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Peak District
Green Lanes Alliance

Saving our green lanes from off-road vehicles

October 2017 Newsletter

Minninglow Lane and Voluntary Restraint

Voluntary restraint during the winter months on Minninglow Lane has been part of PDNPA's action plan for managing recreational motor vehicles for a number of years. Minninglow Lane, Ballidon is particularly vulnerable to vehicle use because it is grassed between the junction with the High Peak Trail (SK 205572) and some tumble down farm buildings at about SK 217565. This grassy section is heavily rutted all the year round and becomes water logged in the winter.



Nearly wall to wall ruts which present problems all the year round. In the summer the grass hides them but they are still there and dangerous to non vehicle users. October 2017



The deep ruts at the western end are already filled with water. Fortunately there is a wide grass verge near these ruts, so they can be avoided. October 2017

In spite of PDNPA officers having an action point (normally in the autumn) to initiate this voluntary restraint, the reality is that it is implemented by the off-roading organisations. Whilst PDNPA can encourage them to do it, there is nothing that PDNPA can do if the organisations decline. It is the off-roading organisations who decide if they will be involved, when, if at all, the voluntary restraint will start; and how long it will last for. It is also the off-roading organisations who prepare and put up the signs and publicise the voluntary restraint. Last winter the TRF, representing motor cyclists, did not participate in the voluntary restraint on Minninglow Lane. Our

impression is that voluntary restraint only starts when the route is so water logged that it is becoming difficult for many vehicles to use it. By that stage it is impassable for horse riders and cyclists and difficult for many walkers to use.

The documentation on LARA's website (Land Access and Recreation Association – an umbrella off-roading organisation)

<https://laragborg.wordpress.com/resources/voluntary-restraint/> makes it clear that it views voluntary restraint as a solution to a particular problem **for their members** and that it should last for the minimum possible duration. There is no indication that they view voluntary restraint as a means of preventing problems arising, let alone to facilitate use by anyone else.

When the Action Plan for the year is discussed, although PDNPA officers report to Members any voluntary restraint that has taken place, Members are never given any information about whether it was a success or not. We suspect that this lack of information about success is because PDNPA has never set criteria by which to judge it. In past years, vehicle logging has never been good enough to determine whether the voluntary restraint has even brought about a simple reduction in vehicle numbers. (See our May 2017 and June 2016 newsletters at <http://pdgla.org.uk/> for further information about this vehicle logging). We believe that the criteria for success for any voluntary restraint scheme on Minninglow Lane should be that it remains usable for non-vehicle users throughout the winter, which would be a far more appropriate test. In the last two winters of voluntary restraint that has not been achieved.

PDGGLA members walked and photographed the route earlier this month. They believed it would already be unusable for horse riders and cyclists. It was passable for walkers in walking boots provided they were prepared to use the narrow grass verges in places. We believe that voluntary restraint should have started at the beginning of October in order to protect the route.



The deep 4 x 4 ruts with a central motor cycle rut between them towards the western end of the grassy section. The grass verge on the right of the photo is also becoming rutted as motor cycles use it to avoid the deeper ruts. October 2017



There are already signs of vehicle "bottoming" and scraping the surface because the ruts are so deep. October 2017



In both these photos note that the route is enclosed by wire fences (one electric, one barbed wire) and that there is only a narrow verge on either side of the ruts that can be used to avoid the ruts. As the winter progresses, this verge will become narrower, the ruts deeper and the route more water logged. The fencing makes it impossible for any horse riders who might want to risk the ruts, because if they were to meet a vehicle there is nowhere to get out of the way. October 2017

We have been told several times that use of Minninglow Lane is highest in the winter, especially for 4 x 4 vehicles, as the route is more challenging when it is muddy and wet. A local person said that the autumn/winter increase in numbers has already started.

As well as starting too late, another weakness of voluntary restraint is that it is, of course, voluntary. Many off-roaders do not belong to national organisations and so may not see the publicity and may choose to ignore the signs placed on the route. The national off-roading organisations have no sanctions even against their members who ignore voluntary restraint.

So whilst voluntary restraint may be used to present a positive image of off-roading organisations, and may be started with good intentions, we do not believe it is an effective management solution for vulnerable green lanes such as Minninglow Lane.

Another consequence of the deep rutting is that walls are destroyed when pillaged for stones to repair the ruts when vehicles get stuck. (See pictures over the page.) This pillaging of walls to assist vehicles out of ruts is a problem on other routes too.



Coping stones in a rut and the wall they were taken from. October 2017

PDNPA has a difficult job in protecting routes in the National Park as they have limited resources and the Highway Authorities seem adverse to making permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). PDNPA has to balance protecting already heavily damaged routes, like Minninglow Lane, against preventing less damaged but equally vulnerable routes, like Wetton, from suffering the same fate. See our September 2017 newsletter for more information about Wetton. Damage and heavy use by recreational motor vehicles destroys the natural beauty of an area; removes the tranquillity; and makes the route either unusable or unattractive to non vehicle users, so reducing their opportunities for quiet outdoor recreation. We support the proposed public consultation for a permanent TRO on Wetton. But we would also like to see PDNPA or Derbyshire County Council acting on Minninglow Lane.

Nomination of Patricia Stubbs for Campaign of the Year

We have just discovered that our Chair, Patricia Stubbs, has been nominated in the Campaign of the Year category in the Great Outdoors 2017 award scheme organised by The Great Outdoors magazine. We have no idea who nominated her. But please vote for her as if she wins it will give a huge boost to the issue of 4x4s and motor bikes destroying the country's green lanes.

To vote go to <http://www.tgomagazine.co.uk/news/tgo-awards-2017-shortlists> and scroll down to Vote Now

House of Lords and NERCA

A House of Lords Select Committee is currently reviewing the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERCA). We're interested in NERCA because it contains legislation that determines whether a route can become a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) and thus legal for vehicles to use.

Individuals and organisations were asked to submit written representations to this Select Committee in answer to a series of questions. The PDGLA submission concentrated on the effects of recreational motor vehicles on "green lanes" - both those which had become BOATs and those whose status is still undetermined. You can read our submission at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/nerc-act-committee/publications/> .

Other organisations involved in campaigning against off-roading also sent in submissions including GLEAM and GLPG (two national organisations with which we are actively involved) and our sister groups the Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Alliance and the recently formed North York Moors Green Lanes Alliance. You can read their submissions at the address given above. It's best to select the pdf file to read as the html file upsets the display of pictures and their captions at times. Peak Horse Power (the Peak District group representing horse riders) and the Peak and Northern Footpath Society also sent in submissions.

Whilst PDGLA is actively involved in off-roading issues within the Peak District National Park, (and is working with like minded groups, local communities and individuals), we realise that the best long term solution would be a change in the law. So behind the scenes we are working with other groups from outside the Peak District, such as GLEAM and GLPG, to try to persuade politicians that the law needs changing and to influence DEFRA to issue stronger guidance to encourage National Park Authorities and Highway Authorities to make Traffic Regulation Orders. We don't often report these activities as they often don't have any immediate results and are part of a longer term strategy. Also we don't always want to inform off-roading organisations about what we are doing.

An example of this involvement with other organisations is that our Chair is Vice Chair of GLPG (Green Lanes Protection Group). She is also attending the forum organised by DEFRA on recreational vehicles in the countryside.