

Notes from the Peak District Local Access Forum Sub-Group Meeting with Derbyshire County Council Rights of Way – held over MS Teams on Monday 20 May 2024

Present: PDLAF (Louise Hawson, Martin Bennett, Charlotte Gilbert, Nick Doran and Paul Richardson); PDNPA (Mike Rhodes and Sue Smith) and DCC (Rob Greatorex, Steve Hollinworth and Gill Millward)

The aim of the meeting was to:-

- 1) Look at the programme of public rights of way repairs proposed for 2024/25.
- 2) Provide LAF input on any issues, challenges or specific concerns.
- 3) Provide feedback on the work completed in previous years.
- 4) Look at how the LAF can help DCC improve its communication with users and stakeholders around repairs and maintenance of public rights of way.
- 5) Any Other Business.

1) 2024/25 Programme

DCC shared the list of rights of way schemes which has been approved for funding from the Highways Capital Programme in 2024/25.

The list is available on the County Council's website here:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/transport-roads/roads-traffic/road-maintenance/road-improvements/2024-to-2025-highways-capital-programme-delivery-plan.pdf>

It includes a number of routes which the Peak District LAF has been following with particular interest, such as Derby Lane at Monyash and Chapel Gate on Rushup Edge. There is also funding for further roadside signposting, as well as emergency schemes ie small scale works which typically include repairs to steps, potholes and damage caused by wash-out. This will, for example, be used to fund further work on Long Causeway. PR asked if this and any other routes could be named on the published list for emergency schemes, so people were aware of any forthcoming work. RG said that this may not always be possible as these repairs were fairly minor and often carried out at short notice so paths could be made safe and did not usually involve any public consultation.

The need for works teams to prioritise repairs on Derbyshire's roads has resulted in a backlog of rights of way schemes which received funding in previous years but have yet to be delivered on the ground. The list referred to above is currently open to review while discussions take place about which new schemes will remain on it and which outstanding schemes will be carried forward from previous years to come up with a realistic programme of work for delivery in 2024/25. **ACTION: RG will let both LAFs know once the list has been finalised.**

The Sub-Group discussed several other routes on the list, including Hartington Upper Quarter Footpath 133 over Shining Tor, Outseats Footpath 38 (Baulk Lane) and Holmesfield Bridleway 60 (Moss Road). MR mentioned that there was sensitive habitat in the vicinity of Moss Road and advised DCC to speak to the landowner.

RG said that it was unlikely that DCC will return to Chapel Gate this year, but there were some other routes which did need to be finished eg the stone pitching on Edale Bridleway 19 (Jacob's Ladder section of the Pennine Way) which was due to start in Autumn 2024.

2) Provide LAF input on any issues, challenges or specific concerns

Whilst there were no other immediate comments on the 2024/25 programme, several members of the Sub-Group would like to have a closer look at the list of schemes and provide DCC with comments on any issues, challenges or specific concerns and where a joint site visit might be appropriate. **ACTION: Comments to be forwarded as soon as possible.**

As far as previously funded schemes were concerned, it was agreed that once there was more certainty about the timing of the repairs for Little Longstone Footpath 12, it would be useful to arrange a site visit with LAF members, DCC and PDNPA officers. This was probably one of the busiest paths in Derbyshire which is used to access the Monsal Trail from the car park at Monsal Head. Apart from the problem with steep, slippery and uneven steps, there were also definitive mapping issues – the path is not on its legal line and possibly has bridleway rights. It was also suggested that the deferred scheme for Bridleway 32 at Hope Cross could be worth a site visit to explore the options for this deeply rutted and very stony track. NB from the notes of the previous Sub-Group meeting on 18 May 2023, another scheme where a site visit might be useful is for Youlgrave BW10, Coalpit Lane. **ACTION: Site visits to be arranged in due course.**

3) Provide feedback on the work completed in 2022/23 and 2023/24

- Ballidon BOAT 11 - MB mentioned that the surface was very soft and vehicles were starting to have an impact.
- Roadside signposting - MB reported that the blades had disappeared off several new signposts and wondered if anything could be done to make the bolts more tamperproof and/or the theft warning stickers put up. MB confirmed that the signs in questions had all been reported and **RG said that DCC would look into this.**
- Bamford Clough – DCC still needed to finalise a report on the public consultation which had taken place quite a while ago and would be available for further scrutiny. CG said that the route was unusable, especially for horse riders and it would be nice to have it back eventually. RG mentioned that the barriers at either end keep getting taken down and asked if LAF members

could help reinforce the message that the route remains closed on safety grounds.

- Rowland Restricted Byway 6 (Wigley Lane) – it was reported that there is illegal use taking place, mainly by motorcyclists, including during the night. Local residents had set up an Action Group. RG said that the RoW team had not been made aware of the latest issues but that they needed to be reported to the Police. It was very difficult to try and prevent use by motorcycles and signs had been frequently removed in the past. MB suggested that most people weren't aware of who can use a Restricted Byway and **RG agreed to review signage to see if it could be improved/ made clearer.**
- Chapel Gate – although DCC is unlikely to carry out any further work on this route in 2024/25, CG reported that a lot of the finer binding material has been washed out leaving larger, loose stones which are not easy for horses to negotiate. It was vital to provide effective drainage and build in resilience to help prevent catastrophic water damage.
- Hollowford Road and Pin Dale, Castleton – again there has been wash out on both these routes. A pipe was put in on Hollowford Road to convey water to a pond further downhill, but it is difficult to drain the route effectively as it is a hollow way and therefore acts as a conduit. In these situations, it is often only possible to be reactive and return to top-up the surface. It was agreed that these issues were only going to get worse as we experience periods of more prolonged and intense rainfall. **LH suggested that flood alleviation and drainage methods to deal effectively with water run-off would be a good topic for the LAF to explore at a future meeting.**
- Long Causeway – this route has been affected by repeated wash-out and needs a landscape-wide solution, working in partnership with adjacent landowners on identifying areas where water can be stored. Because some of the older drainage channels associated with Long Causeway are now blocked and have become valuable wildlife habitats, Natural England (NE) is reluctant to give consent for these to be cleared out, so water is continuing to seep onto the track. NE is being helpful in trying to find a solution – there needs to be a balance between conservation and having a good track for people to use. Capturing water in some attenuation ponds before it reaches the route could be effective. PDNPA will return to site after the bird nesting season to carry out surveys and design a scheme for further drainage work before seeking consent from NE.
- DCC Policy on Use of Tarmac - it was the LAF's view that in rural situations it was inappropriate to tarmac routes which as a result became more road-like and could attract large numbers of vehicles. Whilst BOATs can be legally used by vehicles, they are principally routes for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. RG said that DCC does try to minimise the use of tarmac. The following were cited by CG as examples where tarmac had/was being used:-

- Bamford Clough (BOAT 17) had been provided with a very smooth tarmac surface on a steep hillside. It was accepted that it was not the right choice of material and lessons had been learnt from this. DCC is trying to address the situation and make this a useable route.
- Back Lane, Two Dales (Darley Dale BOAT 58 and 66) had been surfaced with tarmac with a central section left in an aggregate material for horse riders to use. This had unfortunately been washed out forcing riders onto the steep, slippery tarmac. RG reported that once the water issue is resolved, the central strip will be reinstated.
- A steep section of Old Road (including Buxton BOAT 28) between Buxton and Whaley Bridge was out of repair. As part of the Safer Roads Fund Programme this had been identified as an alternative route for cyclists to avoid the A5004 (Long Hill) where accident statistics were fairly high. Following consultation with users, including LAF members, work is currently underway on site to tarmac this section and provide a central grass strip for horse riders.
- Shallcross Incline, Whaley Bridge has been surfaced with a porous paving material (Flexipave) which has been very well received by users, especially horse riders and is also comfortable for walkers. The Incline has an average gradient of 1 in 10 and previous semi-bound surfaces had been constantly eroded or completely washed out. Pricewise it works out slightly more expensive than tarmac. LAF members asked about its use on a floodplain and what would happen if it was inundated with water, would it wash away in this situation? DCC had very limited experience of this product so far with Shallcross being one of the first schemes where it had been used. It was being considered for other schemes, such as the Little Eaton Greenway and the PDNPA was exploring its use from the accessibility perspective. It has been used for longer by other authorities, including Sheffield City (Sam Beaton), on bridleways in Stockport and Barnsley, as well as sections of the Trans Pennine Trail. GM agreed that more research was needed into the use of different surfacing materials. As with any surface/drainage infrastructure it was essential to undertake preventative maintenance in order to protect the asset going forward. There was also a question about the carbon footprint of Flexipave and GM explained that it was a mixture of virgin stone and recycled car tyres. The question of whether recycled material could be used to replace the stone had been raised with the company which produces it. In terms of on-going maintenance, the need to keep the surface clear of leaf litter and fine material like silt which could potentially reduce its porosity was mentioned.
- This prompted a discussion about the role that volunteers can play in the on-going maintenance of routes eg in helping to keep drains clear, cutting back vegetation and brushing up leaves or other detritus which has accumulated on the surface. There had been various schemes over the years to recruit Parish Path Wardens or for different organisations/ voluntary groups to adopt paths

and carry out extra, preventative maintenance. Whilst some of these still continue in a fashion eg through PDNPA/ Peak Park Conservation Volunteers and in theory are a great idea, in practice they require considerable staffing resources to supervise and can be a lot of effort for not a lot of reward. GM mentioned the Service Level Agreement which DCC has with Groundwork to supervise/ facilitate volunteers working on paths and trails across the County. Both Rights of Way and the Countryside Service would like to do more to support volunteers, but existing staff are at full capacity. MB felt that authorities shouldn't rely on volunteers for routine maintenance, but they should be more involved in providing added value/ enhancements eg replacing stiles with gates to improve accessibility.

5) Communication with Users and Stakeholders

MB reported that from his experience, Derbyshire's PRow network is in a very good condition compared to a lot of other areas in England and Wales. In terms of how the LAF can help with the two-way flow of information about Rights of Way repairs which are being planned by DCC, members can help pass on messages about routes which are going to be closed while the work is taking place through their networking contacts. Horse riding groups were already forwarding the information which DCC puts out through facebook and its twitter account. **RG will also talk to the Comms team about publicity for more of the schemes which are coming up.** A continuous dialogue with the LAF is really helpful in terms of providing input on the detail of the schemes themselves, drawing on the extensive pool of knowledge and appreciation of the needs of different user groups, as well as from the landowner's perspective. As far as getting information out to more people is concerned, a lot of the information is already there on the website eg for temporary closures with notices placed on site about a month in advance. MB praised the increasing amount of information that is available on the Derbyshire Mapping Portal, including signposts that are due to be installed and those routes affected by permanent Traffic Regulation Orders. RG mentioned that it was also intended to indicate those paths where it is planned to cut back vegetation by DCC and Parish/ Town Councils. It might also be possible to find some way of indicating which paths are affected by temporary closures.

6) Any Other Business

It had been agreed that DCC Rights of Way repairs would be an item on the agenda for the next LAF meeting. This would be discussed further at the agenda setting meeting on 21 May so RG could have the heads up about what to include in his presentation. RG indicated that he should be available to attend the main LAF meeting on 12 June, but also mentioned that he was moving to a different role within the Authority. As Senior Project Engineer for Highway Inspections, he would no longer be managing the Rights of Way team on a day-to-day basis.