

Washgate

Route Management Plan



Washgate - Route Management Plan



Washgates

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

Commencing at Booth Farm and heading generally south-west on a surfaced track, then continuing south, crossing the river Dove via a stone bridge and continuing generally westwards to Hillend.

Legal Status:	Non-classified Highway
County:	Derbyshire / Staffordshire
Parish:	Hartington Upper Quarter and Hollinsclough
Grid Reference:	SK 058680 to 047672
Length:	1500 metres

Nearest Other Byways / Non-classified Highways / Claimed Byways

Some NCHs in Hollinsclough, approximately 1 km to the south, short section of cul-de-sac route links to this lane near Tenterhill.



Washgate





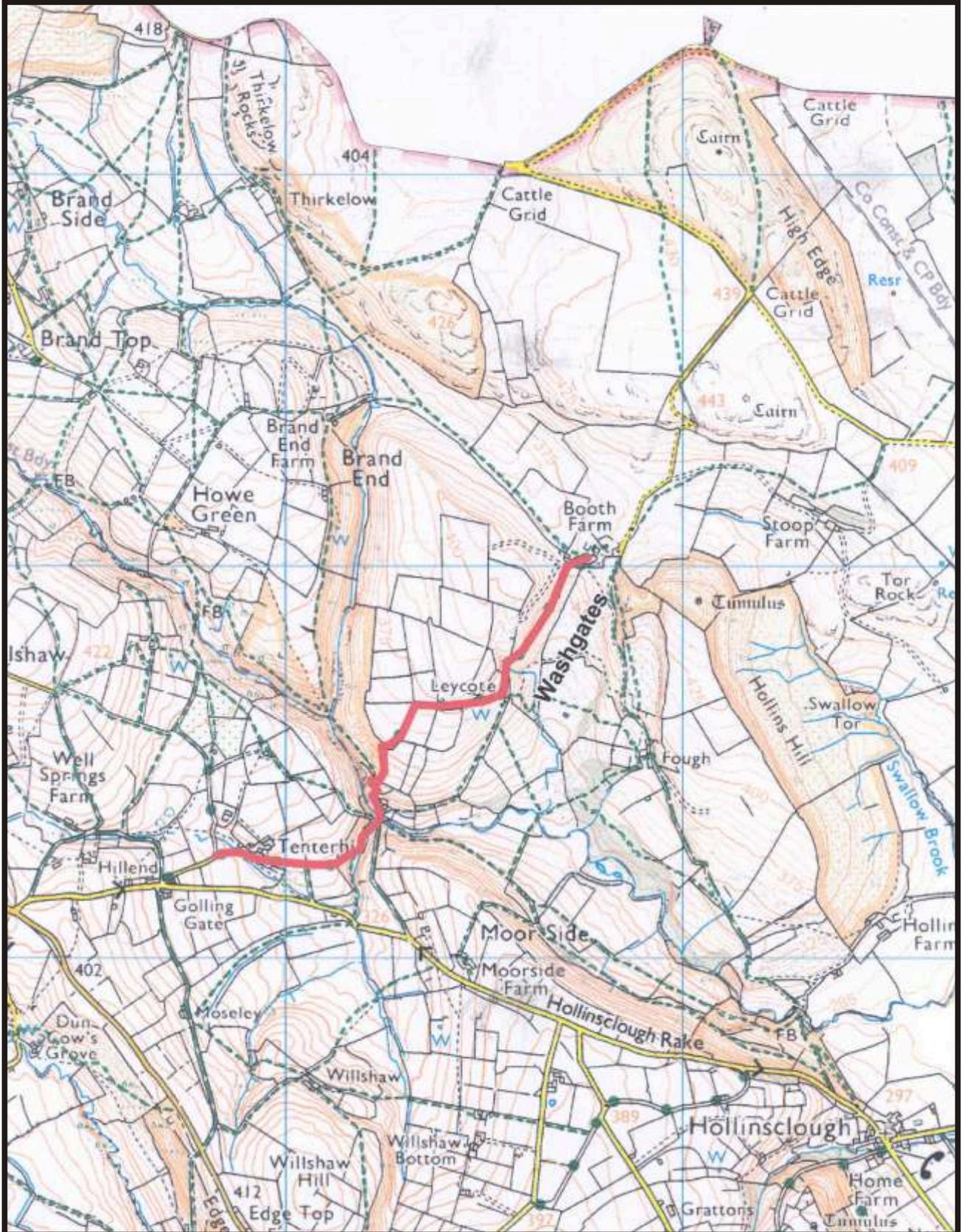
Washgates

 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 are difficult to use, and horse riders and carriage drivers would find use very difficult, 4WD vehicles have reportedly frequently damaged or demolished adjacent boundary walls to ensure continuation. Desire lines are being used on some areas to avoid damage.

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 = 3

Comments:

Crosses through designated area and utilises a grade 2 listed bridge, vehicles have been leaving the highway via the nearby river to continue.

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 = 2

Comments:

Generally localised and adjacent landowners.

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 ford at the river is not, we understand, part of any vehicular highway and damage there is therefore illegal, the highway itself is badly damaged and sections of pitching have been seriously eroded.

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 in several places, and steep, visibility is poor.

Total Score = 14 / 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)* The existing levels are such that no change along the route would be possible as part of an improvement scheme. (gradient existing is approx : 1:5 to 1:12) from bottom to top of route.
- *Drainage Issues* - Due to the nature and steepness of the ground along this route a drainage channel along the edge of the track (which side would depend on the direction line of the track) and stone ' buffers ' across the track at set intervals should slow the flow
- When adverse weather prevails.
- *California Bearing Ratio* DCC highways laboratory to investigate. (If necessary)
- *Repair Specification :-*
- 1. The majority of all the existing loose material should be cleared off the track to allow any exposed rock - head to be made good ie (where rough edges are common these should be subject to some attention so as to blend in with the existing ground)
- New stone infill along the track to regulate ground levels as required.
- 2. Buffers across the track at an angle (built with selected stone) should be constructed at desired intervals down the track to intercept and slow the flow of water during wet periods.
- Water may flow down the whole length of track before outfalling into the stream as there is little chance of any outlet along this section.
- *Cost to repair :-* £ 70k + (Tarmac surfacing / if approved £ 60k) = £ 130k
- *Estimated annual maintenance cost.* (< £5k)
- *Additional comments by engineer*

The above details are dependant on what classification is given to the route.

Historical Maintenance

Stone picking carried out on steep section up from bridge in summer 2008.

Staffordshire

The matter is being dealt with by our Northern Area Highways team.

2.3 Conservation Report

2.3.1 Ecological Report

Site designations

No part of the route passes through an SAC or SPA.

A short section of the route abuts onto the southern block of Colshaw Pastures SSSI. This was notified on the basis of the species-rich unimproved grassland and flushed areas.

A further short section of the route from the River Dove up the steep slope to the north is bordered to the west by a Section 3 Semi-natural Woodland Zone and to the east by a Key Wildlife Site (AG54/R93).

Description and ecological interest

The lane is bordered by a wide range of acid and neutral grassland, heathland, wet flush, scrub and broad-leaved woodland communities.

Between Tenterhill, at the western end, and the packhorse bridge over the river Dove, the lane has a narrow fringe of trees, scrub and grassland. Trees include sycamore, rowan, ash, elder and sweet chestnut. On the southern bank there is a mosaic of dry acid grassland and heath, containing wavy hair grass, heath bedstraw, tormentil, bilberry and heather.

Along the Dove there is richer vegetation: a wetland community including opposite-leaved golden saxifrage and three species of rushes, and a band of broad-leaved woodland that contains bird cherry, eared willow, grey willow, hybrid willows and alder. The latter represents an interesting and uncommon woodland community in the Peak District.

From Washgates bridge to the top of the brow on the north side, the lane is bordered by species-rich communities: acid grassland, neutral grassland, dry heath and grass-heath transitions. The acid grassland community is a particularly good rich example, containing sheep's bit (uncommon in the National Park), beautiful St John's wort, eyebright, devil's bit scabious, violets, green-ribbed sedge alongside typical species such as common bent, wavy hair grass, mat grass, tormentil, heath bedstraw and hard fern. The neutral communities contain knapweed, mouse-ear hawkweed, autumn hawkbit, bird's foot trefoil. Almost all this section of the route qualifies as Category A grassland under the PDNPA assessment scheme. Heathland species present include bilberry, cowberry and heather.

The northern section of the highway, from Leycote to Booth Farm, consists of a hard-surfaced farm track through semi-improved pasture and contains relatively little ecological interest.

Over 80 plant species were recorded along the lane. Badger latrines and tracks in mud were present at 5 places along the route.

Vehicles leaving the highway

Most of the lane is channelled between drystone walls, so little scope exists for off-highway driving.

In addition, the lane is currently subject to a temporary closure order. 'Road closed to vehicles' signs have been placed at Tenterhill, at the western end, and Leycote in the NE section of the route. The lane is physically blocked to 4WD traffic by large boulders positioned at Tenterhill and the top of the brow above the River Dove on the north side. Boulders have also been placed at the ford across the Dove. The gaps are wide enough for horses and cyclists to access the route and motorbikes can also get through these.

Impacts

The surface of the level, western section of the route has been churned up and rutted by vehicles in several places including at the point adjoining Colshaw Pastures SSSI.

Disturbance to the lane surface is evident on the south side of the river Dove and the old ford itself has been damaged. The packhorse bridge too has suffered some damage, with two coping stones missing; a local farmer reports that was the result of a 4WD vehicle attempting to drive over the bridge.

The lane surface on the steep incline up northwards from the Dove has been severely damaged with most of the original cobbles displaced and deep rocky ruts formed. This section contains some of the very few places along the route where vehicles could pass each other and these banks all support the richest vegetation. The ecological interest along most of the route is very high and is very vulnerable to further use by motor vehicles.

2.3.2 Landscape Character Assessment

Washgates lies within the South-west Peak landscape character 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 18th 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.

2.3.3 Cultural Heritage Report

Please see map on the next page illustrating Cultural Heritage Features on or close to the route.

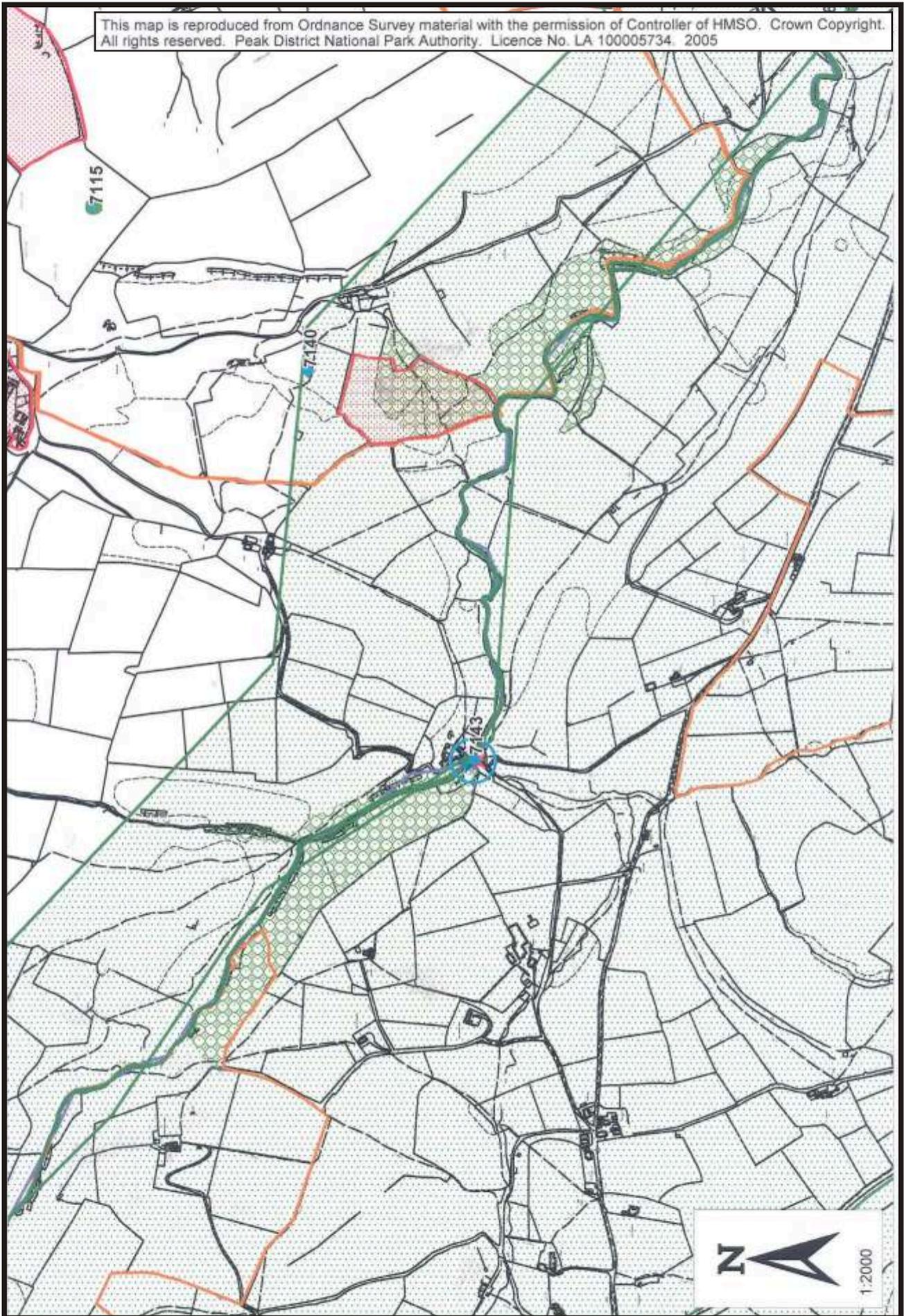
A post-medieval packhorse bridge is recorded on the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) (number: 20628) at SK 06290 66850

Historic landscape character information: the northern section of the route runs through land which is characterised as: Post-1650 Encl - Regular: Piecemeal/Award, no details.

The Chatsworth Map of 1614 shows this as several areas of pasture, in particular 'Calf Haie', 'The Brand' and 'Dovehead Medowes', as well as a 'piece of Moorish Grounde' called 'The Round Knolles'. All were occupied in common by the tenants of The Booth in proportion to their holdings. The Hartington Parliamentary Enclosure map of 1804 shows that there had been subdivision of these areas into smaller enclosures before that date.

The southern section of the route runs through land Enclosure of unknown date - with irregular fields. The land was enclosed prior to an 1827 Harpur-Crewe Estate Map; there is no earlier map evidence.

Map illustrating Cultural Heritage Features on or close to the route



2.4 Evidence of levels of use

Use is generally low for both motorbikes and other vehicles. Initial survey figures are inflated by the presence of a Sunday record of 126 motorbikes in one day, which is believed to have been an organised event.

Thursday 22 Feb 07 - Thursday 29 March 07 (36 days)

Daily totals	Cars only	Motorcycles only
Mondays	0	0
Tuesdays	0	1
Wednesdays	3	21
Thursdays	0	0
Fridays	0	0
Saturdays	11	43
Sundays	15	149
Mon-Fri total	3	22
Sat-Sunday total	26	192
Overall total	29	214
Average per day	0.81	5.94

Thursday 7 June 07 - Wednesday 15 August 07 (70 days)

Daily totals	Cars only	Motorcycles only
Mondays	4	6
Tuesdays	0	2
Wednesdays	1	10
Thursdays	0	11
Fridays	0	5
Saturdays	13	65
Sundays	25	91
Mon-Fri total	5	34
Sat-Sunday total	38	156
Overall total	43	190
Average per day	0.61	2.71

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

On the Derbyshire side only the tenant farmer requires access on the track. This is just for the first approx 200 yds and he requires vehicular access to his land - this could be any time of year.

On the Staffordshire side only landowners at Tenterhill and Gollin Gate Farm require access. This is roughly at SK 051662 and this is just to bring cattle across and along the lane a short distance. This could be any time of year. No vehicular access is required.

Observations from other parties

A number of letters have been received from local residents protesting about the use of the lane by motor vehicles, and the damage caused to the lane as a result. They feel the historic nature of the route needs protection, and motor vehicles should be banned.

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. As an enclosed lane there is a danger to other users – horse-riders etc.
2. Variable width between 3-4 metres between walls and fences. Usable width severely restricted in some places by trees growing in the road, by accumulated earth and rocks and recent placement of boulders.
3. The width is generally very limited.

Cause(s) of damage

1. This route is ruined by MVs.
2. Two 40-50 metre stretches of muddy ruts. At the ford end, one of the stones forming the roadway has been upended to form an obstruction to 4x4s.
3. The surface has been comprehensively destroyed for all users by recreational vehicles. Natural erosion exacerbates that initiated by inappropriate use.

Solutions

1. If no management of the route is foreseeable, a temporary TRO closure should be considered. If management / surfacing is possible, consider permit, or limit on number of vehicles.
2. Cut back vegetation, remove obstructing boulders, reinstate stone setts from which the road is made, reinstate the upended slab at the ford, fill the rutted/muddy stretches.
3. Permanent TRO to protect heritage and prohibit unsustainable use between Tenterhill and Leycote.

Long-term management options

1. As an historical route, cobbled, it has potential, providing the surface is improved and maintained.
2. Routine cutting back of the vegetation, maintenance of the roadway surface.
3. The area around the ancient pack horse bridge is a place of singular charm. It is inconceivable to me that anyone should cause wilful destruction by forcing a four wheel drive vehicle along its attractive historic surface. A TRO should endure in perpetuity, (but) it may be too far gone for repair to the historic surface.

Local Access Forum sub-group recommendations

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

Their majority recommendations for Washgates were:

- A permanent TRO for recreational motor vehicles (except those with specific permission).
- Repair historical route surface.

One Member abstained from this view.

3 Action Plan

Summary of Issues

- Sections of the route are of considerable historic value.
- The bridge crossed is a grade 2 listed structure.
- Damage in the past has been attributed to four-wheel drive vehicles on parts of this trail
- Washgates is presently subject to an 18 month restriction of use to all vehicles save access due to safety concerns. This has been generally well observed and the presence of heavy boulders has deterred all but one determined four-wheel drive trespasser.
- Whilst we wish to see access protected where possible, we also have considerable concerns about the viability of vehicle access on this route.
- The packhorse bridge is not, in our opinion, wide enough or safe enough to allow four wheel drive use.
- The pitched surface is unusual on this type of route but the damage that has been caused over the years has threatened to make repairs almost unviable, we do not wish to see this situation return.
- Ecologists have concerns about vehicles crossing the river which, in any case, do not presently have vehicle rights.

Pre-Management Plan Actions:

The route is currently subject to a temporary closure for repairs. Barriers, signs and logger in place. Landowner fully involved and supportive of the process.

- Vehicle use has been logged
- Frequent meetings have taken place with all parties
- The route has been formally closed for 18 months and some repairs have taken place
- The route has been blocked during this period
- The landowner has been carrying out localised improvements
- A partnership of Staffordshire County Council/Derbyshire County Council/PDNPA is looking into the ongoing monitoring and repair of this route.

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
EMERGENCY TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE**

WASHGATE LANE, LEYCOTE

WHEN: 18 April 2008 to 09 May 2008

WHERE: Washgate Lane, Leycote from the County boundary (with Staffordshire) for a distance of 650 metres (712 yards) in a north easterly direction

REASON: Urgent carriageway repairs **ALTERNATIVE ROUTE:** Not applicable

Access will be maintained, whenever reasonably possible, on the affected length of road. The road will re-open as soon as the work is finished. This may be earlier than advertised.

Derbyshire County Council apologises for any inconvenience caused while work takes place. Anyone needing further information should ring Call Derbyshire on 08456 058 058.

This notice is given under Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) to prohibit its use by traffic.

Ian Stephenson, Strategic Director - Environmental Services, County Hall, Matlock DE4 3AG

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

Washgates

The existing use to date does not appear to have had significant impact on ecological interests, but continued usage has significant potential to lead to i) effects of drainage on the adjacent Colshaw Pastures SSSI and ii) spread of vehicles off the track on/above the incline northwards from the Dove, with consequent damage to habitats of significant importance. A further concern is possible damage to the riverbed from vehicles using the ford, and the potential for vehicular transmission of crayfish plague. Closure of the route to vehicles would be the most secure way of preventing all these problems. However improvement to the surface would be an acceptable alternative ecologically, provided it avoids land-take and drainage effects on the 3 areas of interest (the SSSI, Dove crossing and laneside banks on northern incline from the river). This would need to include measures to ensure vehicles did not off-route up/on top brow of the incline, eg for passing. In addition measures would be needed to prevent damage to the riverbed at the ford, which may need Environment Agency consent. Given the potential for drainage effects on Colshaw Pastures SSSI, Natural England should be consulted about any proposals for work on this route.

5 Management Proposals

- 1. Consult on a proposal for a full-time permanent TRO for motor vehicles, *except* motor cycles, on the grounds of the safety of users of the lane.**

Action: Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service

Priority: Immediate

Timescale: 2009/10

- 2. Carry out repairs to the top section of the lane to make it safe for all users. This will include stone surfacing.**

Action: Derbyshire County Council Highways

Priority: Urgent

Timescale: 2009/10

- 3. Put in place and maintain signs and barriers indicating no through road beyond river. Discuss cross-border issues with Staffordshire CC.**

Action: Derbyshire County Council Highways

Priority: Urgent

Timescale: 2009/10

- 4. Carry out repairs to stone pitching**

Action: Peak District NPA

Priority: Medium

Timescale: subject to assessment of future use and sustainability of the route.

