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Peak District  
Green Lanes Alliance

## **Saving our green lanes from off-road vehicles**

### **March 2018 Newsletter**

PDGLA has three main areas of interest. The first, of course, is the Peak District National Park. Two out of three of our news items in this newsletter reflect this.

The second is campaigning for changes in legislation so that “green lanes” throughout the country are protected from use by recreational motor vehicles. For this we work in conjunction with other groups with similar interests and take part in national forums and initiatives. We plan to tell you more about the outcome of a submission that we made to the House of Lords when they were considering the NERC Act in our next newsletter.

The third area is finding out and collecting pictures of what is happening elsewhere in the country. The problems are not just a damaged surface, but conflicts between users because of narrowness, dangerous blind bends and having to avoid flying stones. Although there is more visiting of routes in Oldham to do, we thought we would share what we have found with you in this newsletter.

#### **PDNPA – Action plans for the management of recreational motorised vehicles etc**

Every year PDNPA prepare an action plan for what they intend to do to manage the effect of recreational motor vehicles on “green lanes” in the National Park. This year it was presented at the March Audit Resources and Performance Committee meeting. The papers presented to the meeting can be seen at <https://democracy.peakdistrict.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cld=133&Mld=2056&Ver=4> You can also hear the debate following the link on the same page.

In summary the action plan is to:

1. Complete the process for the proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on the Wetton Hills route. No other TROs are planned in the next 12 months.
2. Arrange further voluntary restraint on Minninglow Lane with recreational motor vehicle users during the 2018/2019 winter.
3. Continue with the “Miles without Stiles” initiative which is aimed at identifying routes without stiles suitable for use by the disabled. Many of these routes will be

BOATs and ORPAs (other routes with public access on OS maps). Both BOATs and ORPAs are often used by recreational motor vehicles unless there is a TRO on them.

Three spoken representations were made to Members about the inadequacies of the Action Plan – in particular about the need for TROs on Hurstclough Lane, Minninglow Lane and Moscar Cross Road. Members recalled that the first two issues at least had been raised in previous years and expressed concern they would still be being raised next year. Members did not question the validity of these issues and tried to press officers on what the tipping point for considering TROs might be. No clear answer was given to this and the impression we received is that both Members and officers have lost the drive to continue using TROs, citing resource constraints as the convenient rationale. We appreciate that the TRO process **is** very tedious and resource intensive but consider the well being of the National Park will only be served by continuing to pursue it.

PDGLA spoke about the non effectiveness of voluntary restraint so far this winter on Minninglow Lane, Ballidon.



The TRF (representing motor cyclists) refused to take part although Manchester 17 (a local motor cycling club) responsibly encouraged their members to observe the voluntary restraint and put up notices on the route as did GLASS and PDVUG for the 4 x4 vehicles. The voluntary restraint started on 1 November 2017 and will continue until 1 May 2018.

We circulated pictures taken last month to PDNPA members before the meeting to show the condition of the route during a period of voluntary restraint. We've attached that document to the email accompanying this newsletter so that you can see for yourselves the condition of the route. Earlier in the year, PDNPA officers told us that the criteria for judging the success of the voluntary restraint would be those in the Priority Routes Action Plan 2017/2018 Appendix 3. We've cut and pasted the relevant words on the next page:

## Minninglow and Gallowlow Lane (UCR) Ballidon

### People

- ⌚ Promote responsible use
- ⌚ Encourage voluntary action
- ⌚ Improve amenity and safety for route users

### The Route

- ⌚ Improve condition of route
- ⌚ Maintain character of the route
- ⌚ Clarify legal status and/or line of the route

We will leave you to decide whether the conditions shown in the photographs have either improved the amenity and safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders or have improved the condition of the route. Then you can decide whether the voluntary restraint was a success using the criteria PDNPA officers decided to use.

### Vehicle Logging during the voluntary restraint

Every year the vehicle logging data in the Route Summaries prepared by PDNPA are updated to include the logging data for the previous 12 months. (The Route Summaries can be seen at <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/vehicles/priorityroutes>) This year, and for at least the last two years, these updated route summaries have only been uploaded onto the internet after the meeting that considers the Action Plan. PDGLA believe that the logging data should be available before the meeting. For example, in the case of voluntary restraint on a route, logging data gives an indication of its effectiveness in reducing vehicle numbers which could be one criterion for judging its success.

One paper presented to the Audit, Resources and Planning Committee meeting said that there had been a 40% reduction in the number of 4 x4s using the route during the early part of voluntary restraint compared to a comparable period in December 2014 to February 2015 when there was no voluntary restraint. Our calculations show the reduction was 36% not 40%. PDNPA calculated with rounded figures that were not rounded consistently. We used actual vehicle numbers scaled to the same number of days. Whilst it is good to see a reduction in the number of 4 x4s using the route, this reduction has not resulted in an improvement in the condition of the route.

No information was given to PDNPA members on the numbers of motor cycles using the route in the two periods. In the earlier period the daily average was 1.12 motor cycles per day. During the current voluntary restraint it was 0.98 motor cycles per day. PDGLA doubts that the slight reduction is really significant. Motor cyclists are numerically the larger group of vehicle users.

## Please take part in the Wetton Hills TRO consultation

We told you about the public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on the route known as Wetton Hills in our February 2018 newsletter which can be seen at <http://pdgla.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PDGLA-2018-02-February-newsletter.pdf>



*Photograph: February 2017*

The consultation continues until **6 April 2018**. All the PDNPA papers and details of how to respond can be seen at <http://consult.peakdistrict.gov.uk/>

PDGLA supports the proposed TRO. Please take part if you have not done so already.

## Green lanes in Oldham

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) is one of the seven local authorities responsible for maintaining highways (including public rights of way) in the area of the Peak District National Park.

The Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) made applications in 2005 to Oldham MBC for several green lanes, including one which is partly within the National Park area, to be included on the definitive map and statement as byways open to all traffic (BOATs). However Oldham MBC has declined to do this for one of these applications, on the basis that the evidence for BOAT status is insufficient and because of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, passed in 2006. Oldham MBC has not started to process the other applications because the TRF has not yet notified the land owners and occupiers affected of its applications.

The countryside within Oldham MBC is criss-crossed with old paths, green lanes and tracks reflecting its textile production and mining history in the Industrial Revolution and before. Some of these highways are now parts of national and local promoted trails such as the Pennine Way, Pennine Bridleway and Standedge Trail, and they all provide access for Oldham residents to the pasture and moorland countryside of the western Pennines. Some of the green lanes are thought to be pack horse tracks, providing through routes between the textile towns on the Lancashire and Yorkshire sides of the Pennines. (Part of Oldham MBC is the parish of Saddleworth, which was part of the West Riding of Yorkshire until 1974.) Some of these green lanes formed part of the initial development of turnpike roads in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but these



were supplanted by easier (less steep) turnpike roads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which allowed horse-drawn carts to replace pack horse transport. A few green lanes seem to have come into existence later, as a result of the Saddleworth inclosure award in 1834.

Videos on YouTube and photos show what off-roaders are doing to some of these historic green lanes in Oldham. The sunken lane in the photo below is too narrow for all but the narrowest of 4x4s. But this use and use by motorbikes has damaged and displaced what may be old pack horse causeway stones and deepened the adjacent gully down which water runs, nullifying the effect of recent repairs with concrete kerbstones.



Even where a green lane is wider, the damage caused by off-roaders makes it difficult for other users, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and farmers. A short (just over 4 minutes) video taken by an off-roader driving a 4x4 on one wide green lane shows 4 incidents in which mountain bikers (including a child) have to keep to the edge of the uneven surface or walkers have to stop and restrain their dogs, to reduce the risk of accident or injury e.g. from flying stones. The photo below shows a patchwork of repairs, motorbike tyre marks and erosion gullies on another wide green lane (a former turnpike road but now probably unusable by horse-drawn vehicles).



These lanes are on Oldham MBC's list of publicly maintainable highways. So, unless they can be shown not to have historic public rights for horse-drawn vehicles, they are legally open to recreational off-road motor vehicles.

The only ways to stop such vehicles using them are either for Oldham MBC to close them by a traffic regulation order or by national legislation to amend the loophole in the NERC Act which means that such routes, with historic rights for horse-drawn vehicles, become BOATs rather than restricted byways.