those in which a suitable, more acceptable location cannot be found elsewhere and the development is essential for the management of the natural zone or for the conservation or enhancement of the National Park's valued characteristics.
44. DMC2 B. states that development that would serve only to make land management or access easier will not be regarded as essential.
45. DMC3 sets out that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including

the wildlife and cultural heritage assets. Particular attention will be paid to siting, scale, form, mass, landscape setting and the valued character and appearance of the area.

46. DMC5 A. says that applications for development affecting a heritage asset must clearly demonstrate its significance including how any features of value will be conserved and where possible enhanced and why the proposed development is desirable or necessary.
47. DMC5 B. says proposals likely to affect heritage assets with archaeological and potential archaeological interest should be supported by appropriate information that identifies the impacts or a programme of archaeological works to a methodology approved by the Authority.
48. DMC5 F. says that development will not be permitted if it would result in any harm to or loss of significance unless the development is considered by the Authority to be acceptable following a balanced judgement that takes into account the significance of the heritage asset.
49. DMC11 requires development to achieve net gains to biodiversity and geodiversity and requires applications to include details of safeguards and enhancement measures for a site, feature or species of nature conservation importance which could be affected by the development.
50. DMT5 A. says that where a development affects the route of a public right of way the definitive line of the right of way should be retained unless there are exceptional circumstances. DMT5 D. says that the development of new routes for walking will be supported provided that they conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the area.

## **Assessment**

### Principle

51. The application site includes a stretch of the unadopted footpath along the Great Ridge that forms part of a very popular walking route for the general public. The proposed development aims to restore sections of the path that has deteriorated such that continued use is adversely affecting the adjacent land and in places resulted in severe erosion of vegetation and soil.
52. The scheme is being delivered as part of the ‘Mend Our Mountains Campaign’, led nationally by the BMC and being undertaken by the Moors for the Future Partnership on this site. The proposed development has been developed in consultation with Authority officers.
53. The application site is located in natural zone where policies L1 and DMC2 do not permit any development unless there are exceptional circumstances. In this case it is clear that on-going use of the route is causing significant erosion that is continuing to harm the scenic beauty of the landscape and local biodiversity and has the potential to harm local archaeology.
54. Therefore in principle a scheme to restore and reinstate the degraded areas and limiting use to a well-defined pathway would secure significant enhancement of the National Park’s valued characteristics. Therefore in principle the proposed development is in accordance with our policies.
55. The key issues therefore are considered to be whether the scheme can be carried out in a manner that conserves local biodiversity and archaeological interest and whether the proposed design and construction is appropriate.

### Impact of development

56. A variety of construction techniques would be utilised to create a pathway between 1m and 1.5m wide. The steeper sections of the route would be surfaced with flagstones and stone pitching. Stone pitching involves interlocking large stones with their flattest side up to create

small irregular steps. The flatter sections of the route would be surfaced with gritstone aggregate with the surface graded from 25mm to dust.

57. There is some concern about the use of flagstones which can give an urbanising appearance to the countryside. However, we are satisfied that the use of these has been limited to the steeper sections where neither an aggregate surface or stone pitching would be appropriate. The use of natural gritstone for all surfacing is welcomed and appropriate in this landscape, subject to a planning condition to agree samples of the proposed stone and aggregate.
58. The proposed drainage works have been designed to be well integrated into the pathway and will act to minimise water run-off from the path and erosion.
59. Soil and turves excavated from path or drainage construction would be used to revegetate areas adjacent to the new path and the eroded areas. If any additional turves are required these would be cut from areas that are not of ecological or archaeological significance. A detailed methodology has been provided and demonstrates that the restoration works will be carried out in a manner that enhances the valued characteristics of the area.
60. All construction materials will be flown onto the site using helicopters from a site near Castleton. This site is improved grassland and therefore there are no objections to its use to temporarily store construction materials. It is anticipated that it will take 16 days for the helicopter to lift all materials to site.
61. Construction and restoration works will be carried out by hand but some excavator work will be required. This machinery will be tracked to the site by the most accessible route and avoiding ecological and archaeologically sensitive areas. The excavator will be fitted with low pressure tracks and left on site during construction to avoid unnecessary damage. No fuel will be stored on site.
62. A detailed construction methodology has been provided and demonstrates that the construction works can be carried out without harm to the site, nearby biodiversity and archaeological interest and access routes.
63. There are a number of sites and features along the route that are of archaeological and historic interest. These include the site of a possible damaged bronze age barrow immediately adjacent to where the proposed works start at Hollins Cross, a drystone wall along the length of the route recorded as having medieval origins, fossilising the line of the former forest wall that enclosed an area of the royal hunting forest, bronze age finds on Back Tor and potential find spots of pre-historic flint tools along the route.
64. The application is supported by a heritage statement in accordance with the requirements of policy DMC5 and the NPPF. This demonstrates that the possible impacts to the archaeological assets have been considered and minimised by minimising ground disturbance in sensitive areas, using construction methods to avoid ground disturbance, reducing use of a mechanical extractor as far as possible, marking out sensitive areas and careful consideration of access routes.
65. The approach to identify archaeological sensitive areas and tailor construction to mitigate impacts is welcomed. In accordance with advice from our Senior Archaeologist we recommend that if permission is granted that a planning condition is imposed to ensure that these mitigation works are implemented.
66. There are areas where ground disturbance are required for the creation of the path infrastructure and the associated landscaping works, and where the possibility that previously unknown and unrecorded remains and features of archaeological interest could be encountered. Should the works proceed these would then be damaged or destroyed, resulting in permanent harm to the archaeological interest of the sites.

67. The heritage statement makes provision for this possibility, with a commitment for archaeological monitoring throughout the project in order to ensure that any previously unknown or unrecorded archaeological features encountered are identified, and preserved in situ. If permission is granted we would recommend a planning condition to secure the proposed archaeological monitoring in accordance with policies L3 and DMC5.
68. We are therefore satisfied that subject to conditions that the works would enhance the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the National Park and demonstrates the exceptional circumstances required to allow development within the natural zone. If permission is granted we would recommend a condition requiring the timescale of construction and restoration works to be submitted and approved to ensure that restoration works are fully completed.
69. There are limited energy and water saving measures that can be incorporated into the development. However, the development would utilise existing stone, turves and soil. The source of new gritstone is important from a geological and wider sustainability perspective. A condition requiring samples of the stone has been recommended and the suitability of the source can be considered at that time. The proposed use of a helicopter for delivery is carbon intensive, however, given the remote nature of the site and potential damage that deliveries could cause, it is considered to be the only viable option.
70. Given the distance from neighbouring properties, the proposed restoration works will not result in any harm to the amenity, security or privacy of neighbouring properties.
71. We agree with the Highway Authority that there are no objections on the grounds of highway safety. The proposed development will not require the permanent closure or re-routing of any footpaths but construction works may have the potential to temporarily affect rights of way adjacent to the site. We recommend that a footnote is added to any planning permission to inform the applicant of the relevant legislation and relevant contact details.

## Conclusion

72. The submitted application has demonstrated that the proposed development is required to achieve significant enhancement to the valued characteristics of the National Park. We therefore consider that there are exceptional circumstances to justify development in the Natural Zone.
73. The proposed design and construction materials are appropriate in this setting and together with the proposed restoration works will result in an enhancement to the landscape. The application has also demonstrated that subject to conditions that the works can be carried out without harm to local biodiversity or archaeology.
74. Therefore having taken into account all matters raised we consider that the development is in accordance with the development plan. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to planning conditions.

## Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

## List of Background Papers (not previously published)

None

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