

# Peak District Local Access Forum

**Date:** 14 June 2023

**Item:** 5

**Title:** Access for All

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## **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the access for all programme.

## **Background**

In November 2022, the Peak District National Park received £131k of capital funding for infrastructure improvements to make Protected Landscapes more accessible for people of all ages and abilities and from all socio-economic backgrounds, to make them what Glover called, 'places for everyone.'

No funding is available in Year 2 (this current year) of the programme. Further funding will be received in Year 3.

## **Defra Access Funding**

The Year 1 funding was required to be spent by the end of March 2023. This was met by developing facilities at key locations, improving online information, creating and enhancing Miles without Stiles routes, and increasing the number of people participating to meet our ambition (Appendix 1). Monthly updates are attached in Appendix 2. The [Programme and Resources Committee report](#) sets out the details of our delivery. This is summarised as:

- Creating 5.6 km of accessible paths through resurfacing, widening, ramping and installing or removing gates
- Promoting Miles without Stiles routes as being truly inclusive and developing an in-house system for route videos
- Mapping and guides for new Sensory Trails so that everyone slows down to connect with nature
- New welcoming signage and symbols to provide at a glance information
- Undertaking an audit for Accessible Castleton as an accessible village
- Acquiring 6 trampers, an electric wheelchair, and a trike and providing 5 all-terrain wheelchairs free to borrow so no one feels excluded.

## **An Accessible Place**

Accessible Castleton develops a template for accessibility at a large site, in this case a village which is already a popular destination. This builds on the provision of accessible routes by working with businesses to compile a catalogue of information, producing a visitor guide for the visitor centre, providing a sensory story and itineraries, and, in conjunction with Visit Peak District, providing accessibility training for businesses.

## **Recommendation**

- 1. That the report is noted.**

## **Appendix 1 - Ambition**

### **An Accessible Peak District**

The Peak District National Park covers an area of over 555sq km at the heart of the nation. It is one of the most popular, accessible and well-known areas in England with over 12 million leisure visits a year. The National Park is surrounded by major conurbations and provides a vital and tranquil space for physical and mental health and wellbeing and for adventure.

Access to the Peak District National Park is rooted in the first access campaigns which culminated in the Peak District becoming the first National Park in the UK in 1951. A third of the Peak District National Park is open access land with 1,300 miles of rights of way and a network of 20 Miles without Stiles routes with 20 more planned. Former railway tracks provide for leisurely walks and family bike rides on 65 miles of scenic traffic-free trails. We operate cycle and tramper hire facilities at a number of locations and have estates, woodlands, and a campsite.

Accessibility is at the heart of our work. We work closely with disabled user groups and through the Accessible Peak District working group for partner sites and have received awards for our accessibility work. The Miles without Stiles routes are very popular, with 1 in 12 visits to the website. Sale proceeds from the Miles without Stiles handbooks, sponsored by Yorkshire Water, go into the Authority's Access Fund for route maintenance and development.

Our ambition is to develop and promote accessibility hubs across the Peak District National Park to provide a range of routes and experiences in proximity to populations and with the supporting infrastructure and facilities for disability access needs. Access to the hubs would be enabled by links to public transport and dedicated disabled parking and access within the hubs would be facilitated by a range of equipment, information, and signage.

### **Overview – Year 1**

The improvements provided through this funding are helping to increase the number and length of Miles without Stiles routes in the National Park. These routes are suitable for wheelchair users, pushchair users, anyone with mobility issues, and are truly inclusive. Three of these routes are in proximity to the conurbation of Sheffield to widen participation and encourage exploration of the National Park on the doorstep. There have been two interviews with Radio Sheffield, one being with Accessible UK which emphasised how important these routes are for access to nature and for well-being. A further interview is scheduled for later in the year.

The path works on these and other routes have included re-surfacing, widening, creating a ramp in place of steps, improving camber, and re-locating and creating hardstanding at seating. Gates have been removed, replaced, or installed, with new fittings to make them easier to open.

A new video and the development of an in-house system for filming Miles without Stiles routes will help build confidence in visiting and enjoying the beauty of these places. The videos accompany the clear mapping, concise directions and grading of these routes, to help assess suitability, provide familiarity, and to enjoy again places once visited. A staff event to showcase this was held in April 2023.

The funding has provided a template for developing Castleton as the National Park's first accessible village. This includes auditing and supporting businesses, and for an access guide, sensory story, and itineraries. The Local Access Forum will be considering what makes an Accessible Place at their meeting in June 2023.

The multi-user former railways have been made more welcoming with signage, shelters, route widening, the creation of ramps, and removal of gates. A connection with nature is provided by new Sensory Trails.

The acquisition of six trampers has expanded the number of sites available for hire. The branding encourages connections with the landscape and its special places. An electric wheelchair bike and a trike provide for all abilities at our bike hire sites. The new all-terrain wheelchairs are free to borrow so that no one is excluded.

## Appendix 2 – Monthly updates

### Monthly Updates

January 2023

#### More Miles



Continuing the success of our accessible hard surfaced and stile-free paths, works have been completed over the winter for two more Miles without Stiles. More works are currently underway for new and extended routes.

Accompanying films and route videos are in production, and new sensory trails available in time for Spring will make the routes even easier to enjoy.

#### More Places



Work is underway on an accessibility guide for Castleton. Working with businesses and Visit Peak District and Derbyshire, it will help to remove barriers to access.

### More Mobility



Since November, six new all-terrain trampers have been acquired for the Peak District National Park's cycle hire and visitor centres. New inclusive cycles will also be coming soon. Improved signage, shelters, and route improvements will make it even easier to explore. All with a welcoming smile.

February 2023

### More Miles



Four path surfacing projects were completed in February 2023.

These extend an existing Miles without Stiles route on the moorland fringe above Sheffield, follow the start of a historic packhorse route, allow for a Surprise View over the Hope Valley, and widen a section of the Tissington Trail.

### More Places



Sensory Trails have been provided along our Miles without Stiles, so that everyone can take time to connect with nature at [www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/sensory](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/sensory).

A Sensory Story and visitor information is being developed for Accessible Castleton.

#### More Mobility



Peak District Trampers will take you to places where you will want to go. Some of the most iconic places of the Peak District are shown on our new trampers.

March 2023

#### More Miles



Improving or removing gates improves accessibility for the benefit of all users.

New route videos complement the clear mapping and directions of our Miles without Stiles routes.

#### More Places



New signage provides a welcome for everyone.



An accessible shelter has been provided mid-way between the two cycle and tramper hire centres on the Tissington Trail.

More Mobility



More equipment for exploring. All-terrain wheelchairs are free to borrow so that everyone can enjoy the National Park.