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Peak District
Green Lanes Alliance

January 2016 Newsletter

Grassy routes in Winter and the Inadequacy of Voluntary Restraint

Facilitating voluntary restraint on Minninglow Lane, Ballidon and Brassington, and School Lane, Great Hucklow, were action points in PDNPA's Green Lanes Action Plan 2015/2016.



The LARA notice on Minninglow Lane

The LARA (Land Access Recreation Association - which is an organisation representing recreational motor vehicle users) website describes what they understand by voluntary restraint at <http://www.laragb.org/pages/vr.html> Their scheme is vehicle user led; operated for the minimum period of time; and is designed to deal with problems as they arise, not to preempt potential problems. Erection of the notices (such as the one shown on the left) should be agreed with the Highway Authority.

There are two voluntary restraints operational in the Peak District at present, both on grassy routes that are vulnerable to damage in wet conditions. Whilst better than nothing, they don't really deal with the problems at source by preventing the routes getting damaged in the Autumn. It is not until the damage occurs, that voluntary restraint comes into operation.

Minninglow Lane

Part of Minninglow Lane is one of the few grassy "green lanes" in the Peak District National Park. The most vulnerable section is east of the High Peak Trail (SK 205572) to the old farm buildings at about SK217565. This section is rutted and water logged every winter as shown in the pictures on the next page. So winter damage is foreseeable and it is desirable that any measures should start in the Autumn to keep the route usable by cyclists and horse riders (who are more affected by ruts and mud than walkers) in the winter.



March 2011: Photograph taken during a previous period of voluntary restraint. Note the fresh tyre marks!



January 2012



February 2013



January 2014



March 2015

It seems obvious to us that something permanent needs to be done to prevent Minninglow Lane reaching this state every winter. Both Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and PDNPA, who are in a position to take action, should be aware of the winter problems on this route.

We've been told that this voluntary restraint was brought in unilaterally by the off-roaders without consulting DCC or PDNPA (in spite of what the notices say.) The

notices say that it will last until 1 May but off-roader websites state it will be removed as soon as possible.

Whilst better than nothing, we believe that this voluntary restraint, which came into operation on 19 December 2015, was far too late to be effective as these pairs of pictures demonstrate. Even in October 2015 the condition of the route was not good. (The pictures were taken in October because most seasonal TRO's elsewhere begin on 1 October to reduce deterioration during the winter from recreational vehicle use.)



October 2015: Already showing visible signs of deterioration.



17 December 2015: 2 days before the voluntary restraint came in



October 2015



17 December 2015



October 2015



17 December 2015



17 December 2015: Even when they dry out, ruts of this depth are going to be a hazard to non vehicle users

which put the engines under so much load and slowed the bikes down 😞
Please, dear reader, do not ride Minninglow until we take the signs down 😊“

And it's not only walkers, cyclists and horse riders who would have had problems on Minninglow Lane as it was in December. Here's an unedited comment from the TRF forum from a motor cyclist:

“The VR signs are up on Minninglow now, it really was deep ruts and water, it was half way up the engines and created a bow wave up and over the front mudguard - I kid you not I do not know how Will and I kept going with the depth and shear length of the water

Wetton

This is another grassy route from the Back of Ecton area SK105566 to the Manifold Valley SK098561 via Wetton Mill. The route shows signs of damage every winter but looks better in the summer months when it dries out.



January 2013



February 2014



March 2015

Perhaps what is most worrying about this route is that it shows damage every winter but use was light when PDNPA carried out monitoring in April and May 2015 with 15 users over 52 days. [Source PDNPA Route Summary at http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/550099/RS1503-Wetton.pdf]

Vehicle monitoring can only be done for a short period of time as PDNPA has

insufficient loggers for all the routes they want to monitor. We've been told by local people that this type of route is used more in the winter than summer (probably because many drivers prefer to test their vehicles and themselves in muddy conditions). So the data collected by PDNPA may not be indicative of winter use.

The voluntary restraint on this route came into operation on 1 January 2016. Off-roader websites say it was with the co-operation of Staffordshire County Council and PDNPA.

The damage was less severe than that on Minninglow Lane in December 2015. But it is important that this delightful route across National Trust land in a popular part of the National Park is not allowed to deteriorate further



December 2015



December 2015

Again, we are pleased that recreational motor vehicle users have recognised the need to protect this route, but feel that any voluntary restraint should have been started earlier. And voluntary restraint is not a long term solution.

School Lane, Great Hucklow

PDNPA proposed trying to facilitate Voluntary Restraint on School Lane in its Action Plan for 2015/2016. Here the concern is not the surface but the fact that the village primary school is on this BOAT (byway open to all traffic). There was an incident where speeding trail bikes scattered a party of school children. So understandably there is concern in the village about recreational motor vehicles using the route. Great Hucklow Parish Council and Friends of the Peak District are both campaigning for Derbyshire County Council (DCC) to take action on the route.

The position here is complicated because DCC have a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order on the route preventing 4 wheeled drive vehicles using it. (This is because of damage to an adjoining route and has nothing to do with the condition of School Lane or protecting school children.) The Parish Council is opposed to Voluntary Restraint because they feel it could prejudice the imposition of a Traffic Regulation Order which could be enforced by the Police. So there is currently no Voluntary Restraint on this route.

Why We Think That Voluntary Restraint is Not the Solution for Vulnerable Routes

1. There was voluntary restraint on Minninglow Lane east of the High Peak Trail during the winter of 2010/2011. PDGLA has photographs taken in March 2011 which show numerous motor cycle tracks on the lane and adjacent fields. Motor cyclists our members met entering the lane were unaware of the agreement.

2. PDNPA monitoring data for this period can be found at http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/318982/RS1303-Minninglow-Gallowlow-Lane.pdf Monitoring data from winter 2009/2010 showed an average of 0.9 motor cycles per day. There were an average of 1.1 motor cycles per day during the period of voluntary restraint. So there was an **increase** in usage per day by motor cycles from the previous winter during this period.

3. Voluntary restraint was agreed on Long Causeway for a one way system in 2008. It is unclear whether it was ever implemented but there were no signs on the route and no indications that vehicles were observing it before the PDNPA TRO came into force.

4. There was voluntary restraint on The Roych with a one way system prior to the PDNPA TRO. The results of monitoring by PDGLA members, albeit on a limited number of days, showed 43.75% of recreational vehicle users ignored the one way system.

5. DEFRA guidance confirms our own experience that recreational motor vehicle users fail to adhere to requests for voluntary restraint.

7. A significant weakness of voluntary measures is that there is no way of enforcing them and no incentive to abide by them; in fact they penalises only those who follow them.

6. Voluntary restraint is most effective when endorsed by vehicle organisations but many vehicle users do not belong to any organisation. The TRF has almost 4000 members, and estimates that there are 10,000 active trail riders in the UK.

8. Its failure is part of a wider picture of the ineffectiveness of voluntary measures generally. RockingtheBOAT (based in Great Longstone) carried out monitoring on Leys Lane, Little Longstone. This showed that many recreational motor vehicle users do not even follow their own voluntary code of conduct with respect to group sizes, vehicle speeds and legal number plates. (34% of 4x4s and 49% of trail bikes showed non-compliance from January to September 2014.)

9. The information on the LARA website (see page 1) shows voluntary restraint is not to prevent damage occurring but to reduce use when it has occurred. Any restraint will be minimal for the shortest period of time. It does not consider the effect of damage on non vehicle users.

Therefore, instead of voluntary restraint, we would like to see Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) banning recreational motor vehicle users at all times on these routes.

Moscar Cross Road – Another route which is vulnerable in the winter
 Moscar Cross Road is a Sheffield BOAT (byway open to all traffic) that runs eastwards from SK225886. The part of greatest concern is the uphill slope across the first field from that grid reference. There is little evidence on the ground that farm vehicles use this section of the track. Sheffield City Council carried out repairs to the drainage in April 2013. However winter damage to the grassy surface continues. The pictures, taken from approximately the same point at each visit tell the story. Again a full TRO is needed to protect this route.



July 2011



March 2013 before the SCC repairs



March 2014 - 11 months after the SCC repairs



January 2016 - Note the particularly deep rut on the right

Please sign the latest petition against off-roading

A horse rider who wrote to British Horse to say her holiday in Wiltshire was ruined by off-roading has now launched a petition calling for a review of all Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). The petition says that every BOAT should be reviewed with a view to it being closed to motor vehicles. Please sign the petition and also forward it on to friends and supporters. The petition is at <https://community.sumofus.org/petitions/revise-by-ways-open-to-all-traffic-green-lanes>

It is no wonder the holiday was ruined. Wiltshire has 819k of BOATs. This is 18% of all BOATs in England and more than in any other county.