

**Route Summary Report
Swan & Limer Rakes
March 2018**



Description

Swan and Limer Rakes are integrally linked. Both routes are sunken lanes for the most part, with broken stone surfacing and/or exposed bedrock, which in places is stepped. The routes are currently closed pending repairs by Staffordshire County Council as the Highway Authority.

Legal Status: Non-classified Highway
County: Staffordshire
Parish: Hollinsclough CP
Grid Reference: SK 062 662 to 065 665 and SK 063 664 to 065 659
Length: 420 metres and 610 metres

Nearest Other Byways / Non-classified Highways / Claimed Byways

There is a small network of non-classified roads and a byway nearby in Hollinsclough

Sustainability Analysis

Undertaken in 2013

Physical - Does the route show serious signs of physical damage resulting from usage?

Comment: Parts of both routes are practically impassible for the majority of users, with exposed bedrock steps

Score: 3 (4 or more user groups would find the route hard to use) – as at time of survey

Conservation - Is the route subject to any protective designation (for heritage or wildlife)?

Score: 1 (no areas of protection abut or cross the highway)

Complaints - Have there been any complaints about vehicular use conflicting with other uses?

Comment: Concerns raised by various bodies but in particular local people and the parish council

Score: 2 (yes from localized sources or individuals)

Character - Is the character of the route being damaged by vehicular use?

Comments: The routes are severely deteriorated.

Score: 3 (the highway and adjacent land are affected)

Conflict - Is the free passage of non-motorised users being prejudiced?

Comment: Parts of both routes are practically impassible for the majority of users, with exposed bedrock steps

Score: 3 (3 or 4 issues regarding the width, visibility, slope and speed of use by vehicles)

Total Score = 12/15





| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY</p> | | <p>Swan & Limer Rakes</p> <p> Route with proven or possible motor vehicle rights which may be unsustainable</p> | <p>DESIGNATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site designated as one or more of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site of Scientific Interest - Special Area of Conservation - Section 3 & Natural Zone Scheduled Ancient Monument |
|---|--|--|---|

Representation on this map of a route is no evidence of a right of way.
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Levels of Vehicular Use*

Logged use taken at junction of two rakes.

Weds 2 June 2010 – Weds 11 Aug 2010 (71 days)

| Daily totals | Large Vehicles | Motorcycles only |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Mondays | 5 | 0 |
| Tuesdays | 0 | 12 |
| Wednesdays | 0 | 7 |
| Thursdays | 7 | 4 |
| Fridays | 0 | 13 |
| Saturdays | 24 | 10 |
| Sundays | 20 | 59 |
| | | |
| Mon-Fri total | 12 | 36 |
| Sat-Sunday total | 44 | 69 |
| Overall total | 56 | 105 |
| Average per day | 0.8 | 1.5 |

Friday 18 November 2016 – Thurs 16 March 2017 (119 days)

| Daily totals | Large Vehicles | Motorcycles only |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Mondays | 0 | 0 |
| Tuesdays | 2 | 3 |
| Wednesdays | 4 | 5 |
| Thursdays | 1 | 4 |
| Fridays | 0 | 4 |
| Saturdays | 7 | 13 |
| Sundays | 24 | 15 |
| | | |
| Mon-Fri total | 7 | 16 |
| Sat-Sunday total | 31 | 28 |
| Overall total | 38 | 44 |
| Average per day | 0.31 | 0.37 |

Conservation interest

Ecology - An ecological survey was carried out in February 2015 (Appendix 1).

Landscape – The route lies within the South-west Peak landscape character area – an area of upland and associated foothills. Roads and tracks cross the landscape...some tracks link upland grazing to lowland settlements, while others are former transport routes. In places 18th century roads follow almost direct routes, while elsewhere such roads were abandoned and more sinuous replacements were built...to avoid steep gradients which wagons could not negotiate in winter. This is a generally peaceful landscape with small winding lanes which are often sunken on slopes.

Peak District Local Access Forum Comments

The Green Lanes Sub-group surveyed the route and met in November 2014. Appendix 2 sets out their individual observations. The group recommended that:

- PDNPA to ascertain the proposals and aspirations of the Hollinsclough Action group and the parish council
- Approach Staffordshire Highways with the subgroup's observations and ask for a reply within a set timescale
- Speak to the local ranger and councillor with a view to further assessing local wishes and suggestions

Issues

People

- Disturbance to residents – proximity of house and village
- User conflict – recreational value for all users

The Route

- Route nature – narrow, steep, limited visibility
- Route condition – poor surface

Appendix 1 - Conservation Report

Site: SWAN RAKE

Date of survey: 15.02.2015

Description and ecological interest

Length: 430 m. The route descends from a surfaced minor road between Clough Head Farm and Banktop north and then eastwards to Hollinsclough village.

The route passes through semi-improved acidic grassland, grass-heath and gorse scrub, with a small area of woodland on the north side at the end. The narrow verges and banks contain some bilberry and other neutral and acid grassland species.

Vehicles leaving the highway

The route is banked and walled or fenced along both sides and there is no access to the adjoining land.

Impacts

The first section is level or descending slightly, with an earth surface that is rather muddy and contains two shallow ruts (c.10- 15cm). There is a PDNPA post and 'Proceed with care' sign here. The gradient then steepens and from here to the junction with Limer Rake the track surface becomes stony and loose with small 'steps'.

The track is severely damaged over a section of 65-70m; it has been eroded down to the bedrock and contains 14 rock steps up to 60-75 cm in height. These appear impassable to 4wd vehicles or very difficult to pass, and similarly difficult for motorcycles (3 motorcyclists attempted to ascend the track during the time of the survey but turned around and went back). Cyclists would most likely be forced to pass this section on foot, too.

Around the junction with Limer Rake, the surface is very muddy and just below there is a deep rut on one side that would also impede vehicle access. The last 100m to the village are level and have a firm surface.

Other than the level section near the village, the route is narrow, confined between banks and walls /fences and offers no possibility for vehicles to pass.

Site: LIMER RAKE

Date of survey: 15.02.2015

Description and ecological interest

Length: 650 m. The route runs from the minor road at Bank Top descending in a north-westerly direction to join Swan rake c. 100 m above Hollinsclough village.

The route passes mainly through semi-improved neutral grassland. Opposite New Barn farm is a plantation of open woodland and below that a bank containing acidic grassland. The narrow verges of the track contain bilberry and other species typical of acidic grassland such as heath bedstraw, tormentil and hard fern.

Site Designations

No SAC/SPA , SSSI or Natural Zone.

Vehicles leaving the highway

The route is banked, walled and/or fenced along its length and there is no access to the adjoining land, except through unlocked farm gates.

Impacts

The track is used by vehicles, motor cycles, cycles, horses and pedestrians judging by the visible tracks.

The first short section is marked by two ruts to a depth of 10-25 cm. The track then steepens and bends round to the left; this section is rockier and covered in loose stones, and eroded down to the bare rock in places, exposing rock steps that would be difficult to navigate in a vehicle , motorcycle or bicycle. Then a long stretch descends across the slope to the end. Here the bed is generally softer and rutted along most of its length, with ruts of 20-30 cm and reaching 50 cm over one short section.

The route is too narrow along its length for 4WD vehicles to pass. Vehicle movement is channelled along the existing ruts which can be expected to be deepened with continued use.

General

This refers to the way we walked down rather than the one it joined at the bottom that we walked up.

I had a chat with a trail bike rider after our visit and he said it was absolutely great like it was. He usually rode down it. That is one point of view.

The rest of my comments really apply to both ways.

I am familiar with both this and Swan Rake, and quite apart from anything else I reckon both have got significantly worse in recent months. If anything the deterioration is likely to accelerate due to natural forces, if not off road use. It is beyond my conceptual powers to imagine that anyone could drive anything along either, but apparently they do.

Again, both routes lead from a quiet rural community. It must be relevant that use of both ways for quiet enjoyment or for going about their legitimate business (eg farming) is denied local people by the state of the surface (or should I say lack of surface). You also raised the issue of public nuisance. No one has any right to cause another a public nuisance.

Both raise serious issues of safety for pedestrians even without vehicular traffic, and are probably un-rideable on horseback.

There is also a self evident matter of environmental damage which needs addressing.

Urgent remedial action is needed. Whilst this may be unlikely to happen it may be possible to do some mitigating work on drainage to prevent further wash out.

After that, given the state of both ways, I think both should be closed to all users on grounds of safety, environmental damage and to limit further deterioration.

General

Limers and Swan Rakes are in a very poor state of repair, which is the responsibility of Staffordshire CC Highways, who will plead poverty. Options are to serve on them a s56 "Out of Repair" notice, which will not be well received or for PDNPA to the use the usual subjective reasons to exercise their TRO power.

Swan Rake

This is a lovely little lane into the village of Hollinsclough and is a much treasured asset of the village. Many of the local residents are very upset about the damage caused to this track by excessive use by off-road vehicles.

The route is damaged for the majority of its length with deep steps down to the bed rock. The track is passable by all classes of user but only with great difficulty and would certainly be unusable by anyone with even minor mobility issues. There was evidence on the lower section below the step of a vehicle approaching the step uphill and being unable to proceed.

As with most of these routes drainage is an issue and would need to be addressed as part of a major restoration project to bring this route to a standard where it can be the village amenity it once was. (I have tried to get photos of the track in it's heyday but without success. However I do think consultation with the Hollinsclough residents would confirm the original surface of the route).

Limer Rake

Where Swan and Limer Rakes join there is a great deal of washout. There is evidence of some repair but this has failed because the drainage issues were not resolved first.

Limer Rake is a narrow track with no opportunity to pass. As with Swan Rake this lovely lane was a treasured asset of the village and there has been a significant loss of amenity to the local area by the damage caused by excessive vehicular use.

The lower section is badly eroded and is down to the bed rock. The upper section is very narrow and there is serious undermining of the stone walls and evidence of stones being taken from the walls to help traction. On this section there was evidence of damage to and damage by motor vehicles

Water damage is an obvious issue with this track and should be considered as part of the restoration work. (Again I have tried to get photos of the lane before it was so badly damaged and I would encourage consultation with the local residents about the original surface).

There was evidence of recent vehicular use but again we visited in dry conditions and it would be

interesting to see what it was like after a period of rain.

General

These routes consist of enclosed tracks giving access to properties from Hollinsclough to the west and south west.

I assume they were popular for recreational users, but present usage and condition make that unsafe and impossible. Reports of winching of vehicles late at night, and signage - e.g. Code of Respect - 4WD's 5 mph and 2WD 20mph are indicative of efforts to address problems voluntarily working with users. This has not worked in my view.

There are some awful sections from the point of view of scope to use for walking, cycling and horse riding. Condition is appalling and previous repair work is not adequate with uneven and broken stone and step changes in levels. There are narrow and deeply rutted sections.

Liaison needed with Staffordshire CC at a very early stage to consider their policy and approach in such a severely affected route where enjoyment of walking, horse riding and cycling is no longer possible.

Suggested Objectives:

People

- Reduce impact of use on the local community
- Promote responsible use
- Encourage voluntary restraint as a matter of urgency
- Improve amenity and safety for route users

The Route

- Improve surface condition in the few places where ruts have developed to the detriment of non vehicular users
- Restore the character of the route

The Area

- Protect the environment of the area

Safety issues

Signage

- There is a 'code of conduct' post at the top of each route. This would appear to indicate to those who do not know the route that it is useable and could encourage users to try the route and get in to trouble if they were inexperienced drivers.
- OK
- Scope for some advisory signage initially as used in other parts of the Peak
- Review and improve as necessary, but not working at present

Surface & Off-Site Information

- The route has been used extensively for night-time 4WD challenges, disturbing the farm at the junction of Swan and Limer Rake. This has reduced since police intervention
- Generally good surface condition apart from some rutting in short sections of the Valley - SSSI?
- Major issues to assess and address

Conflicts of different use

- Both routes are narrow and there are no escape routes for horses, cycles or walkers
- The challenging track conditions have made this route unsuitable for any quieter use but there are obvious safety implications for anyone walking or riding at the same time
- Very apparent and enjoyment by walkers, horse riders and cyclists not possible as things stand

Width

- Narrow
- 2.5M mostly
- Some narrow and deeply rutted sections - photos taken by LAF member helpful to have alongside consideration of this route appraisal please

Speed

- It is unlikely that speed would be a factor given the present condition of these routes unless someone was out of control in which case a serious accident might result.
- 5 mph
- Signage indicates need for respect, no doubt born of problems experienced and reported

Cause(s) of Damage

Recreational Use

- These routes are in a terrible condition and this is the result of use by vehicles
- This is the main cause of damage and is in fact part of the attraction to motorised user. Although the main damage has probably been by 4W vehicles there is evidence of motorbike use also. Walls have been demolished for makeshift repairs
- Related clearly to Motor vehicle usage and need vehicle logging and monitoring information to clarify

Agricultural use / access

- Apparently little use.
- Minimal
- no doubt affects local agricultural access

Natural erosion

- This is exacerbated by the damage done to the surface by vehicle use. There is no drainage left intact and the level of the route has been worn down below wall level in places so that the boundaries are being undercut.
- Ancillary to the motor damage, the surface has washed down the steeper sections as it has become loosened by wheeled use.
- Not evident it is natural erosion that is causing problems

Solutions

- At present use appears to be limited simply because it is well-nigh impossible to use these routes. All types of users find the present state of them challenging to say the least.
- SCC are unlikely to put TROs in place and if they do without repairs it means that the routes will still be very difficult for other users.
- There is the possibility of an accident which could be very serious and any publicity from that would reflect badly on all concerned.
- the damage to the route is extreme and major repairs are needed to the central section if it is to be made available to all users. Even walking is challenging currently. Without such repairs this route will become increasingly less usable for most people.
- Needs to begin with policy approach with Staffordshire Highway Authority
- Urgently review scope for voluntary restraint and improved signage
- Assess scope for and resources to carry out major repairs
- Consider justification for TRO's on the 2 sections of route for 4WD's and 2WD's

Long-term Management Options

- SCC should be made aware of the dangerous nature of these routes. I think this is the factor which might precipitate action.
- I would like to see research into what the surface of these routes was like before they became so degraded and also what the previous levels of the surface were. Such evidence would make a powerful case for preventative action on other routes.
- If the repairs are to last, a TRO excluding all motorised users will be needed.
- Monitor and Review from above
- Review/pursue TRO's in the National Park interest