

Newsletter Summer 2022

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AGM on Tuesday 7th June 2022 – Charlotte Gilbert, Chair

It was wonderful to be able to meet in person after so long. About 15 members gathered in Charlotte's barn in Alport for the AGM and social. Everyone was delighted to be together and to find out how we had all fared over the past couple of years. Once the formal part of the meeting was over we enjoyed a glass of wine, burgers and delicious cake. This was followed by Christine's inspiring talk on the Pack Horse Routes of the Peak District. Elsewhere in the newsletter, Christine has given more information on her very exciting project to promote the Pack Horse routes.

Please can I take this opportunity to encourage you, as a member of Peak Horsepower, to consider joining our committee? We meet over Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month. The present committee work hard on behalf of the equestrian community in the Peak District but we are limited in what we can do unless we can get a few more on the committee. All the meetings are very informal and there is no pressure to take on more than the members are comfortable with - if you don't want to make a regular commitment but have a skill or are happy to help with a specific project that would be very much appreciated too.

New PHP website

Prompted by the closure of our previous web hosting company, we have developed a new Peak Horsepower website. The new site is much simpler than our old one. It gives basic information about who we are and what we do, tells people how to contact or join us, and it has all the necessary maps and information for anyone who wants to do our two long-distance rides (Kinder Loop and South Peak Loop). We still have a couple of teething problems but are up and running. We will be using Facebook and emails for news and important messages as we have designed the new website so that it does not need constant updating. The web address remains <http://www.peakhorsepower.co.uk/>

2026 cut-off date for new rights of way abandoned

The government has ditched the cut-off date set by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) for adding to the Definitive Map new rights of way claimed on the basis of historic use. Although there is no longer any urgency, the PHP members who have been doing fabulous research into lost ROW will be continuing their work and will be making new bridleway claims where they can. Defra has not yet made any announcement about whether the government will also be repealing the bit of the CROW Act which says that no new Byways Open to all Traffic BOATS can be added to the right of way map after 2026.

Defra consultation on off-roading

The Defra consultation which included questions about whether there should be new legislation to control off-roading on unsealed tracks in the countryside closed on 9 April. It could be up to a year before Defra publicizes the outcome of the consultation. Many thanks to everyone who took part and called for further restrictions.

PHP's response to the consultation was covered in Horse and Hound. The H&H article also reported for a second time the findings of our 2017 national survey on the impact of off-roading on riders. The survey found problems nationwide.

Changes to the Highway Code

Some of the recent changes to the Highway Code are good news for riders. One of the main changes is a new hierarchy of road users. Horses are now on a par with pedestrians and cyclists as vulnerable users. This makes it clear that motor vehicle drivers must do all they can to reduce the danger or threat they may pose to riders.

The advisory speed at which to pass people riding horses or driving horse-drawn vehicles has been reduced from 15mph to 10mph. Drivers must also allow at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space between their vehicle and a horse, a change which could be very useful when pressing for Traffic Regulation Orders to exclude motor vehicles from narrow riding routes.

Sheffield Heritage Highways

Seven colour-coded waymarked routes designed for horse riders have been developed using old highways and packhorse trails in the 'Sheffield Lakeland' to the north west of Sheffield. The Heritage Highways project is part of the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership which is funded by the National Lottery Fund. Project volunteers have identified and researched old highways and created detailed route guides with historical references. Full printable ride instructions, gpx route files and elevations can be found on the website at <https://www.heritagehighways.co.uk/heritage-rides>

This is a fantastic initiative, and we'd love to hear people's experiences of exploring these routes. Please share your photos on Facebook (and see below for similar plans for Derbyshire).

Peak District Packhorse Routes

We are currently working with the British Horse Society to prepare a bid for Heritage Lottery funding to raise the profile of the many packhorse routes that run through the Peak District. Many of these are in a sorry state of repair and by raising their profile as historical assets it is hoped that they will be included in future maintenance schedules.

A similar project has just been completed in South Yorkshire, the Sheffield Heritage Highways (see above) and an inaugural ride took place last month from Moorwood Equestrian Centre, near Stanington.



As part of the proposed Peak District project, 10 circular rides will be devised, based on the goods carried by packhorses: lime, lead, salt etc. Details of these rides will be made available in booklet format as well as online.

The project is in its early days yet but we will keep you informed as to its progress.

Washgate Bridge, Hollingsclough, over the upper river Dove (photo C Harding)

Representing horse riders' interests – working with United Utilities in Macclesfield Forest

Earlier this year, we were alerted via a chance post on social media to United Utilities' future plans for Macclesfield Forest. Though it's over the border in Cheshire, the Forest falls within the Peak National Park and is used by riders from Derbyshire who travel in by trailer or box. Unfortunately, horse riders had not been involved in the consultation process which took place last year.

Christine Harding, BHS ABO for High Peak, set up an online survey to which 54 riders responded, and subsequently formed a focus group to find out how riders were catered for in the Forest. Meetings with UU have taken place and discussions around parking, new routes, gate improvements, and surface issues with feeder routes like Charity Lane are on-going.

With help from Charlotte Ditchburn, BHS CABO for the North West, the local authority Cheshire East are now on board so we hope that ultimately improvements can be put in place and that in the future, horse riders will be involved in any further consultations.



Updates on local Rights of Way



1. Good news on Moscar Cross, Sheffield (BOAT)

In our January newsletter we featured Moscar Cross Road, a Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT) on the Sheffield edge of the Peak Park which suffers extensive damage by motor bikes and 4x4s in the wet months of the year. We had asked for an onsite meeting with Sheffield City Council to discuss the possibility of a Traffic Regulation Order and the meeting was held in February. All user groups attended, including the off-roading organisations. Sheffield agreed to consider a seasonal Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) excluding all recreational motor vehicles during the months when the damage is done. The idea of a seasonal TRO was supported by all user groups, even the off-riders.

In March Sheffield placed a temporary restriction on the route in order to carry out annual flattening and re-seeding of the track (their current management approach to the damage). Despite this South Yorkshire Police reported that locked gates were being tampered with to gain access to the route and warned that further abuse “may well lead to permanent vehicular restriction.” Just before we issued this newsletter we heard from Sheffield that they are now committed to a seasonal TRO, but it will not be brought in until winter 2023/24. They want to monitor the route so they can decide when the TRO should start and end. They tell us they have already started to do this. We think a seasonal TRO on the route should run from the beginning of October to the end of May.

2. Howden and Derwent reservoirs track (Bridleway)

In spring 2022 the section of the main track around Howden and Derwent reservoirs which is owned by the National Trust was resurfaced with crushed gritstone to make a smoother surface which would be accessible to more users. They are also supposed to have replaced the bridleway gates “so that they all have easy open latches, opening in both directions.” We would be interested to hear any horse riders’ experiences of riding on the resurfaced trail and using the new gates.

3. Cave Dale, Castleton (Bridleway)

DCC was due to carry out repair work on the bridleway in Cave Dale, Castleton in early 2022, but paused work in response to pressure from the mountain biking community who were concerned about the type of surface that was going to be put down. Previous repair work on nearby Pin Dale (BOAT) had used inappropriate material for use within a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and DCC subsequently had to remove it. DCC said they were reviewing their plans for Cave Dale and that no work would take place until they had more detailed proposals, which they expected would take a number of months.

4. Bamford Clough (BOAT)

In our last newsletter we reported that DCC's plans to tarmac Bamford Clough, which links Bamford with the riding routes above Hathersage, had gone ahead. This was done despite our advice that the Clough is far too steep (1:3) for a tarmac surface to be safe for horses. Due to various safety concerns, since then the Clough has remained legally closed to all users while DCC carried out a road safety audit. The audit concluded that 'the road presents hazards to road users associated with its layout, *surfacing, gradients*, [our italics] and restricted width between stone boundary walls' and recommended a one-way system. DCC is currently in the process of consulting a proposed Experimental Traffic Order (ETRO) making the route one-way uphill.

PHP is objecting to the proposed ETRO because it will not restore access to riders or carriage drivers. We are arguing (again) that the way to restore equestrian use is: to a) remove the tarmac and replace it with a more suitable surface or lay a pitched stone strip down the centre of the track; and b) bring in a TRO excluding motor vehicles in both directions at all times. We are also pointing out (again) that as the route is a Byway Open to all Traffic, in law the majority user is 'persons on foot or horseback', not motor vehicles. At present DCC is trying to manage the route as though it were an ordinary road, which it is not. The Parish Council is also objecting to the ETRO proposal and wants to see a full TRO.



Stone flags and pitching are increasingly being used to repair other routes in the National Park; for example Washgate on the Derbyshire/Staffordshire border, and Saddlers Way in Macclesfield Forest (pictured).

Stone flags used on Saddlers Way, Macclesfield Forest (bridleway)

5.South Head, Pennine Bridleway, Hayfield

A mountain biker helpfully reported that a gate on this route had been partially blocked by a very large boulder, making it inaccessible to horses. This was a particular problem for Kate McMorris, who was about to go that way on her Great British Vet Trek from John o' Groats to Land's End, raising funds for VetLife and Pets As Therapy. Fortunately, members of the Dark Peak Bridleways Association FB group came to the rescue and arranged to escort Kate on an alternative route.

Meanwhile farmers and the National Trust were notified of the blockage and arrangements made to shift the stone. We are still unsure why it was placed there, but it is likely to be related to (illegal) motorised use of the bridleway. If you are riding that route please let us know if you encounter any similar access issues.



The boulder blocking the Pennine Bridleway at South Head (photo K Booth).



Local riders Caz and Nessy with Kate McMorris and Marylin (palomino)

6. Sett Valley Trail to St George's Road, New Mills (Bridleway)

This new bridleway takes riders off the dangerous 'beep beep' corner on St George's Road. It was campaigned for by the Dark Peak Bridleway Association, the Peak and Northern Foot Path Society and the BHS, and went to Public Inquiry. Peak & Northern FPS very kindly provided one of their iconic signs to indicate the exit from the existing Set Valley Trail onto the new bridleway across the Millfields side of the Picker to Salem Bridge. Signage at the Salem Bridge exit, where the BW meets the road, will be provided by DCC. Work has taken place recently to trim the track and local riders are being encouraged to include it in their rides.



The new sign with hardy volunteers from Dark Peak Bridleways Association

7. Swan and Limers Rakes, Hollinsclough, Staffordshire (BOATS) – TRO in sight?

We last reported on Swan and Limers Rakes in Staffordshire in January. At that point Staffs had decided to repair the (severely damaged) Rakes 'to the minimum standard of a bridleway or cycleway with a smooth surface suitable for use by all non-motorised users'. This was good news as it implied that Staffs, which had already found no evidence of any historic motor vehicle rights, was not keen on keeping the Rakes open to 4x4s and motor bikes.

They have now carried out the first stage of consultation on a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to permanently exclude motor vehicles. We have not been able to respond as this first stage consultation is for statutory consultees only (Police, Fire etc) and users directly affected by the proposal (presumably the off-roading organisations). The consultation closed at the end of April. Fingers crossed that Staffs will press on with a full TRO. Meanwhile the repairs are in progress and both Rakes are still closed to all users.

8. Scaly Gate and Scar End Lane, New Mill nr Holmfirth (BOATS)

Kirklees Council is using concrete blocks to close Scaly Gate and Scar End Lane to motorised vehicles. These are two BOATs in New Mill, near Holmfirth. As far as we can tell from media coverage (there appears to be no information at all on the Kirklees website), the concrete blocks are enforcing an 18-month Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO), put in place so that damage from off-road motor vehicles can be halted and repaired. Pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders are unaffected by the TTRO. Local residents were reported to be relieved at the closure after suffering months of disturbance by 4x4s and motor bikes.

None of this is much consolation to nearby Holme Valley residents and non-motorised users. They have been battling for several years now to get a TRO banning 4x4s and motor bikes from Ramsden Road and nearby Yateholme Lane. Kirklees is still resisting a TRO and it has completely failed to implement the half-baked Public Spaces Protection Order it tried to make last year as an alternative. But at least the Council seems at last to be acknowledging the damage and public nuisance being caused on its green lanes.

9. Marsden Packhorse Route (bridleway)

This old packhorse road across the moor to Rochdale starts from Marsden, just beyond the northern edge of the Peak Park. In June 2019 the track above the beautiful Easter Gate (or Close Gate) bridge was in a sorry state, as was the surrounding moor which had been ravaged by fire. Two and a half years on, and thanks to funding from Kirklees Council and the work of [Marsden Moor NT](#) and their volunteers, the steep gully has been replaced with pitch and flag using stone flags from mills in the area that were being demolished. This new length of causeway continues the centuries-old tradition of laying stone slabs across difficult ground, examples of which can be seen all over the northern Peak District and South Yorkshire.



Stone flags on Marsden Moor (photo C Harding)

Other items of interest

Research into e-mountain bikes

British Cycling has announced a new, long-term research project into the use of off-road e-bikes, including electric mountain bikes. According to their website research will focus on current and future trends in electric mountain bikes and plans to accommodate the expected increased numbers of users. We have been in touch to suggest that the research should include looking at impacts of mountain biking on surfaces and on horse rider safety. You can find details of the research on the British Cycling website: [Major new research project launched into E-mountain bike use in Britain](https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/news/2019/05/20/major-new-research-project-launched-into-e-mountain-bike-use-in-britain) ([britishcycling.org.uk](https://www.britishcycling.org.uk))

Pennine Bridleway - *update from Peter Cooper, Peak Horsepower Committee member and Co-Chair of SPEED (Safe Pedestrians, Equines, The Environment and Drivers), reporting on discussions in Peak District Local Access Forum (LAF) meetings on bridging the gap in the Pennine Bridleway near Glossop*

Karen Turnbull (DCC Economy, Transport and Environment) has been looking at alternative routes to plug the gap between Simmondley and Gamesley (including the SPEED suggestion). They are trying to get a meeting with Sara (North East Trails) and Heather (National Trails) towards the end of July to discuss a variation to the approved route away from Dinting Viaduct. As ever the devil will be in the detail as they will need to find money for the construction. The money allocated for design work has been rolled forward so once the new route is agreed it will be possible to move forward with the design. We will keep asking the questions at the quarterly Peak LAF meetings and have asked for the "Completion of the Pennine Bridleway" to be one of the Peak LAF objectives.

Derwent Valley Horse Trail

Claire Brooks is leading a project team to map out a horse accessible horse trail from the south to the north of Derbyshire. It is in its early stages yet, but feel free to have a look at the website <https://www.derwentvalleytrust.org.uk/horse-riding/>

Please help us ensure equestrian voices are heard!

Having more members gives us more influence when campaigning to improve equestrian access in the Peak District.

- Please encourage your friends to join Peak Horsepower via the 'Membership' link on our homepage: <https://peakhorsepower.co.uk/>
- Share this newsletter with anybody who might be interested – if you are on a yard can you print it out and take it down for others to read?

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