

# Moorlands Lane

## Route Management Plan



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### Introduction

In March 2006, a Derbyshire County Council Improvement and Scrutiny Committee examined the issue of the use of unsurfaced highways. The key recommendation of the Committee was that each Non-classified Highway in Derbyshire would be surveyed to define whether it is sustainable or unsustainable.

National Park staff acted behalf of Derbyshire County Council to conduct a baseline survey of routes within the National Park. A full condition survey of all 180 'other routes with public access' has been completed and prioritised.

At it's meeting on 7th March 2008, the National Park Authority requested that the routes showing highest priority from the survey should be subject to management plans, in order to determine the most appropriate courses of action.

This plan is therefore intended to inform the Highway Authority (Derbyshire County Council) and the National Park Authority to enable the development and review of measures to improve the management of the route.

### 1 Description

The lane commences at its junction with Blakelow Lane\* and proceeds generally south-west as an enclosed lane, which is partly surfaced and partly unsurfaced.

- We have taken the lane to commence at Blakelow Lane and proceed via the surfaced track around the quarry although the legal line will require further investigation (the NCH appears to pass directly through the quarry).

Legal Status: Non-classified Highway

County: Derbyshire

Parish: Bonsall

Grid Reference: SK 262589 to 269592

Length: 950 metres

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

Links into several NCHs and claimed Byways in the area of Bonsall Moor Quarry.




Moorlands Lane







**Moorlands Lane**

 Route with proven or possible motor vehicle rights which may be unsustainable

**DESIGNATIONS**

-  Site designated as one or more of
  - 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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## 2 Report

### 2.1 Sustainability Analysis

The ability of a route to sustain use is largely dependent on the existing route surface, the topography and the drainage of the route. The surface can vary from mineral soils or grass to a stone-surfaced track. On most routes some engineering works have been carried out to alter the natural surface and drainage.

Each Non-classified Highway in Derbyshire has been surveyed to define whether it is sustainable or unsustainable.

The methodology was considered and approved by Derbyshire County Council Improvement and Scrutiny Committee in March 2006, the Peak District Local Access Forum in December 2005 and the National Park Authority as part of its 'Strategy to Manage Recreational Vehicular Use of Unsurfaced Highways and Address Off-road Use' in October 2007.

National Park staff, acting on behalf of Derbyshire County Council, conducted a baseline survey in the National Park. A full condition survey of all 180 'other routes with public access' has been completed and prioritised.

The survey was intended to provide a quick review of all routes to place each into one of three broad categories:-

- Sustainable
- Unclear
- Maybe unsustainable

#### Method:

1. Does the route show serious signs of physical damage resulting from usage?  
Yes/uncertain/No
2. Is the route subject to any protective designation (for heritage or wildlife)?  
Yes/uncertain/No
3. Have there been any complaints about vehicular use conflicting with other uses?  
Many/Some/None
4. Is the character of the route being damaged by vehicular use?  
Yes, a lot/Yes, a bit/No
5. Is the free passage of non motorised users being prejudiced?  
Yes, a lot/Yes, a bit/No

Each positive response registers 'may be unsustainable' each negative response registers 'sustainable' and other responses register 'unclear'.

One or more 'Maybe unsustainable' responses will put the route in the 'Maybe unsustainable' category at this stage. No 'Maybe unsustainable' responses but one or more 'Unclear' responses will put the route in the 'Unclear' category at this stage. All 'Sustainable' responses will put the route in the 'Sustainable' category at this stage.

All routes recorded as 'maybe unsustainable' will be the subject of a management plan.

## Results:

***The above methodology has been refined in order to clarify the questions/answers, and allocated scores to enable a statistical comparison.***

### **1. Does the route show serious signs of physical damage resulting from usage?**

*Is it difficult for user groups to use this route? (for users groups we have defined walking, cycling, horse-riding, carriage driving, and vehicles)*

*3 points – 4 or more user groups would find the route hard to use,*

*2 points – 2-3 user groups would find the route hard to use*

*1 point 1 or no user groups would find the route hard to use.*

Score = 3

Comments:

Some sections of route virtually impassable on foot after wet weather, most user groups would find this route difficult to use at this time.

### **2. Is the route subject to any protective designation (for heritage or wildlife)?**

We have defined protective designation as Scheduled ancient monument, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation or Section 3 and Natural Zone.

*3 points a route crosses or abuts a protected area and vehicle users are (for whatever reason) leaving the highway,*

*2 points – the route crosses or abuts a protected area,*

*1 point – no areas of protection abut or cross the highway*

Score = 1

Comments:

No designation.

### **3. Have there been any complaints about vehicular use conflicting with other uses?**

*3 points - Yes many complaints from a variety of sources,*

*2 points - Yes from localized sources or individuals,*

*1 point – few or no complaints*

Score = 3

Comments:

Frequent, and from various sources, the police have been involved in village meetings. Complaints identify a general issue with vehicles using the moor and specifically the use of the quarry as an off-roading site at weekends.

### **4. Is the character of the route being damaged by vehicular use?**

*3 points – the highway and adjacent land are affected,*

*2 points – the highway is affected,*

*1 point – little or no affect (including 1 or 2 minor areas of damage on the highway)*

Score = 3

Comments:

The lane is very badly drained in areas and deep mud affects access, whilst no trespass from the lane itself has occurred there is concern that use facilitates access to the quarry and illegal activities there, and hence 3 points here. This must be investigated as part of the wider management of the route.

**5. Is the free passage of non-motorised users being prejudiced?**

*Are there issues regarding the width, visibility, slope and speed of use by vehicles?*

*3 points yes (3 or 4 issues),*

*2 points yes (1 or 2 issues),*

*1 point – minor/no issues*

Score = 3

Comments:

The route is narrow, speed is excessive on the quarry area and visibility is poor.

**Total Score = 13 / 15**

## 2.2 Engineering Report

- *Width (including latest road safety and engineering advice used for roads)*
- Wherever possible a width of 3m to be achieved. Otherwise a practical width to be constructed to suit site conditions.
- *Incline (as above)* This will be dictated by existing ground levels and could vary extensively. (gradient 1:20 to 1:10 )
- *Drainage Issues -*
- A piped carrier drain and open ditches would be adequate to control water shed along the route. ( As required )
- California Bearing Ratio - DCC highways laboratory to investigate. (If necessary)
- *Repair Specification -*
- 1.Preparation - Site to be cleared of vegetation / rubbish (To allow new build)
- 2.Earthworks / Ground treatment - Material to be removed from site (where necessary) to receive stone base and surfacing (Re-cycled materials ie. stone / or Tarmac)
- Existing rutting could be filled with suitably sized stone )
- *Cost to repair - £ 115k*  
estimated annual maintenance cost.- Depending on usage ( < £ 5k )
- *Additional comments by engineer -* The above details are dependant on what classification is given to the route.
- Would not recommend a metalled surface on this route.

If agreed to tarmac surface add £30k

### Historical Maintenance

Vegetation cut back and self-set trees removed over narrow section in summer 2008, costing £2,500.



## **2.3 Conservation Report**

### **2.3.1 Ecological Report**

#### ***Site designations***

The route does not pass through, or abut onto, any SSSI, SPA, SAC or Section 3 zone.

#### ***Description and ecological interest***

Narrow strips of vegetation line both sides of the lane. There are stretches of trees and shrubs and coarse grassland. Trees and shrubs are principally hawthorn, blackthorn and elder with rare wych elm. Grassland communities mainly consist of coarse grasses and herbs. The most noteworthy species are meadow cranesbill, tormentil, common knapweed and meadow vetchling but these are all rare, and the quality of the grassland is no more than Category C with small patches of Category B. Evidence of use by badgers (tracks in mud) was found at two points.

#### ***Vehicles leaving the highway***

The lane is narrow and confined between intact stone walls along most of its length so offering no possibilities at present for vehicles to leave the highway. The exception is a short stretch at the western end where the lane runs into a disused quarry site.

#### ***Impacts***

At the time of the visit (24/8/8) most of the Lane showed signs of use by walkers, cyclists and motor cyclists but not by 4WD vehicles i.e. a central bare strip down the centre of the lane and overgrown verges.

The old quarry has heavy recreational use by 4WD vehicles and motor bikes and these have churned the lane surface at its western end where it enters the quarry into a quagmire and damaged bordering vegetation (blackthorn, other shrubs) over about 40-50m.

Preferred vehicle access into the quarry now appears to be via a track on its north or northeast side. The narrow nature of the lane and fringe of hawthorns and blackthorns and consequent risk of damage to vehicle paintwork may act as a deterrent to access from the Brightgate end of the lane.

### **2.3.2 Landscape Character Assessment**

Moorlands Lane lies within the White Peak landscape character area – an elevated limestone plateau dissected by deeply cut dales and gorges. Regular field boundaries have generally been built using quarried stone, (and) isolated stone field barns are often incorporated within the pattern of stone walls. Lead-mining and quarrying (have produced) industrial features very important to the White Peak landscape character. The pattern of straight roads (is) defined by stone walls, reflecting the late enclosure of the land from common and waste.

### **2.3.3 Cultural Heritage Report**

No recorded archaeological features on the route.

Historic landscape character information: the route runs through land which is characterised as Ancient Enclosure - Fossilised Strip System. The area is shown simply as 'Bonsall Ancient Inclosures' on the Bonsall Parl. Encl. maps of 1774 & 1776, with no field boundaries given. The earliest map evidence of these is the Bonsall tithe map of 1848. Field shape suggests that the majority are fossilised medieval strips.

## 2.4 Evidence of levels of use

### Friday 30 March 07 – Thursday 26 April 07 (28 days)

Daily totals	Cars only	Motorcycles only
Mondays	0	9
Tuesday	0	2
Wednesdays	0	4
Thursdays	0	0
Fridays	0	5
Saturdays	0	39
Sundays	0	44
Mon-Fri total	0	20
Sat-Sunday total	0	83
Overall total	0	103
Average per day	0	3.68

### Thursday 26 June 08 – Friday 25 July 08 (30 days)

Daily totals	Cars only	Motorcycles only
Mondays	0	2
Tuesdays	0	0
Wednesdays	0	8
Thursdays	0	5
Fridays	0	2
Saturdays	0	3
Sundays	0	14
Mon-Fri total	0	17
Sat-Sunday total	0	17
Overall total	0	34
Average per day	0	1.13

#### **Demand from other Users**

Scrub clearance work carried out in spring 2008 opened up the lane to equestrian and cycling use. The route is crossed by the Limestone Way.

#### **Observations relating to the Implementing of Actions**

What are the challenges that must be faced in relation to managing this route – are the resources in place to do so, and if not, how may they be sourced?

#### **Ownership and agricultural access**

The eastern section from Bonsall Lane to the Quarry Site has, until recently, been so narrow that it's very unlikely that this section was used for agricultural access.

The 'unofficial' link from Moorlands Lane to Blakelow Lane is used by the farmer to access fields north of moorlands lane every week to care for livestock, using a tractor and other agricultural equipment,. However, he has difficulties with access to these fields at weekends because vans keep parking in his gateways.

He does not wish to speak to motorbike users who park their vans here because of past incidents when he has had his gates vandalized and motorbikes riding over his land.

## **2.5 Local Access Forum Subgroup Members' comments**

Members of the Peak District Local Access Forum were invited to visit the site and make comments based on a methodology and proforma. They were requested to discuss the routes with other Members and try to reach a general recommendation, however, if they were unable to agree, members were invited to provide their individual observations.

Their comments are summarised as follows:

### **Safety Issues**

1. Too narrow for multi-use.
2. Variable width between 3-4 metres. Usable width restricted in places by trees, accumulated earth and rocks and recent placement of boulders in the road. Although apparently used predominantly by walkers and trail bikers, no conflict observed.
3. The route is unpleasantly mauled by motorcycles.

### **Cause(s) of damage**

1. Although surfaced in part it's only for a short distance. The rest is hollow, is rutted and collects water – often impassable.
2. Two 40-50 metre stretches of muddy ruts.
3. Two sections naturally wet.

### **Solutions**

1. As the route appears to be used mainly for access to the quarry where 'illegal' activity takes place (off-roading), a closure is appropriate. It adds nothing for exploring the countryside – far too short.
2.
  - a. Cut back vegetation
  - b. Remove boulders
  - c. Grade those places where deposited soil and vegetation have restricted the road width.
  - d. Place restricted width signs at each end.
  - e. Fill the rutted or muddy stretches.
3. No action necessary.

### **Long-term management options**

1. Permanent TRO for MVs.
2. Routine cutting back of vegetation and keep accumulations of soil in check.
3. Allow re-growth of trackside vegetation.

### **Local Access Forum sub-group recommendations**

The sub-group met at Losehill Hall on 28th November 2008 to discuss their observations.

There were no agreed recommendations for Moorlands Lane.

### **3 Action Plan**

#### ***Summary of Issues***

- Electronic monitoring of use of Moorlands Lane shows vehicle use is small (around 50 motorbikes per month) compared to other lanes in the area.
- We have no evidence that four-wheel drive vehicles use the route
- A short section of the lane is virtually impassable after wet weather and this must be addressed.

Local resident's concerns made to the police about illegal vehicle use in Bonsall Moor quarry is a separate issue.

#### **Pre-Management Plan Actions:**

- Vehicle use has been logged
- Clearance work has taken place on the route
- The LAF vehicle subgroup has visited the lane
- A partnership of PDNPA Staff, the police and Derbyshire County Council are working to look into trespass issues associated with the area.

### **4 Recommendations**

#### **4.1 Conservation Recommendations**

##### ***General***

- The timing of works may be important in some cases, notably on moorland sites where the bird breeding season will be sensitive
- The extent of surfacing, and ensuring machinery avoids sensitive areas. In general there is a presumption that the extent of surfacing should be the minimum required to ensure sustainable use
- Type of materials- generally limestone material will not be appropriate in shale-grit areas, for example
- Storage of any materials obviously needs to avoid sensitive areas
- Associated drainage- need to avoid adverse impact on hydrology of areas of interest
- Repair/revegetation of any existing areas of damage.

##### ***Route specific***

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No significant ecological issues here re-either continued vehicular use or remedial work.

### **5 Management Proposals**

**Carry out route-surface repairs**

**Action: Peak District NPA with materials from DCC Highways**

**Priority: Moderate**

**Timescale: 2010/11**

