

**Route Summary Report  
Three Shires Head  
March 2018**



**Description**

The route proceeds from the lane at Cut-Thorn in a generally south east, north east then north direction, crossing River Dane via stone bridge and then south and generally south east to lane east of Cocket Knowl. The route crosses Derbyshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire boundaries. A Traffic Regulation Order by Cheshire CC restricts 4-wheeled motorised vehicles.

Legal Status: Unclassified Road

County: Cheshire East/Staffordshire

Parish: Macclesfield Forest and Wildboarclough CP/Quarnford

Grid Reference: SK 0024 6810 to 0147 6727

Length: 26900m

**Nearest Other Byways/Non-classified Highways/Claimed Byways**

Cumberland Lane heads lies approximately 1.5km north.

**Sustainability Analysis**

Undertaken in 2013

Physical - Does the route show serious signs of physical damage resulting from usage?  
Comment: Sections of the route have a badly broken surface, some ponding and would be challenging for many user groups in some seasons

**Score: 3** (4 or more user groups would find the route hard to use)

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

**Score: 2** (the route crosses or abuts a protected area)

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

Comment: Frequent and widespread concerns raised.

**Score: 3** (many complaints from a variety of sources)

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

**Score: 2** (the highway is affected)

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

**Score: 1** (minor/no issues)

**Total Score = 11/15**



## Levels of Vehicular Use

### Wednesday 29 July 2009 – Friday 30 October 2009 (94 days)

Daily Totals	Large Vehicles only	Motorcycles Only
Mondays	0	14
Tuesdays	0	18
Wednesdays	0	24
Thursday	0	13
Fridays	0	11
Saturdays	0	39
Sundays	0	65
Mon-Fri Total	0	80
Sat-Sun Total	0	104
Overall Total	0	184
Average Per Day	0	1.96

### Wednesday 10 June 2015 – Thursday 3 September 2015 (86 days)

Daily Totals	Large Vehicles only	Motorcycles Only
Mondays	0	30
Tuesdays	0	26
Wednesdays	0	35
Thursday	0	37
Fridays	0	45
Saturdays	0	135
Sundays	0	160
Mon-Fri Total	0	173
Sat-Sun Total	0	295
Overall Total	0	468
Average Per Day	0	5.4

### Friday 5 August 2016 – Wednesday 4 January 2017 (153 days)

Daily totals	Large Vehicles	Motorcycles only
Mondays	0	54
Tuesdays	0	62
Wednesdays	0	70
Thursdays	0	54
Fridays	0	76
Saturdays	0	430
Sundays	0	515
Mon-Fri total	0	316
Sat-Sunday total	0	945
Overall total	0	1261
Average per day	0	8.24

## **Conservation interest**

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

Landscape – Three Shires Head lies within the South West Peak landscape 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 2015. The LAF subgroup unanimously agreed that:

- The PDNPA works with user groups to manage levels of group use at busy times.
- That feedback is given to the subgroup regarding liaison with user groups.
- The route should be subject to extra monitoring at busy times.
- The issue of an adjacent landslip should be raised with East Cheshire Borough Council as a matter of urgency.
- Signage needs to be clear and appropriate at both ends of the route and the bridge to clarify status for all users.
- Consideration should be given to instigating localised repairs on the Staffordshire section using volunteers.
- The condition of the lane and its use should then be kept under continuous review.

## **Issues**

### People

- Disturbance to residents – proximity of farm
- User conflict – recreational value for all users of the route and area

### The Route

- Route nature – narrow, steep
- Route condition – loose surface, section of landslip

### The Area

- SSSI, Natural Zone
- Impact on adjacent land – illegal use of adjacent footpath

### Other

- Management/legal issues caused by the route crossing the Cheshire/Derbyshire/Staffordshire county boundaries

## Appendix 1 - Conservation Report

**Site: THREE SHIRES HEAD**

**Date of survey:** 04 December 2015; 30 January 2016 (revisit as weather very poor on 1<sup>st</sup> visit)

### **Description and ecological interest**

Length: 2.0 km.

The route runs from Cutthorn, on a minor road off the A54, round the side of Cutthorn Hill to Three Shires Head, then below Turn Edge to Turn Edge Farm.

The first stretch from Cutthorn is hard surfaced. It then descends over a loose stony slope, with water flowing down it, to the bridge. Ascending below Turn Edge there are more loose stony stretches and some exposed bedrock steps. As the track levels out it contains some wet patches (bypassed by small paths) before meeting the farm track, with a hard surface, below Turn Edge Farm

The start of the route is gated with a sign saying No vehicles except for access. There are stretches without passing places but enough room in others. Below Turn Edge long stretches seem too narrow to allow passage by 4WD. No signs of 4WD use were visible. Tyre tracks showed use by motor cyclists and cyclists. Both were seen on the route and the latter were able to negotiate the steep steps without too much difficulty.

From the start at Cut Thorn and around Cutthorn Hill to Three Shires Head the land on the north side is acid grassland and moorland and on the south semi-improved pasture. From Three Shires Head to near the end, there is acid grassland and some moorland on both sides, with open sessile oak woodland along Turn Edge (NVC community W16). The eastern end of the route passes through semi-improved pasture.

### **Site designations**

From Cut Thorn to Three Shires Head the route runs along the edge of the Leek Moors SSSI (i.e. land to north is in the SSI and that to the south is not). From Three Shires Head, the land on both sides is within Leek Moors SSSI. The whole route, except for the final stretch below Turn Edge Farm lies within Section 3 moorland.

### **Vehicles leaving the highway**

The route is walled and/or fenced along its length on at least one side, usually both. The section below Turn Edge is open on the east side there are tyre tracks visible on the footpath from the track heading diagonally up into Turn Edge Wood.

### **Impacts**

The start and end of the route are along hard surfaced tracks used by farm vehicles. Use by motor cycles (and 4WD as far as the bridge is likely to make the loose stony surface worse, and it seems likely that the exposed bedrock on the Turn Edge section is at least in part the result of motor bike or other vehicle use. The use of the footpath into Turn Edge Wood by cycles or motor cycles may have been exploratory, but more regular use would soon result in damage to the soft surface and vegetation. A few wet and muddy patches have been bypassed causing some (limited) damage to the vegetation.

### **Historic Landscape Character**

Three Shires Head runs through a landscape that is comprised of enclosed fields and enclosed moorland. The section of the route from Cut Thorn farm to the bridge at Three Shires Head runs along the boundary between the enclosed moorland upland on the southern closes of Cut-thorn Hill, an area of moorland enclosed prior to the Wildboarclough Tithe of 1849, and the enclosed fields to the South characterised as enclosure of unknown date with irregular fields. At Three Shires Head the route passes briefly into an area characterised as open wastes and commons, an area allocated as shown on the Hartington Parliamentary Enclosure Map of 1804, but which remains open moorland.

The section of the route south from Three Shires Head bridge south towards Turn Edge farm runs close to, if not on, the boundary between enclosed irregular fields of unknown date to the west on the lower slopes close to the River Dane, and enclosed moorland to the east that was enclosed prior to 1839.

From just before Turn Edge Farm to the end of the section of route under consideration at Cocket Knowl the route continues through enclosed irregular fields of unknown date on both sides.

### **Historic Environment Baseline – known designated heritage assets, undesignated heritage assets, and survey data available**

The route of Three Shires Head right of way passes over one designated heritage asset. This is the Grade II listed bridge at Three Shires Head/Panniers Pool (NHLE 1,145,883). This is a late 18<sup>th</sup> century pack horse bridge, originally c4 feet wide, but later widened to 6 feet on its northern side. It is understood that the roadway of the bridge was replaced in concrete prior to listing in 1983. This bridge is at an important location at the meeting of 3 counties, and the meeting of 4 pack horse routes that lead from Cheshire and Staffordshire into Derbyshire forming a narrow network of tracks that can still be traced today. This is a route of some antiquity, and though depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1871 as 'Pannierspool Bridge', it is depicted on John Speed's map of 1610 as 'Three Shires Stones', and the name of Pannier's Pool is first recorded in 1522, suggesting that there may have been a ford in this area prior to the bridge.

The southern and eastern areas of this section of rights of way at Three Shires Head formed part of an area of the Warslow Moor Estate that was surveyed by John Barnatt in 1986. The enclosed irregular field systems also formed part of the an archaeology FEP desk based assessment in 2012. As such a number of historic and archaeological features surviving in the fields adjacent to the route have been identified. This includes hollow ways and trackways, some of which lead out on the moorland and others that lead from the route of the right of way and down into the enclosed fields; relict field boundaries and enclosures; ruined wall footings; ruined buildings/barns; sheepfolds and small fields.

The route is depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1871 in its current position, although no further evidence is readily available to help specify the age of the route any further, or indicate whether its origins may lie as a pack horse route. However, the historical context of the route can be understood alongside the surviving agricultural features that survive in the neighbouring fields at this junction of enclosed fields and moorland, and the key meeting of cross country routes at Three Shires Head.

### **General recommendations**

If the route has not previously been walked or surveyed it would be useful for future monitoring if the route could be checked by means of a rapid walk over survey, with a written account and photographic record created. Particular attention should be paid to surviving historic features including the Listed Three Shires Head pack horse bridge; any historic surfacing materials along the route; dry stone walls; gate posts; the intersections between the right of way and other historic routes, tracks and hollow ways. As any damage to surviving historic features, but particularly to the Listed bridge, would be of concern once a basic record has been created this

can form the baseline from which to monitoring and assess future damage, as well as to help prioritise damage repair or mitigation in the future.