

Washgate – Conservation Interest

Ecological interest

A short section of the route abuts onto the southern block of Colshaw Pastures SSSI and Section 3 Semi-natural Woodland/Natural Zone.

The Colshaw Pastures SSSI was designated for its species-rich unimproved grassland and flushed areas.

The Natural Zone designation comprises habitats falling within the Section 3 map defined by the Wildlife and Countryside Amendment Act 1985 as areas whose natural beauty it is particularly important to conserve.

The lane is bordered by a wide range of acid and neutral grassland, heathland, wet flush, scrub and broad-leaved woodland communities, the majority of which are high quality biodiversity habitats. The woodland community comprising bird cherry, eared willow, grey willow, hybrid willows and alder is uncommon in the Peak District. The species rich acid and neutral grasslands are considered to be the highest category in the Peak District. A significant proportion of the adjacent land is managed in Higher Level Stewardship Scheme agreements in recognition of its high environmental quality and the opportunities for positive conservation management.

Locally the verges of the lane support exceptionally high quality grasslands and heathland of importance for biodiversity but also to the visitor experience. Over 80 species have been recorded along the route including Sheep's bit, a Derbyshire Red Data Book plant owing to its rarity and declining population. Managed by only very light and erratic grazing the verges support habitat types and structures that are subtly different to the adjacent farmland and woodland. They therefore add to the complex mosaic of habitats in the area which anecdotally support a very diverse bird and invertebrate fauna. In addition whilst the verges are of value in their own right they also act as a wildlife corridor linking adjacent habitats and sites.

Archaeological Interest

The route runs through a range of Historic Landscape Character areas - Post-1650 Enclosure; regular:Piecemeal/Award; Enclosure of unknown date irregular fields - and is considered to be post-medieval origin.

The packhorse bridge is grade II listed and is identified on the Derbyshire Historic Environment Record (HER) as a heritage asset of local and regional importance whose conservation contributes to the overall cultural heritage of the NP. Also registered on the Derbyshire HER is the location of a former sheepwash and yard area known as Washgates.

Landscape Interest

Washgate lies within the National Park and the South-west Peak Landscape Character Area and adjacent to the Natural Zone.

The National Park is designated for its internationally and nationally important landscape.

The Natural Zone designation comprises areas whose natural beauty it is particularly important to conserve. Within the National Park it comprises the wilderness areas in which the influence of man and of development is less marked.

The overall strategy for the South-west Peak LCA is to protect and manage the distinctive historic character of the landscapes through sustainable landscape management, and seek opportunities to value the diverse landscapes of the South west Peak whilst managing recreation opportunities, woodlands, wildness and the diversity of remoter areas.