

WETTON HILLS
Statement of Reasons for Proposed Traffic Regulation Order
February 2018

	Background
1.	The proposal is to make a traffic regulation order that will have the effect of prohibiting use by mechanically propelled vehicles at any time along the route at Wetton Hills in the County of Staffordshire, subject to the exceptions listed below.
2.	The proposed order would be for the purposes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventing the use of the road by vehicular traffic of a kind which, or its use by vehicular traffic in a manner which, is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road or adjoining property • preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs • conserving or enhancing the natural beauty of the area, or of affording better opportunities for the public to enjoy the amenities of the area, or recreation or the study of nature in the area.
3.	The proposal conforms to the Authority's Strategy for the Management of Recreational Motorised Vehicles in their Use of Unsealed Highways and Off-road and the Procedure for Making Traffic Regulation Orders.
4.	The proposal follows consideration of consultation responses under Regulation 4 of the National Park Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England) Regulations 2007. These responses identified various management options and were reported to the September 2017 Audit Resources Performance Committee www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/committees .
	The Route and Area
5.	The route at Wetton Hills is an unclassified road and green lane which commences from the Leek Road in the Manifold Valley, in the County of Staffordshire (grid reference SK 098 557), proceeds in a northerly direction for a distance of 400 metres or thereabouts and then northeasterly for 1000 metres to end where it meets the tarmacadamed road from Back of Ecton at Manor House Farm, in the County of Staffordshire (grid reference SK 105 566).
6.	The route is in a National Park designated for its exceptional natural beauty and within the Natural Zone where it is particularly important to conserve that natural beauty. The landscape, ecological and geological interest in this area is of national and international importance and there are nearby cultural heritage features of national and local importance. These designated and undesignated assets all make a significant contribution to the character of the area.
7.	The route follows the valley bottom below Wetton Hill within an extensive area of open country and links with the Manifold Trail and Wetton Mill. For much of the route there is no surfaced track and an impression of remoteness is created by the seclusion of the valley.
8.	The historic nature of the route and its setting in the landscape in addition to the variety of natural and cultural heritage features adds to the experience of using the route. The route also gives the opportunity for quiet enjoyment and to experience

	tranquillity, one of the special qualities that people value most about the Peak District National Park.
9.	Appendix 1 sets out the use of the route. Appendix 2 sets out the conservation interests of the site. Appendix 3 sets out the factors which contribute to natural beauty and the opportunities for open-air recreation.
	Impacts
10.	Management problems associated with this route relate to the character of the route and the environmental sensitivity of the route and area. Actions have included logging vehicle use and a period of voluntary restraint over the Winter of 2016. Detailed route management information is available at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/priorityroutes .
11.	The presence of mechanically propelled vehicles using the route, and the effect and evidence of their passing have an impact on the natural beauty in this area. This impact and the anticipation of the presence of motorised users can detract from the experience and enjoyment by other users. The reference in section 5 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to the purpose of understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks suggests a focus on quiet outdoor countryside recreation associated with the wide open spaces, wildness and tranquility to be found within the National Park. (Defra 2007). The use of the route by mechanically propelled vehicles detracts from this focus.
12.	Whilst it is recognised that motorised vehicle users, in undertaking their chosen form of recreation, also appreciate the special qualities of the area, their use of the route by this mode of transport is adversely affecting those special qualities to a more significant extent than other users.
13.	The nature of the route and its location away from major roads is such that mechanically propelled vehicles are visually and aurally intrusive. Vehicle use is defining a route along the grassy trackless sections of the valley bottom and is impacting on the special qualities of the area. Government guidance suggests that 'a level of recreational vehicular use that may be acceptable in other areas will be inappropriate in National Parks and incompatible with their purposes.' (Defra 2007).
14.	Appendices 4 and 5 identify the effects of recreational vehicular use on the special qualities of the area.
	Alternatives
15.	A width restriction reduces the overall numbers and impacts from mechanically propelled vehicle users (MPVs) but 2-wheeled use is still significant in its extent and intrusive with the potential for conflict with other users. A one-way system would reduce the impact on the un-delineated grassy route by limiting passing between vehicles but conflicts with other users and visual, physical and auditory impacts would still remain.
16.	A seasonal restriction could help in reducing the impact to times when ground conditions are anticipated to be more suitable but would not prevent impacts occasioned by periods of high rainfall and when the grassy sections are more susceptible to damage.

17.	In view of the nature of the route and the sensitivity of the area, it is not considered that the impacts could be identified and adequately managed by a more selective TRO, a permit system, or other measures such as a scheme of voluntary restraint to a level which is acceptable. Such measures would also need to provide confidence in protecting interests of acknowledged importance which may not occur through recovery periods or measures to make the route more sustainable. A less restrictive option is therefore unlikely to achieve the outcome of sufficiently protecting the character of the route, and the natural beauty and amenity of the route and area.
	Public Interest
18.	In balancing the duty in section 122(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the factors set out in section 122(2) of the 1984 Act, the Authority believes the need to preserve the amenity and conserve the natural beauty of the route and the area through which it runs outweighs the needs of mechanically propelled vehicular users of the route notwithstanding that such a restriction will affect the expeditious and convenient use of the route by mechanically propelled vehicles. For vehicles seeking to use the affected route as a through-road, there are alternative routes on metalled roads in the area.
19.	<p>Exceptions to the prohibition are proposed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) use by emergency services or by any local authority or statutory undertakers in pursuance of their statutory powers and duties b) use to enable work to be carried out in, on, under or adjacent to the road c) use for the purposes of agriculture or land management on any land or premises adjacent to that road d) use by a recognised invalid carriage e) use upon the direction of or with the permission of a Police Constable in uniform f) use with the prior written permission of the Authority
20.	On balance, it is considered that continued use by mechanically propelled vehicles on this route would have an adverse impact on the archaeological and landscape interests, the natural beauty, amenity and recreational value of the area, and the special characteristics of the route.
	Consultation Comments
21.	This statement accompanies the proposed order, notice of proposals and map showing the extent of the proposed restrictions. These may be viewed at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/consultations and at Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AE from 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday (closed Bank and Public Holidays and closed at 3pm on Christmas Eve).
22.	If any person wishes to make any representations relating to the proposed order, they must do so by 5pm on 6 th April 2018 via the consultation webpage referred to above or by writing to Rights of Way at the above address. Any objections must specify the grounds on which they are made.

23.	The following documents are appended: Appendix 1 – Vehicle Use Appendix 2 – Conservation Interest Appendix 3 – Natural Beauty and Recreation Appendix 4 – Impacts of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles Appendix 5 – Special Qualities
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Ref: Guidance for National Park Authorities making Traffic Regulation Orders under section 22BB
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Defra, 2007

Appendix 1 – Wetton Hills – Vehicle Use

Status

The route is an unsurfaced Unclassified Road (UCR) and a Green Lane.

Highway Authority Records

The route appears on Staffordshire County Council's List of Streets as a publically maintainable highway (D1133) and a section with no maintenance (G1133).

Private Use

Sections of the route are used for access for land management purposes.

Vehicle Logging Data

2014: 4-wheeled – average of 0.2 per day
2-wheeled – average of 0.1 per day
2015: 4-wheeled – average of 0.3 per day
2-wheeled – average of 0.8 per day
2016*: 4-wheeled – average of 0.05 per day
2-wheeled – average of 0.9 per day
2017: 4-wheeled – average of 0.3 per day
2-wheeled – average of 0.9 per day

*Includes a period of voluntary restraint

Access

The gates at either end of the route do not prevent its use as a through-route.

Appendix 2 – Wetton Hills – Conservation Interest

Ecological/Geological Interest

The whole route runs through the Hamps and Manifold Valleys SSSI with the southern end also being within the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (approximately 200m in total). The north-eastern part of the route also forms Section 3 Limestone Hill and Heath/Natural Zone and the south-western part Limestone Dale/Natural Zone.

The Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation was designated primarily for the presence of two internationally important habitats listed in Annex 1 of the European Habitats Directive 1992, one of which – semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland on calcareous substrates – occur along the course of the route.

The SSSI was designated for its ancient semi-natural woodland, scrub communities, grassland, and invertebrates and for the limestone geology and geomorphology and cave fossil deposits.

The Natural Zone designation comprises habitats falling within the Section 3 map defined by the Wildlife and Countryside Amendment Act 1985 as areas whose natural beauty it is particularly important to conserve.

Archaeological Interest

The route passes through a range of Historic Landscape Character areas including Post-1650 Enclosure - Regular: Piecemeal/Award and Enclosed Moorland.

A Scheduled Monument - a prehistoric bowl barrow - lies at the summit of Wetton Hill. This is a rare survival in the Peak District of an unexcavated example of this type of monument. The route lies 300m downslope of the barrow, at its nearest point. The route lies within the setting of the monument.

A number of features lie adjacent to the route. These are noted on the Historic Environment Record and have been identified as assets of local or regional importance whose conservation contributes to the overall cultural heritage of the National Park. These include a building platform, which is the possible site of an early mill (110m from the route), numerous caves and fissures of cultural heritage interest around the southern end of the route, a stone stab footbridge at the bottom of Wetton Hill (20m away from the route) and the former Leek and Manifold Light Railway (which joins the track at its southern end).

The Manor House at the northern end of the route is grade II listed.

Landscape Interest

The route lies within the White Peak Landscape Character Area (LCA) and within Natural Zone.

The National Park is designated for its internationally and nationally important landscape.

The Natural Zone designation comprises areas whose natural beauty it is particularly important to conserve. Within the National Park it comprises the wilderness areas in which the influence of man and of development is less marked.

The overall strategy for the White Peak LCA is to protect and manage the distinctive and valued historic character of the settled, agricultural landscapes, whilst seeking opportunities to enhance the wild character and diversity of remoter areas. The route is within the Limestone and Limestone Dales and Limestone Hills and Slopes Landscape Character Types within the White Peak LCA.

Appendix 3 – Wetton Hills – Natural Beauty and Recreation

The following identifies how the special characteristics of the area meets the tests for designation as a National Park and the evaluation of opportunities for open-air recreation.

Natural beauty

Landscape quality i.e. condition, that is the intactness of the landscape, the condition of its features, its state of repair, and the absence of incongruous elements:

- Landscape elements and features in good condition; some erosion to rights of way
- Landscape unspoilt with no notable incongruous features

Scenic quality i.e. appeal to the visual senses, for example due to important views, visual interest and variety, contrasting landscape patterns, and dramatic topography or scale:

- Limestone dale and dry valley
- Far reaching views along the route and to the skyline
- Open nature of the upper sections contrasting with a sense of seclusion along the tree fringed lower parts of the dale

Relative wildness i.e. the presence of wild (or relatively wild) character in the landscape due to remoteness, and appearance of returning to nature:

- Extensive area of open country
- Sense of remoteness
- The Manor House is situated at the northern end of the route

Intrusiveness/tranquillity i.e. freedom from undue disturbance. Presence in the landscape of factors such as openness, and perceived naturalness:

- Within open country
- Within Natural Zone/section 3 Limestone Dale and Limestone Hill and Heath

Natural heritage features i.e. habitats, wildlife and features of geological or geomorphological interest that may contribute strongly to the naturalness of a landscape:

- Dry valley
- Semi-natural limestone dale grasslands and scrub
- Caves and fossil deposits

Cultural heritage features i.e. archaeological, historical and architectural characteristics or features that may contribute to the perceived beauty of the landscape:

- Wetton Hill prehistoric bowl barrow
- Stone slab footbridge
- Possible site of an early Mill
- Caves and fissures
- Link to the former Leek and Manifold Railway
- Listed building at the northern end of the route

Associations i.e. connections with particular people, artists, writers, or events in history that may contribute to perceptions of beauty in a landscape or facilitate understanding and enjoyment:

- Route used to transport copper to Red Hurst Holt on the Manifold and Leek Railway

Recreation

Access to high quality landscapes, memorable places and special experiences i.e. opportunities to enjoy scenic quality, relative wildness, and peacefulness etc:

- Outstanding views
- Access to an extensive area of open country and its hills and dales.
- Links to the Manifold Trail and the South Peak Loop for horse riding and cycling
- Links to the National Trust's Wetton Mill café and holiday accommodation

Presence of a wide range of natural or cultural heritage features, landmarks and designations that cumulatively enrich the landscape experience:

- Important cave fossil deposits
- Historic track, scheduled monument, listed building
- Wetton Hill and the Sugar Loaf are distinctive
- Diverse range of opportunities for access

Range of outdoor recreational experiences which enable people to enjoy the special qualities of the area and do not detract from the enjoyment of the area by others i.e. quiet outdoor recreation:

- Easily accessible from surrounding settlements and holiday accommodation
- Scope for a variety of walks
- Scope to link in with longer trails
- A means of access for activities in the area, including caving
- Opportunities for nature study

Scope for management of recreation to enhance recreational opportunities or protect the conservation interest of the Park:

- Retention of grassland and repairs to the route in sympathy with the area
- Restrictions to recreational motorised vehicle users

Appendix 4 – Wetton Hills – Impacts of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles

Ecological/Geological Impacts	Possible Mitigation
<p>Loss of vegetation on and adjacent to the route The route runs through grassland, with a large section of the route undefined on the ground. Vehicle use, agricultural and recreational, has the potential to take a number of routes along the bottom of the dale-side resulting in a net loss of vegetation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surfacing of the route to accommodate motorised vehicle use would change the character of the route and further reduce the amount of vegetation and could also result in further impact on the ecology and geology of the area. • Waymarking could delineate the line of the route but deviation may still occur. • Liaison with PDNPA Ecologist and Natural England over vulnerability, sensitivity and capacity issues.
<p>Damage to the drainage and surfacing of the route The use over time by vehicles damages the grass surface of the route and affects drainage and surface run-off.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the use of the route to maintain its trackless nature. Consider appropriateness of surfacing with respect to designations and character of the area. • Surfacing of the route to accommodate motorised vehicle use would change the character of the route and result in changes to run-off which could also further impact on the ecology and geology of the area. • Liaison with Highway Authority, PDNPA Ecologist and Natural England over maintenance and impacts. • Voluntary code of conduct (do not use roads which may be seriously damaged by wheel pressure, do not travel on green roads where they risk being damaged beyond a point of natural recovery, do not use roads that are too narrow for your vehicle.) has been unsuccessful in preventing damage.
<p>Noise and disturbance impact on wildlife Disturbance to nesting birds where susceptible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with Natural England and PDNPA Ecologist over vulnerability, sensitivity and capacity issues. • Voluntary code of conduct (effective silencing, ride quietly) will assist in preventing disturbance.

Archaeological Impacts	Possible Mitigation
<p>Impact on heritage assets and their settings and therefore the significance of nationally designated and currently undesignated heritage assets</p> <p>Intrusiveness of vehicles has an impact on the setting of features. Evidence of passage, and works and signage to deal with that, have an impact on the heritage asset and the character of the route and area and the setting of features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level and timing of use being monitored. Liaise with PDNPA's Cultural Heritage Team and Historic England over vulnerability, sensitivity and capacity issues.

Landscape and Visual Impacts	Possible Mitigation
<p>Visual impact of vehicle movement in the landscape over a wide area</p> <p>The impact from the passage of vehicles during the day or night is affected by the open nature of the landscape and the level of use of the route.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level and timing of use being monitored.
<p>Wheel ruts and damage to character of the route</p> <p>Evidence of the passage of vehicles is seen by the development of wheel ruts and on and adjacent to the route.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the route. Consider appropriateness of repairs with respect to designations and character of the area. Liaison with Highway Authority, Natural England and PDNPA Ecologist. • Existing voluntary code of conduct (do not use roads which may be seriously damaged by wheel pressure, do not travel on green roads where they risk being damaged beyond a point of natural recovery) has been unsuccessful in preventing disturbance.

Social Impacts	Possible Mitigation
<p>Deterrence of use by non-MPV users from presence or anticipation of vehicles Disturbance from vehicles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage indicating the range of classes of users • Voluntary code of conduct (limit to group sizes and maximum speed limits) can be unsuccessful in preventing disturbance
<p>Noise impact on people Disturbance from vehicles on users of the route and the properties to access the route.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary code of conduct (travel at a quiet and unobtrusive pace in small groups) not always applied

Appendix 5 – Wetton Hills – Special Qualities

Beautiful views created by contrasting landscapes and dramatic geology

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
The natural beauty, natural heritage, landscape character and diversity of landscapes	Protected habitats and features; limestone dale with extensive views	Ecological – damage and disturbance and risk of disturbance Archeological – impact on setting of features Visual - presence and evidence of use
Trees, woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, field barns and other landscape features	Range of landscape features	
Significant geological features	Caves	

Internationally important and locally distinctive wildlife and habitats

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
The importance of wildlife and the area's unique biodiversity	Protected habitats; accessible areas for the study of nature	Damage and disturbance and risk of disturbance
Trees, woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, field barns and other landscape features	Range of landscape features	

Undeveloped places of tranquility and dark night skies within reach of millions

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
A sense of wildness and remoteness	Away from major settlements and roads	Visual – presence and evidence of use Noise transient but over a wide area
Opportunities to experience tranquility and quiet enjoyment	Freedom to explore away from sources of noise	Noise transient but over a wide area. Conflict with other users

Undeveloped places of tranquility and dark night skies within reach of millions (cont.)

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
Easy accessibility for visitors from surrounding urban areas	Links to towns on the perimeter of the Park boundary.	
Opportunities to experience dark skies	No significant light sources	Night driving
Opportunities to improve physical and emotional well-being	Variety of access and recreation	Conflict with other users; damage to the route
The special value attached to the National Park by surrounding urban communities	Nearby communities and links to towns on the perimeter of the Park boundary.	Deterrence of other users

Landscapes that tell a story of thousands of years of people, farming and industry

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
The natural beauty, natural heritage, landscape character and diversity of landscapes	Protected habitats and features; limestone dale with extensive views	Ecological – damage and disturbance and risk of disturbance Archeological – impact on setting of features Visual - presence and evidence of use
Thousands of years of human influence which can be traced through the landscape	Range of historic features apparent in the landscape	Impact on the settings of features
Trees, woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, field barns and other landscape features	Range of landscape features	
The cultural heritage of history, archaeology, customs, traditions, legends, arts and literary associations	An important area for access to the landscape that contains these elements	Impact on features and their setting
Environmentally friendly methods of farming and working the land	Protected areas	Impact on land management.

An inspiring place for escape, adventure, discovery and quiet reflection

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
Opportunities to experience tranquility and quiet enjoyment	Freedom to explore away from sources of noise	Noise transient but over a wide area. Conflict with other users
Easy accessibility for visitors from surrounding urban areas	Nearby communities and links to towns on the perimeter of the Park boundary.	
Opportunities for outdoor recreation and adventure	Recreational pursuits of quality and challenge	Conflict with other users
The cultural heritage of history, archaeology, customs, traditions, legends, arts and literary associations	An important area for access to the landscape that contains these elements	Impact on features and their setting
Opportunities to improve physical and emotional well-being	Variety of access and recreation	Conflict with other users; damage to the route

Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
Clean air, earth and water	Protected areas, away from sources of pollution	Pollution
Opportunities to improve physical and emotional well being	Variety of access and recreation	Conflict with other users; damage to the route
The cultural heritage of history, archaeology, customs, traditions, legends, arts and literary associations	An important area for access to the landscape that contains these elements	Impact on features and their setting
The special value attached to the National Park by surrounding urban communities	Nearby communities and links to towns on the perimeter of the Park boundary.	Deterrence of other users

Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary (cont.)

Special Quality	Value	Impact by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
The flow of landscape character across and beyond the National Park boundary providing a continuity of landscape and valued setting for the National Park	Interconnecting limestone dale	
Sense of place	Naturalness of the landscape	Visual – presence and evidence of use Noise transient but over a wide area