

Park bosses set out case versus rail line

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The Peak District National Park Authority has issued a new response to groups proposing the restoration of a railway line from Derby to Manchester along the hugely popular Monsal Trail.

Organisations including Manchester & East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP) have developed proposals to reinstate the former Midland Mainline.

Rebranded as the 'Peaks and Dales Railway', the line would cross the Peak District via Matlock, Rowsley, Bakewell and Millers Dale, and MEMRAP has been campaigning to build support for the idea and tie it to the Gov-



Chee Tor tunnel on was previously part of the railway route which is now line is now used by hundreds of thousands of walkers and cyclists each year.

Last week, a spokesman for the Peak District National

Authority said: "The authority is totally committed to a low-carbon and sustainable future for travel and access for all to the national park.

"However, we do not accept that the reinstatement of the railway on the route of the Monsal Trail is part of the solution."

In an effort to explain its position, the authority has outlined two tests which any proposed line would have to meet in order to outweigh the significant benefits of protecting the route for leisure use, landscape character and biodiversity.

The first test is whether the line would meet identifiable strategic needs in the national interest.

This is important because of the principle of consider-

ing major development in the national park and the specific impact on the Natural Zone, which has the highest level of protection in the park, characterised as the wilder parts of the landscape.

The second test concerns impact and whether an equally convenient and acceptable provision of the Monsal Trail could be provided elsewhere that is of a similar quality and without having an unacceptable impact on the landscape and environment.

The park spokesman said: "The authority has worked with MEMRAP to understand if their current proposal can pass these tests, however to date we have not received anything to indicate the tests can, or have, been overcome by their work."