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Peak District
Green Lanes Alliance

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Hollinsclough Rakes

Limer and Swan Rakes are in the Staffordshire part of the Peak District, near the border with Derbyshire. They are among the most damaged and abused routes in the National Park and have become so dangerous that they have been closed to all users for several years through a sequence of temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs). Pressure has been mounting on Staffordshire County Council to repair the routes and ban recreational motor vehicles at all times. Staffs has at last bitten the bullet. It is now planning repairs and consulting on who should be allowed to use the Rakes once the repairs are done. The consultation is at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Rakes and closes on 31 January. PDGLA will be calling for full TROs on both Rakes. Please take part in the consultation.



Limer Rake

Ramsden Road is being destroyed, but no-one is doing anything about it

PDGLA has been worried about Ramsden Road for a long time. When it was assessed by the Peak Park Authority (2013), it scored a shocking 14 out of 15, almost a full house, on the criteria the Authority used to assess whether motor bikes and 4x4s driving on the route is sustainable (physical damage, conservation issues, levels of complaint, impact on the character of the route, and the extent to which non-vehicle users are being affected.) Since the 2013 assessment, motor vehicle use has intensified and the problems have got worse. But nothing effective is being done about it. One of our members monitors Ramsden Road and has been tracking why things have gone so wrong. This is his report.

Ramsden Road is a Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT) which runs just inside the boundary of the Peak District National Park above Holmfirth before dropping down to Ramsden Reservoir. It is the focal point of an area that has been a hotspot for off-road vehicle use and damage for many years.



Ramsden Road

Political influence

The highway authority is Kirklees Council, where officers have long held the view that vehicular use is damaging Ramsden Road itself, the surrounding environment and everyone else's enjoyment of the whole area. A local petition in 2007 led to a Kirklees committee report and a decision to place a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on Ramsden Road prohibiting recreational motor vehicles. This was never implemented due to the political influence of two Kirklees councillors.

Experimental TRO aborted

Ten years on, in 2017, following an approach by Peak & Northern Footpaths Society, Kirklees agreed to repair Ramsden Road and put an Experimental TRO on it to protect those repairs for a period of 18 months. Had this gone to plan the route would have been fully repaired by June 2020. Unfortunately, Kirklees made unforced legal errors in the TRO Order which meant the TRO had to be withdrawn.

Despite the abortive TRO costing around £10,000 in legal fees and on-site works, at this point the TRO process was abandoned. There is no formal record of where and how this decision was made, who made it and under what authority.



Ramsden Road

Friends of Ramsden Road

Instead of taking further action itself, Kirklees decided to set up a user group called Friends of Ramsden Road. The group was supposed to raise funds and oversee repairs, and so solve the problems Kirklees was failing to tackle itself. It has proved to be a convenient cover for Kirklees to hide behind. In their two years of existence, the Friends have made no effective progress in raising funds or repairing the damage to Ramsden Road. This is understandable and the group is not really to blame as the task is a big one and the volunteers, although well meaning, are not qualified for it.

The 'Friends' have made things worse

Setting up Friends of Ramsden Road has actually made things worse. It has delayed the necessary repairs being undertaken by Kirklees; the scale and level of damage has increased dramatically under the group's 'stewardship'; and the sudden spike in vehicular use which took place when the creation of the Friends stopped in its tracks the prospect of a Kirklees TRO has become permanent. The route is now well and truly on the off-roader radar with large convoys of 20 to 30 vehicles driving it day and night. This is causing huge nuisance and distress to local residents and non-motorised users of the byway are being intimidated from using the route.

Off-piste activity is at an all-time high and there is now extensive damage on adjacent private land alongside both Ramsden Road and nearby Kiln Bent Road. During the November 2020 lockdown off-roaders pulled out bollards and gates to get onto SSSI land in the national park. In the more severe lockdown this month (January 2021) a 4x4 has been burnt out and sits on the unmade road at Yateholme Reservoir, 4x4s have been stuck in the snow on Ramsden Road and the police have had to station a Police Community Support Officer near the route at night to record vehicle registration numbers. A number of fines for breaking lockdown restrictions have been issued.

All this is happening in the Peak District National Park. It is being enabled by Kirklees and abetted by Peak Park Authority inaction.

BBC coverage

The BBC Radio 4 You & Yours programme recently visited and interviewed a local resident. His account of the damage and nuisance being caused by off-roading in the area is compelling and far more accurate than off-road propaganda put forward in the programme, by Kirklees and by Friends of Ramsden Road. You can hear the programme at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000gy03>. The Ramsden Road item is 24 minutes in.

You can find out more, and see more of the damage, on the Pathwatch site at [ramsden road – Path Watch \(path-watch.com\)](http://ramsden-road-Path-Watch(path-watch.com))

What has been happening at Pindale?

There is still no action to protect Pindale, near Castleton. Since we reported on this route in the last issue of the newsletter, abuse of Pindale now includes the dumping of burnt out cars. As well as the vehicle below, there are three others in the disused quarry alongside the track.



Pindale, January 2021

Abuse of the ancient monument adjacent to the route and of the SSSI also continues. When is the Peak Park going to act to restore the amenity value of Pindale and its surroundings?