



Peak District Local Access Forum
c/o Peak District National Park Authority
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20 March, 2014
by email

Dear Rachel

Wider Peak District Cycle Strategy

I am writing as a follow up to Tim Nicholson's excellent presentation to the Local Access Forum on 13th March about the Draft Cycle Strategy and Action Plan. This was followed by Claire O'Reilly who kindly gave us an update on the welcome Pedal Peak II Project.

After consideration by the Forum, a Sub Group met over and after lunch to consider a response which is forwarded in this letter for your consideration please as a report is prepared for Authority members - probably in May. The main LAF delegated authority to the Sub Group to respond on its behalf. Annex A attached gives background about the Local Access Forum, our previous advice and the Strategic background. Our response is:

1. The Draft Strategy and Action Plan is most welcome and well presented. It is clearly linked to the Strategic Plans for the Peak and cycling strategies we looked at which were in place or emerging from constituent authorities, and suggestions made by the Forum - for example through the Cycling Summit. Links proposed to cities and towns are superb. On pages 2 & 7 we would add to the aim after "community benefits" ".. and creating better understanding of the wider Peak District area by all who cycle and enjoy the area"

On page 3, in the Strengths and Weaknesses, suggest adding to strengths - "Strong record of Partnership working by local authorities with other interests." Under weaknesses, perhaps add - "Lack of transport back to Cycle Hire Centres after completing linear rides" Both are things which are taken forward so are worth stating. The benefits of Cycling are very well stated. Are there statistics/measures of the economic benefits before the Strategy and Pedal Peak project and since then? We support the Themes and Action areas with some additions listed in this letter.

2. We are pleased to see the tremendous scope for:

- Health and Social benefits to individuals and communities – it is proven that an active lifestyle improves health and wellbeing, and reduces the likelihood of serious illness and premature death. This in turn reduces pressure on the health service and improves workplace attendance.
- Economic benefits to communities – a new cycle link could provide exciting opportunities for new and existing businesses, generates spending in the local economy and supports jobs
- Environmental benefits - improvements to the public realm, less congestion and pollution

3. The strength of the Draft Strategy is in relation to cycle and trail route developments which is great and most welcome, with an ambitious short term action plan and challenging proposals for the medium and long term where more can no doubt will be added for the future through reviews, and as other funding opportunities arise . The concept of Main, Secondary and Complementary Networks is sound. The Principles underpinning the Strategy are supported, with the addition of Promoting Understanding and in relation to the "infrastructure" aim for a jointly agreed guide and standards for Multi Use routes (see below).

4. The challenges which we feel should be addressed are that:

- **Mountain biking is not given sufficient attention as a major activity** with users subscribing to the Peak District economy, but with challenges and opportunities which need to be addressed strategically and incorporated in this strategy. This really is fundamental and should not be left for a future report as we gather maybe the intention. There should be discussion and engagement with this substantial user interest with 300 activists in the Peak. We could probably help with that. There is a newly formed Peak Mountain biking group who have been in contact with Peak Officers. They have the 300 members - <http://www.peakdistrictmtb.org.uk>. A goal to build a Peak District Mountain Bike Group with users would be welcome. There should be a commitment to develop opportunities in the short term action plan; (with scope for involving volunteers and perhaps attracting Sport England grants), Skills areas (e.g. introductory practice areas near Cycle Hire Centres), areas for Skills development "set-pieces" (e.g. alongside the Trails, where land ownership issues are already known). This would contribute significantly to Sport England objectives of retaining young people in sport. There should in addition be short and medium term aspirations to further meet the need of mountain bikers through proactive engagement with relevant groups. The proposals for linking mountain biking routes at Macclesfield Forest are interesting, but seen as long term. An aspiration in the short/medium term to look at a mountain bike centre would be welcome and something about which Adge Last and other LAF members could advise further.
- **Road Cycling** should also be given some attention. It is a natural progression for cyclists, as they move from occasional to regular participation, to begin to cycle on roads. Sign-posting, and driver-awareness information should be an integral aspect of this strategy as it leads to increased participation.
- ..
- **Both these activities are popular and are included as photos on the front cover, but receive limited attention in the Strategy.**
- **The Trails Management Plan** is excellent. It should be acknowledged and strategic issues and actions included, as it needs future resources. Surely, it needs to be in this Strategy if future funds are to be sought. For example, the Monsal Trail developments have been superb, but adequate maintenance and renewal of surfacing and structures is essential. Re-engaging with the Trails Steering Group (upon which Charlotte Gilbert represents us), was pledged but is not happening.
- **Cycle Hire opportunities** have been taken by the National Park Authority and other interests (as listed in the document), and the strategy and Pedal Peak recognise more can be done in future. That seems to need some emphasis as an aspiration in the Strategy, together with the planned efforts to improve public transport links to Centres and opportunities to return users and bikes to centres after linear rides.

In both the above points, the aim should be to feed up into the Strategy sound operational experience and appropriate Action Plan initiatives and resources.

- **Cycleways** have been established in other parts of the country with many successes, but there have sometimes been problems where the emphasis and signage is on cycling to

the frustration of motorists and other users as one of our members observed from his knowledge of the Newcastle and Northumberland area. The Strategy calls for a consistent and integrated approach to " the surfacing and signing of routes within any environmental constraints. Our plea here is that having got a great partnership from adjoining authorities and bodies, it would surely be worthwhile re Pedal Peak II and this Strategy to have a clear commitment to working to achieve appropriate surfacing, signage and integrated usage, incorporating horse riding - the Derbyshire County Council approach to "Greenways" (see extract attached), would seem a good starting point for a Good Practice Guide. Within this Conflict Management issues can be addressed through the promotion and management of Multi Use routes.

- **Getting Started** - We feel that the Cycling Market (page 5) is great for progression from Occasional, through Regular to Frequent cyclists. What seems to be missing is "Getting Started" which Pedal Peak 1 helped with, but strategically needs continuing and the opportunities from Schools through to Clubs etc stated.
- **Promoting Understanding and Education** - Throughout the Strategy and Action Plan, we feel that an opportunity has been missed to Promote Understanding (second purpose) and education. This should be added to the Principles underpinning the strategy – and it should be recognised that all parties (cyclist, walker, rider, motorist etc), will need to be included in this aspect of the Strategy as a means of pre-empting conflicts of interest...
- **Accessible opportunities.** Routes should be considered and developed with the needs of disabled users in mind. For example – where gates are required, gate latches should be positioned in order to facilitate use by a trike/wheelchair user travelling independently. This is currently not the case at Ladybower, where extremely able wheelchair cyclists have to depend on able-bodied assistants to undertake the circuit.
- **Ethnic diversity.** There is a huge opportunity to work pro-actively with partners in the "Wider Peak District" to engage with and welcome the diverse communities from the nearby cities.

We know the Pedal Peak II bid was supported by a number of adjoining LAF's and we ask if they have been invited to comment on this Strategy?

I hope this letter of overall welcome is helpful, and would like to reiterate the enthusiasm of representatives of the LAF to continue to be involved as this exciting work is taken forward. We look forward to the success of the Strategy and Action Plan in developing new opportunities and improving sustainable and healthy travel options in the wider Peak District. We hope the above areas for further work are agreed and incorporated to get the most from a Strategy for the future.

Yours sincerely

John

John Thompson
Vice Chair
Peak District Local Access Forum

Copies to: Jim Dixon, Mary Bagley, Emily Fox, Tim Nicholson and Carol Parsons, Sue Smith & Richard Pett (Peak District NPA), Geoff Nickolds and Andrew McCloy as Authority members who have been on the LAF, Cllr David Chapman as Lead Member for Recreation at the Authority. Richard Taylor, Gill Millward, and Claire O'Reilly Countryside Service, Derbyshire County Council (Gill, please circulate to any other Derbyshire colleagues who are involved) Edwina Edwards, Chair, all LAF members and Mike Rhodes, Secretary

Peak District Local Access Forum - As you know, this is a statutory body, appointed jointly by the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) and Derbyshire County Council (DCC). It covers the National Park area and the countryside of north-west Derbyshire around Buxton, New Mills and Glossop. Our role is to advise both the authorities on the improvement of public access and opportunities for the purpose of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area.

Background Support and previous advice from the Forum

We have previously reviewed cycling opportunities in the wider Peak District and:

- Congratulated the Peak District NPA, Derbyshire CC, constituent Highway Authorities and partners for work done to date to improve cycling opportunities.
- Welcomed the opening of the tunnels on the Monsal Trail as an awesome achievement from a brilliant vision to a fantastic reality. This is benefitting thousands of people's enjoyment and understanding of the National Park, and bringing tremendous and significant economic benefits to the area.
- Encouraged further work and initiatives to enable increased participation and enjoyment of the area by visitors and the local community and complete the Peak Circuit and facilitate wider use of the National Park in an active and sustainable way.
- Participated in the Cycling Summit in February, 2013 as a forerunner to the Pedal Peak II bid and this draft Strategy.
- Delighted to see already on the Monsal Trail, the number and variety of users and their obvious enjoyment on cycle, foot, horse, mobility scooter, and family's with children and push chairs discovering previously hidden views from on high into the valleys. It is particularly encouraging through the Pedal Peak District project that many new riders have started cycling helping them to enjoy the area, get fit and healthy.
- Welcomed multi use routes like the Trans Pennine Trail, and the opportunities that has provided for cycling, horse riding and walking across the country.
- Supported the excellent Trails Management Plan which was put together with input from a Steering Group, including Charlotte Gilbert for our LAF. We refer to this in our response as needing to be incorporated and reflected in the Strategy.
- Provided a letter of support for the Pedal Peak II bid which is now being implemented with £5 million of Government money and £2.5 million of match funding. This provides marvellous links to surrounding towns and cities through excellent partnership working with constituent authorities and Sustrans.
- Asked Forum members for future input which has been offered and we are keen to help.

Strategic Background

We support the National Park Management Plan and Recreation Strategy for the Peak District and in relation to priority issues they support the Cycle Strategy - "the National Park will strengthen its role as a welcoming place and premier destination, synonymous with escape, adventure and enjoyment" (NPMP - W11). "Accessible and diverse recreation opportunities will be available for all, encouraging healthy living, enjoyment of the landscape and a sense of adventure." (NPMP W14).

The Recreation Strategy recognises the popularity of the Peak District for cycling, offering everything from quiet country lanes and traffic-free trails to challenging mountain bike terrain. The Strategy supports calls from providers and users for - "more circular routes and routes linked to urban areas and transport hubs. It stresses that linking routes to small scale local sustainable development such as accommodation, cafes, information and cycle hire or repair helps to sustain the local economy and enhance the visitor experience."