Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails
Ladmanlow, Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

November 2010
(Burlow Road access link removed December 2010)
Currently it is planned to work up each of these sections in parallel, and to realise land agreements and to make planning applications as progress on each self-contained section dictates. It is hoped that the first works on the ground will be in hand for public use in 2011 and that the whole project will be open in 2012, the year of the Olympics.

The Peak Trails Links Project – A summary

Buxton to the High Peak Trail and to the Monsal Trail, and the Monsal Trail to Matlock

The National Park has popular cycling routes along the Tissington and High Peak Railways as well as on the Monsal Trail near to Bakewell. But it has long been frustrated by their not connecting through to Buxton and Matlock Stations.

The links proposed here would overcome this and lay the foundation for the National Park to pursue a much more sustainable transport programme, one in which many visitors arrived by train and then used bicycles to explore the Park.

The map here does no more than show the line of the proposed route and highlight each section which is to be covered by a detailed report for discussion with landowners and authorities.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails

Harpur Hill & Staker Hill Section

Executive Summary
This project sets out to provide a largely traffic free path from the existing Buxton Country Park through to Harpur Hill and finally to join the minor road to Earl Sterndale at Staker Hill. This 6.5 km route will achieve a number of objectives and meet various policies of the High Peak Borough Council including;

- It will create a valuable local resource for walkers, cyclists and people with wheelchairs and children’s buggies. The path is mostly level and will have a good all weather surface so it can be used throughout the year.
- The route with create a path across what is currently a gap in the public footpath network above the Burlow Road in Harpur Hill.
- The project adds nearly 4kms to the length of publicly accessible route on the line of the historic Cromford and High Peak Railway all of which can be added to the existing High Peak Trail.
- It will now be much easier and more practical for visitors, including families to cycle from Buxton to reach the High Peak and Tissington Trails, all in line with Council policy to widen transport choice and encourage sustainable transport.
- The Pennine Cyleway which currently follows the hilly and heavily trafficked Burlow Road can now be re-signed and diverted to this much more suitable route, in line with Council policy to improve this strategic route.
- The path with make for a better route for local people to walk and cycle to work in Harpur Hill industrial area and at HSL.
- The completion of this route past the Norbert Dentressangle lorry park will enable the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to consider designating the corridor as a Local Wildlife Site thereby bridging the current gap in wildlife interest along the old railway.

This revised application has taken into account various points raised at Committee in an earlier submission, including by adding a gravelled surface all through to make the path more sympathetic for its countryside setting, modifying the planned links into the local community, and taking into account detailed discussions with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to enhance the ecological benefits of the final work.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails

Buxton Country Park, Harpur Hill & Staker Hill Section

Introduction

This map shows the key route from Buxton via the Country Park, the High Peak Railway and across Staker Hill to reach the quiet back roads to Earl Sterndale and the High Peak and Tissington Trails. Once built it will create a really wonderful local resource for the free use of the residents of Buxton, and it will make and attractive route all the way from the Railway Station to the High Peak Trail, which will be within the ability of most people who want to cycle however much a novice they might be. The route will also form a good all weather path for walkers and much of it will be very suitable for people in wheelchairs.

At present cyclists have no choice but to follow a series of main roads out of Buxton, up to Harpur Hill, down along Burlow Road and then up and down Hind Low to finally pick up the minor roads through Earl Sterndale. All this is completely unsuitable for the novice or family group and challenging even for more experienced cyclists. So it is not surprising that most people choose to drive to start cycling at Parsley Hay. The central purpose of this link to Buxton is to create an attractive route which is mostly traffic free, not too hilly and a memorable local resource in its own right.

Such a route can be achieved by leaving Buxton around the edge of the Country Park on a new path climbing steadily up to Ladmanlow. Here the original course of the High Peak and Cromford Railway remains intact through the HSL site and curving around Harpur Hill.

At this point the later link to the Ashbourne Railway (built in 1890) drops away to join the main quarry railway, whilst the High Peak Railway is lost in the vast Hillhead Quarry. Staker Hill provides the way forward. An existing bridle path forms the basis of the route, with two additional zigzags to take out the worst of the gradient. The climb is worth it for magnificent views in all directions, and indeed the top might well be a popular destination for local visitors and Buxton people.

The route now runs level around an open hillside to the road to Earl Sterndale where this phase of construction ends. The road is very lightly trafficked and is a most suitable way through to the High Peak Trail, but it has a large drop (110m) to Earl Sterndale and back again. In the longer term a subsequent phase would endeavour to build a much less arduous route, roughly along the line of the ridge followed by the bridle path to finally complete a traffic free route from Green Lane on the outskirts of Buxton to the High Peak Trail.

These notes describe the Buxton Country Park, Harpur Hill and Staker Hill sections. Most of the way the route runs on existing residential roads and no works are considered necessary or are planned, except some signing. The detailed work which is the subject of this planning application, covers the 1.3km of new path climbing up through Grinlow Woods and Buxton Country Park to reach Ladmanlow. This route will provide an invaluable all-weather local walk, a good link to the Country Park, a way into town for visitors at the camp site there, all as well as a route to HSL and the Tissington Trail beyond.

This proposal complements the County Council’s Greenway Strategy in that it provides for a high quality walking and cycling route to the town centre and the station, and on this traffic free section an excellent route for people with disabilities or in wheelchairs. It does not though provide for equestrians in that its focus is to enable the public to visit the countryside and the National Park, from the town and from the station.

This route is promoted by Peak Cycle Links Ltd, a new local organisation set up to deliver walking and cycling routes in the area, by working closely with the County and District Councils and the Peak District National Park. In this instance its task has been to negotiate agreements with the various landowners and statutory bodies along the way, to raise funds, and to construct and maintain the routes all as a part of a wide ranging programme to encourage the public to travel more sustainably. In particular Peak Cycle Links wishes to recognise its indebtedness to the Buxton Civic Association which has encouraged this work and provided the model for this direct action approach by the local community. In addition we are grateful to the support given by the principle landowners who have made this route possible. The Health and Safety Laboratories, Norbert Dentressangle, Tarmac Ltd, The Chatsworth Estates and Mr W Wright of Haslin Farm.

Map © Crown Copyright

View of rock cutting from HSE entrance

Area covered by This Report
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: **Harpur Hill & Staker Hill Section**

These maps describe the works proposed via a series of notes, drawings and photographs. The part of the route shown in green dashes is already surfaced as a road and no further works are required, whilst the sections shown in red comprise the lengths over which new paths need to be built.

All the new paths will be soundly constructed on a good stone base and finished off with a machine laid tarmac surface 2.5m wide which will then be finally topped off with tarspray and dark gravel chippings to reflect the rural nature of the area. This will ensure a good all weather surface, one that is suitable for wheelchair use as well as cycling and walking, and yet will be able to cope with farm vehicles and grazing livestock.

1. Proposed continuation through Country Park to Buxton itself is not part of this application but will be detailed separately.
2. Existing large car park in Country Park is a very convenient place to join this route if arriving by car.
3. Follow this road and build short length of surfaced path either side of wicket gate in order that cyclists and walkers can easily bypass the cattle grid.
4. The route then goes across in front of the field centre and follows the line of the existing path parallel to the main road.

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**Notes for Map 1**

1. Proposed continuation through Country Park to Buxton itself is not part of this application but will be detailed separately.
2. Existing large car park in Country Park is a very convenient place to join this route if arriving by car.
3. Follow this road and build short length of surfaced path either side of wicket gate in order that cyclists and walkers can easily bypass the cattle grid.
4. The route then goes across in front of the field centre and follows the line of the existing path parallel to the main road.

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**Key for Detailed Maps**

- Existing tarmac road  
- Proposed new path  
- Generally 2.5m wide  
- New fence  
- Note in text

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Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

Notes for Map 2

1. The position of the crossing of Grinlow Road has been discussed in detail with the County Council’s Highway engineers. It is shown at the optimum position set away from the main road junction where there are complex traffic movements, but not too far such that vehicle speed picks up, even though this is within the 30mph area. Signing will be dealt with in separate schedules to be approved by the County Council.

2. The route will proceed along this wide access road which will be resurfaced.

3. The path now leads off this, via an entrance made of two large rocks and runs along the plot boundary as shown in the sketch. This area has excellent views both north and south which could be enjoyed from a seat placed at the highest point.

4. Ramp down to join the High Peak Railway just by the existing gate. Note that this is the point of the start of the original Grinlow Branch and this piece of railway history could be marked with a replica of the original signal or something similar.

5. Entrance gateway to make it clear that this is the High Peak Trail route south, that it is by agreement with HSL Laboratories, that the public should keep to the route, and that at times patrols may be in evidence or closures necessary. This point was the summit and the end of the Cromford and High Peak Railway opened in 1829. As well as keeping the existing works gate it may be best to install a standard ‘A’ frame access control to limit entry by motorcycles who will not be permitted to use the route. This prohibition will be reinforced by appropriate notices.

6. The existing tarmac road has recently been repaired in places.
Notes for Map 3

1. Route continues along course of High Peak Railway.
2. Modify existing gate.

Photo 1. View along railway at Stanley Moor looking towards Ladmanlow
Photo 2. Looking along High Peak Trail showing the excellent existing surface
Photo 3. View through cutting on the way to HSL
Notes for Map 4

1. At the south end of the cutting, for HSL’s security requirements, divert the public path down the side of the embankment as shown in the sketches so as to shield the new works site. Note a wall or a low bank will need to be built running up to the north of the existing cattle grid in order to complete the visual security of the site. Gate off the works road on the old railway at this point.

2. Slope up gradually through this wood to join the old railway at the cross roads. This short section of woodland path will add a welcome shade on this exposed upland route.

3. Clearly mark this footpath as being for walking only.

4. Follow existing railway route which is already marked out with a cycle route on this high embankment.

5. Clearly mark path through junction with red highlight and sign No Entry up hill! The HSL will install a new security gate and access control in this area.

Sections through link by Anthony Hill Embankment

Photo 3. View from south end of Anthony Hill cutting showing boundary wall falling away from the road and the current view of the new works which would be hidden by the proposed stone wall.

Photo 4. View from wood looking at the Anthony Hill embankment showing the approximate line of the proposed path sloping down and shielded from sight of the new works.

Photo 5. View looking towards crossroads showing the approximate location of proposed path emerging form the woodlands. The line of the old railway straight ahead would be gated off and the footpaths up to Turncliff closed.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill & Staker Hill Section

Map 4

Photo 6. Looking north from the start of the Anthony Hill cutting.

Photo 7. View showing HSL road already marked out with walking and cycling space.

Road on railway to Ladmanlow

Repair fencing over 130m

Scale 1:2500 at A3

6 metres 100 200
Map 5

The Cromford and High Peak Railway

This historic line was completed in 1831, to a survey by Josias Jessop, to link the Cromford Canal Wharf at High Peak Junction with the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge, 33 miles away. The summit of the line was at Ladmanlow (386m), somewhat higher than the Ais Gill summit on the Carlisle and Settle line (356m).

The proposed path runs along sections of the original railway formation (1831) from Ladmanlow. By 1892 the line north of Ladmanlow had been largely abandoned, and in 1899 the LNWR opened their line to Ashbourne, which used parts of the Cromford and High Peak Railway to Parsley Hay, and made a new connection to the old railway at Harpur Hill. In 1875 a number of sharp bends were taken out to make a more direct route in the area of what is now the HSL and Harpur Hill industrial area.

Whilst there are no particular significant railway structures remaining, on what was largely a contour railway in this area, this project proposes to mark each of the numerous sidings and deviations with a large rock, carved with the quarry name, to be positioned as closely as possible to the location of the original trackwork points. A wider interpretation of this historic railway will be integrated with National Park signing further south.

Photo 8: View from bridge looking east along railway formation

Photo 9: View from HSL access bridge looking west along the 1875 cutting at Harpur Hill showing the proposed path. Over this section the path is to be constructed with an unsealed finish topped off with limestone dust. This is possible on this section as there is no drainage or erosion issues, no livestock graze this section nor is it used by farm vehicles.

Notes for Map 5

1. Build a new path for pedestrians and cyclists here through the cutting which passes under the HSL access road and behind workshops. This section to be constructed in limestone and finished in limestone fines to reflect the wildlife interest in the adjacent grasslands. Alongside the container and buildings which line the boundary of the industrial estate, a hedge of native non thorn species will be planted to the recommendation of Penny Anderson Associates.

2. This link to the proposed HSL car park (which will be available to the public) runs along the line of the original High Peak Railway. It now consists of rough grassland which will be cut and managed as an extension of the local wildlife site.

3. Area of proposed carpark.

4. Rock to mark line of original railway.

5. Make another clear entrance to the High Peak Trail here, confirming the route to Buxton.

6. Mark out road with a zebra crossing to give an emphasis to the route.

7. Construct a ramp from available fill at 1:20 down to the level of the existing path. The access to the road to be controlled by a ‘K’ type anti-motorbike control, together with a locked 3.6m wide farm access gate, set back from the road edge by 4m.

8. All along this section the turf taken up from the cutting to the west will be laid along the finished verge and side of low earthworks in order to reproduce the local wildflower mix such that when mature the existing gap in the local wildlife site along the route of the railway can be bridged.

9. Construct path along edge of field and build new ramp at 1:20 gradient back up to railway. This ramp should be excavated out of the embankment in order to win material for earlier ramp down off industrial road (See map 5 for detail). At the deepest part of this ramp bring in 10 cubic metres of large stone to make a habitat in the heart of the embankment.

10. High Peak Trail continues on the line of the former railway.

11. Link to Parks Inn to ramp off the old railway near the abandoned reservoir, follow the railway boundary as far as the field boundary and then run centrally down this with a new fence either side to finally cross to Parks Inn as shown in the detail in the next page. Paul please note we have a new fence on both sides of the path now.

12. ‘K’ type access control to prevent motor bikes at the entrance to the pub gardens.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill to Staker Hill section

1. Sketch showing earthworks ramp beside Norbert Dentressangle land
   - New boundary fence on HSE land
   - Ramp 4m wide dropping at 1:20 made from available material
   - New boundary fence
   - Path to be built on a low causeway to ensure dry throughout the year.
   - Sections showing climb from field back to railway (40m)

2. View near to bottom on ramp
   - New boundary fence
   - Path to be set at 1:20 gradient
   - Cut through the old boundary wall of the railway and finish masonry off neatly
   - Ramp excavated with line of old ramp and material used for ramp up to industrial road
   - Old track to quarry blocked off with rock
   - Sections showing climb from field back to railway (40m)

3. View at ground level looking towards Harpur Hill
   - All fences to be standard agricultural (7 wire sheep mesh plus one strand barbed and one strand smooth wire on timber posts) 1.0m high overall
   - New boundary fence
   - Wicket gate for public footpath
   - Example of ‘K’ type access control
   - Use fill to even out undulations in ground
   - Side of embankment excavated for fill
   - Maintain existing grasses on new slopes

Wildlife
- All construction to be confined within 3m wide agreed corridor.
- All vegetation and turf from here to be laid on outside face of ramp east of level crossing
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

Notes for Map 6

1. Exact location of this and each siding into the various quarries to be checked with contemporary maps and marked with a large rock to double up as a seat.

2. At this point, where the rockface comes close to the railway, block off the current motorcycle route to the Blue Lagoon area, with a line of large rocks across the whole width of the railway including an "K" type access control to admit walkers, cyclists and wheelchairs.

3. At the boundary of Tarmac’s land enhance the existing gate with a new farm access gate together with 1.2m wide wicket gate and 1.0m wide cattle grid as shown in the standard details.

4. Clear away the field fencing and repair the former loading platform and if the appropriate quarry machinery is available set up 3 or 4 “sculptures” to give an insight to the workings of the old quarries.

5. Position robust kissing gate in gap in rocks to allow informal access to the “Blue Lagoon” without damage to the farm fencing.

6. Again clear fencing from concrete loading area and re fence along top of bank.

7. Install new farm gate and wicket gate/cattle grid across the main path.

8. This section of the route will be used as the farm access road.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill section

**Platform used to display “sculpture” to commemorate quarry industry**

**Cross section showing path on railway used for farm access and grazing**

**Existing lane at rear of Grin Low Close**

**Start of path from pub car park at 1.2m wide gap between shed and garage**

**Reinforce existing hedge if required**

**Cycle racks**

**Path in defile over this section**

**Install “K” type motorcycle control here**

**Ramp up at 1:12 to reach edge of pub garden between two trees**

**Cut through into field 5m from corner of field**

**3.6m farm gate plus kissing gate for footpath to stop motorcycles here**

**Cattle grid and wicket gate either side of farm crossing so as to allow cattle to graze in the area**

**New fence with barbed wire and sheep netting to prevent access to land beside No 7 and to allow cattle to graze here**

**2m wide path excavated 1.8m deep altogether to prevent overlooking, so as to maintain an open view of the hillside from No 7**

**Approximately 10m opposite No 7 Grin Low Close**

**Sketch of path passing behind No 7 Grin Low Close**

**View of proposed path entrance at Parks Inn**

**Detail of link through Parks Inn garden**

**Map 6**

**Scale 1:2500 at A3**

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This whole section of the route runs at a high altitude, above 1200ft, (380m) so is relatively bleak. There is no intention to plant additional trees as this is not felt appropriate, but rather to treat this as an open moorland section of the route. The only exception to this is around the Harpur Hill industrial estate where some planting would shield a fairly brutal background.

Wildlife studies have been carried out by Dr. Phil Smith, of Penny Anderson Associates, who reported that it was unlikely that species of particular significance would be found along this particular section of the overall project. Three sections of the planned route are designated Derbyshire Wildlife Sites; at Stanley Moor where the route follows the existing tarmac road along the old railway, through the cutting at Harpur Hill industrial estate, and along the old railway for a short distance towards Harpur Hill itself. Through the cutting the path follows the line of the existing public foot path, whilst part of the remaining section of the designated railway land is in fact a lorry park and the rest heavily used by motor cycles.

Landscape, the environment and wildlife matters

This Staker Hill section is by kind permission of Tarmac Ltd who have planning consent for the extraction of limestone and the extension of Hillhead Quarry in this area. At some stage in the future, this section of the cycle route along with the bridleway, will have to be diverted, in order to accommodate this work. At the present time quarrying plans are yet to be determined but it is anticipated that the eventual route may run parallel to the railway and then up beside the Buxton Road at Hind Low.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

View looking along High Peak Railway towards Harpur Hill. This section will be used as the farm access road to the fields above Harpur Hill.

Looking south along the line of High Peak Railway and showing the path climbing up Staker Hill.
Map 8

Notes for Map 8

1. The path continues to follow the 428 contour to pick up the old access track just below the upper row of abandoned bunkers.

2. From this point, outside the boundary of quarrying consent, the path should follow a convenient alignment to join the road a little further down the hill. Former bomb sites are a feature.

3. Stock proof wicket gate at entrance to field along with a sculptural sign announcing the start of the Greenway route to Buxton Country Park and the distance to Buxton Station. Make good dry stone wall.

4. Cyclists to follow road to Earl Sterndale.

5. Existing line of public bridleway to eventually be diverted as the quarry extends.

General Points

A. Seating. This route has a number of memorable vantage points, all of which would be appropriate stopping points for the public to enjoy the view, have picnics or otherwise pause on their journey. If possible these seats should be made from rock and steel to reflect the rugged nature of the industries here. It may be that appropriate seat shaped rocks or pieces of redundant quarry machinery can be used to make appropriate seats for this landscape.

B. Quarry machinery as sculpture features might not be seen as appropriate ornaments for a National Park, but around Buxton they are part of the landscape. We all rely on the products of quarries and might well be intrigued by the rugged equipment used to win the limestone for roads, cement and lime. Worn out crusher jaws, excavator components or sorting screens might all make for interesting markers along the route and a tribute to the quarry industry, ideally a sculptor familiar with the reuse of such artefacts would manage this part of the programme of works.

C. Signs and directions Details of signing are not included here as it is intended to adopt the same standards of signing and information boards used by the National Park, all in a single coordinated scheme from Buxton station to Parsley Hay, the High Peak and Tissington Trails.
Map 8
To Ladmanlow and Buxton
Bridle path continues beside the road before cutting off towards the top of Hindlow

Model aircraft field

Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

Scale 1:2500 at A3

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To Ladmanlow and Buxton

Bridle path

Model aircraft field

Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

Map of route from Harpur Hill to Earl Sterndale Road

Bridlepath continues beside the road before cutting off towards the top of Hindlow
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails

Harpur Hill & Staker Hill section

Technical Details

Improving the Pennine Cycleway, Route 68

The Peak District National Park Authority are currently working on opening up the four closed tunnels on the Monsal Trail. This will complete a continuous railway path from Bakewell to Millers Dale and the Blackmill Cottages access road to the Wye Dale car park by the A6 at Topley Pike. This is likely to become a very popular route running as it does through particularly scenic scenery.

However neither this newly extended Monsal Trail, or the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails reach through to Buxton. In each case the end of the Trail is separated from the town by major roads with high levels of traffic in effect precluding any possibility of cycling from Buxton to join these railway trails.

So in addition to the work on the Monsal Trail itself, the PDNPA have been pursuing a programme to develop good family quality cycling routes to connect through to Buxton station, with the objective that visitors to the National Park could arrive by train, hire bicycles at the station and then visit the town and explore the National Park via these two magnificent trails.

At present an estimated 24 million visits are made to the National Park each year, mostly by car. At the heart of this project is the objective of reducing car borne visitors by as much as 1million a year, thereby reducing traffic on the roads, reducing emissions and contributing towards the Council’s sustainability targets.

Map1 shows the end of the existing Trails and the main roads separating them from Buxton.

Map2 shows the proposed links. The Woo Dale link from the Wye Dale car park to Redgap Lane provides a wonderful way from the Monsal Trail to Buxton. And the Staker Hill, Harpur Hill and Buxton Country Park, which is the subject of the current planning application, goes a long way to making a perfect connection to the High Peak and Tissington Trails.

As well as a route for visitors, this section of railway route will be a most valuable local reserve for Buxton residents.

The Link to the High Peak and Tissington Trails

This proposed route starts at Buxton station and follows quite lightly trafficked routes through Buxton to Green Lane and Holmfield. Then the planned route climbs up through Grinlow Woods and Buxton Country Park to Ladmanlow. Over this section the gradient will be kept to a 1:15 slope in order that this route can also be used by people with wheelchairs, as well as cyclists and walkers.

From Ladmanlow the route follows the line of the High Peak Railway, including the long part which is already has a tarmac surface for the occasional use of the HSL, before finally climbing up Staker Hill to join the minor country road to Earl Sterndale and thence to join the High Peak Trail. This revised route will be signed as the Pennine Cycleway and the existing unsatisfactory alignment via Burlow Road will be abandoned.
Greenways, Bridleways and Cycle Routes

Derbyshire County Council has a policy to create an extensive network of Greenways catering for walkers, cyclists and horse riders all on a common route. The approaches to Buxton have proved to be very difficult with limited route options and significant restrictions. As a consequence the links to the High Peak and Tissington Trails proposed in this application cater only for walkers, cyclists and those with buggies or wheelchairs.

Particular effort has gone into creating a good all weather surface and easy gradients on the main route not exceeding 1:15. The most significant obstacles precluding horse riding on this link from Buxton is the long section of HSL land (the former High Peak Railway) where there is inadequate space for horses to pass HSL vehicles on the high embankment to Turncliff, and where the not infrequent sirens, alarms and explosions of every sort would be likely to frighten horses, and in addition Grinlow Woods where horse riding is not permitted.

The Map shows how a future horse riding route might be fashioned along the same general corridor. The most difficult section is to negotiate a new route along the edge of the hill above Earl Sterndale to reach the existing bridleway at Hind Low. Again for safety reasons the quarries require such a route to be set well back from the quarry edge. It is intended that these negotiations would be put in place once the route proposed from Buxton to Staker Hill is open because if it could be achieved it would also be of value to cyclists by avoiding the long hill down to, and up from Earl Sterndale. Buxton Country Park car park would seem to be an appropriate place for horse boxes to unload and the route to start.

On the other side of Buxton there is a similar restriction along the very narrow section of proposed route beside the River Wye to avoid the A6. Here a good option for horse riders would seem to be to follow the Pennine bridleway as far as Tunstead, and then the exiting bridleway to cross the railway near the Tunstead works. Then negotiating a new bridleway inside the field edge up the hill would avoid all the heavy industrial traffic and lead through eventually to Hardyside Lane and Redgap Lane to reach Fairfield Common on the outskirts of Buxton.

That route includes two very severe hills (up to Meadow Farm on the way to Tunstead and up the hill from the Tunstead works) which precluded it from being remotely suitable for a family cycling route, but none the less it remains an interesting option for horse riders.

Surface Materials and Finish

The surface along route will vary depending upon the circumstances and conditions at each point.

Long lengths of the former High Peak Railway, all through the HSL site already have a tarmac surface and this will remain.

Through the cutting at the Harpur Hill industrial estate, which is designated as a local wildlife site, the route is level with no drainage problems so an unsealed surface maybe appropriate.
Proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails: Harpur Hill and Staker Hill Section

Beyond this area the gradients down to Harpur Hill require a sealed surface and then the remainder of the route is used by agricultural vehicles and unfenced with livestock grazing across the route and the fields either side, so this section to the Earl Sterndale road will also have a sealed surface finished off with tarspray and gravel chippings to give the most rural appearance possible.

Gates and Access Controls
There are relatively few gates required on this project as on the agricultural lengths livestock will graze across the route. Where affected, farm gates will be replaced with new, and the end of sections which may have livestock, self closing wicket gates and narrow cattle grids, similar to the example shown on the Radstock and Frome path in Somerset.

Restricting motorbikes is a common problem to all open spaces and we will use the “K” type barriers favoured by Derbyshire where appropriate. These can be adjusted in width to make it more difficult for motorcyclists whilst at the same time still allowing permitted users, walkers, cyclists and nowadays people in motorised buggies to use the route.

In Buxton Country Park, in particular, we will work closely with the County Council, who already manage the whole area to a very good standard. Indeed the construction of any path there will be tied into their thinning out the woodlands as part of their management plan.

Signing the route through will also be a joint exercise. Peak Cycle Links has agreed to prepare a schedule of signs for the County Council to consider and will maintain them if the County requires. This will include resigning the Pennine Cycleway, Route 68, from Earl Sterndale to Buxton.

Wildlife and Ecology
Greenways footpaths and cycling routes are important opportunities for making ways through the countryside for the public to enjoy and appreciate the landscape, the views, the vegetation, plants and wildlife. Encouraging more people to travel this way and less by car, is a significant contribution towards reducing pollution, CO2 emissions and the intrusion of traffic into quiet areas.

At the same time it is important that in constructing and maintaining the paths take care to minimise disturbance to the ground and to ensure that the public keep to the route rather than wander too widely.

The application is supported by detailed recommendations by Penny Anderson Associates, locally-based ecological consultants with specialist skills in integrating wildlife and development. They will be on hand to oversee critical phases of the work.

Maintenance of the Route from Buxton to Staker Hill and the High Peak Trail
This project is being promoted by Peak Cycle Links, a local charity set up to work with the Peak District National Park Authority, and with the Councils, to bring forward the key links to Buxton and Matlock stations which lie outside the National Park itself.

Peak Cycle Links will construct the route to a high standard to start with and this is an important aspect of ensuring that the path remains in a good condition. In particular, the long gradients which are an inevitable part of climbing out of Buxton will be given a sealed surface to prevent the erosion and wash out which is inevitable with a stone surface.

Peak Cycle Links anticipates signing up a large number of supporters, both locally and from amongst all the visitors who will be using the new trails. Their support will find ongoing maintenance, as well as provide a roster of local voluntary rangers who will look after the paths on a daily basis as they walk or cycle along them. This will include any footpath sections for walkers as well as the main shared use route.

In Buxton Country Park, in particular, we will work closely with the County Council, who already manage the whole area to a very good standard. Indeed the construction of any path there will be tied into their thinning out the woodlands as part of their management plan.

Signing the route through will also be a joint exercise. Peak Cycle Links has agreed to prepare a schedule of signs for the County Council to consider and will maintain them if the County requires. This will include resigning the Pennine Cycleway, Route 68, from Earl Sterndale to Buxton.

Wildlife and Ecology
Greenways footpaths and cycling routes are important opportunities for making ways through the countryside for the public to enjoy and appreciate the landscape, the views, the vegetation, plants and wildlife. Encouraging more people to travel this way and less by car, is a significant contribution towards reducing pollution, CO2 emissions and the intrusion of traffic into quiet areas.

At the same time it is important that in constructing and maintaining the paths take care to minimise disturbance to the ground and to ensure that the public keep to the route rather than wander too widely.

The application is supported by detailed recommendations by Penny Anderson Associates, locally-based ecological consultants with specialist skills in integrating wildlife and development. They will be on hand to oversee critical phases of the work.
and we will be following their advice on minimising the impact upon protected species and habitats where the potential for these occurs. They will influence choice of materials, exact position of the route, timing of works and future management for wildlife. We have inspected the site with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and expect to work with them as this project matures. The map here lists matters of common interest and the positive outcome expected.

**Summary of Wildlife Actions**

1. Railway corridor is a designated Wildlife Site from Ladmanlow to Harpur Hill.
2. Adjacent Stanley Common is a particularly interesting habitat, but is unaffected by this proposal.
3. At the embankment diversion section, the existing railway embankment has material of microbiological interest. Soil and plant material harvested from the areas to be lost will be carefully stored and then used to recreate similar habitats on the embankments of the completed track, with appropriate management.
4. Through this cutting the contractor will be limited to a 3m wide strip centred around the existing tractor tracks, or as otherwise instructed by the ecologist. All soil and vegetation of botanical interest which cannot be retained in situ will be harvested and used to recreate similar grassland communities on embankments below the Norbert Dentressangle section, so as to link two currently separate Wildlife Sites together with habitats of greater wildlife value.
5. The site for storage will be in this area which was used by HSL contractors previously and will not impact any areas of existing nature conservation interest.
6. The remaining spur of the original alignment of the High Peak and Cromford railway, currently zoned for industry, will be managed as part of the existing Local Wildlife Site, providing and extension to the existing area and an opportunity for grassland enhancement for wildlife.
7. This “missing” section of the Wildlife Site could be designated once the material from the cutting has established as shown in the cross-sections. 10 cubic metres of loose rock fill will be included in this embankment to enhance the habitat.
8. The existing gates will be repositioned further to the west so as to enable a larger area of land to be grazed. The dividing fence will be removed so that livestock can range right up to the side of the quarry, providing improved grassland management for wildlife.
9. Here and at two other locations near ponds, Penny Anderson Associates will be the Ecological supervisors and will attend the site at the start of construction to see if there is any evidence of Great Crested Newts and will take the appropriate action if found.
10. This section of the former railway could be designated as a Wildlife Site in order to extend the existing length of railway designation.
11. The whole section up Staker Hill and across to the Earl Sterndale road will be constructed if possible outside the ground nesting birds breeding season. If not the route will be inspected by Penny Anderson Associates and the project will act on their advice.
1. Introduction
This revised report has been prepared by Helen Hamilton (BSc, MSc, MIEEM) of Penny Anderson Associates Ltd (PAA) and updates previous survey work carried out on 14th & 15th December 2009 and on 15th June 2010 (submitted with a pervious application HPK/2010/0329, and presented in Appendix 1).

The report is based upon the results of two meetings with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) on 4th and 10th November 2010. It aims to address the holding objection placed upon application HPK/2010/0329 by Natural England (30th September 2010) and provide the additional information requested by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (8th September 2010).

The topics covered are:
- Bats
- Great Crested Newts
- Biodiversity & Habitats
- Breeding Birds.

PAA have been appointed to provide a clerk of works role to the works, in support of all wildlife related issues in this proposal. PAA have appropriately experienced staff in ornithological survey, grassland translocation and restoration as well as Great Crested Newt licence holders with expertise in overseeing on the ground works. PAA are based in Buxton so would be able to react quickly to issues that may arise and attend on site at short notice.

2. Bats
No built structures or other potential roost sites are now affected by the proposals.

3. Great Crested Newts
Background
Three ponds are located within the application section. These are located at:
- Pond 1 – SK 063 701
- Pond 2 – SK 067 701
- Pond 3 – SK 067 704
- Pond 4 – SK 043 705.

Great Crested Newt (GCN) presence in the survey area is not known. The NBN Gateway did not return any GCN records and DWT do not know of any from this area, nor of any surveys that have been carried out. However, the area is quite well visited, so should GCN occur in anything other than a low population, their presence seems likely to have already been reported.

The immediate habitat quality within 5m of the ponds is good, such that newts would be unlikely to need to travel far to find suitable refuges. All ponds within the search area are isolated from each other by a distance of 350m or more and therefore the likelihood of GCN is reduced accordingly. The harsh and unpredictable Peak District environment at this altitude (1450m) also reduces the likelihood of GCN in this area, although small populations have been found close to this altitude elsewhere in the Peaks. If GCN are present, there is a likelihood of them occurring within the proposed route as suitable terrestrial habitats are present.

Potential Impact of Works
Intended works will be conducted over a temporarily brief period, and would be of low impact. A 3 metre-wide (maximum) corridor will be excavated to a shallow depth over most of the route length. This work would be carried out in short sections.

The path to be created lies largely along already well used, and in places, consolidated, track; therefore the consolidation of much of the route would result in no change to the potential impacts upon GCN, if present.

NE guidance on survey requirements for minor developments within 100m of a potential GCN pond indicate that a survey would not be needed for low impact works such as this. Furthermore, even if a survey for GCN populations was carried out, the short term temporary works would still most probably be below the licensing threshold, so we would proceed under method statement whether GCN were present or not. Waiting to carry out a survey would jeopardise the whole proposal in terms of funds for the sake of no net change to procedure.

Proposed Approach
In the absence of GCN evidence, but with the small possibility of a population being present, we would recommend to adopt the precautionary principle to all works within 100m of a pond, adhering to the following points:
- All works to be carried out under an agreed Detailed Method Statement written by a suitably qualified and experienced licensed GCN ecologist.
- Works to potential terrestrial habitats to be delayed until spring once overnight temperatures rise consistently above 5°C therefore any GCN should have returned to the aquatic environment, or at least undergone the transformation from aquatic to terrestrial life-phase, thus allowing it to be moved – April onwards would therefore be preferable.
- All works within 100m of a water-body would be overseen by the ecologist. 20 tons (or 10 cubic metres) of coarse limestone rubble would be imported as refuge / hibernacula to be re-created in close proximity on a like-for-like basis as instructed by the ecologist. 20 tons (or 10 cubic metres) of coarse limestone rubble would be imported for this purpose.
- Works only to be carried out during daylight hours – no excavations to be worked during dusk/dawn/darkness, and no excavations to be left open overnight – trenches within the 100m zone to be backfilled daily, or securely covered.
- All materials to be stored on raised pallets or outside the 100m zone.
- PAA are contracted to provide a clerk of works role to the development, in support of all wildlife related issues.

4. Biodiversity and Habitats
Background
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) highlighted that the route will pass through four local wildlife sites, two of which are designated for their species rich flora and fungi (the other two being for bird interest). Two meetings have been held with DWT to resolve their concerns regarding impacts upon biodiversity and habitats present at these sites, on 4th and 10th November 2010. The latter was on site to discuss minor route realignments and specific conservation, mitigation and management measures to be incorporated into the scheme.

Potential Impacts
DWT concerns related to habitat loss of species rich vegetation. They requested details of how impacts would be mitigated and compensated for. The proposed approach is detailed below.

Proposed Approach
It was agreed at the meetings that most of the concerns could be addressed by on site involvement of an ecologist to fine tune construction to minimise adverse impacts and maximise opportunities for new habitat. To
DWT agreed that the above concerns could be addressed through an appropriately worded planning condition, placing onus upon the developer and their ecologist to address these concerns in liaison with DWT where appropriate.

5. Breeding Birds

Background

One potential area of bird sensitivity around Harpur Hill highlighted by DWT would be unaffected by the Staker Hill route proposals. This is a regularly used track and so ground nesting birds would not be nesting in close proximity to the track owing to already existing disturbance factors, i.e. people, dogs, and occasional motorised vehicles.

Another potential area of bird sensitivity lies near Staker Hill, an area through which the proposed path passes. Any important bird activity in this location is likely to come from ground-nesting species, such as skylark, lapwing and curlew.

Potential Impacts

At Staker Hill, the route runs along the existing track before turning south-west up the field. Breeding birds, especially ground-nesters, are sensitive to disturbance, and would be unlikely to nest in close proximity to the existing track owing to existing disturbance levels from dog-walking etc. Formalising the path surface here would therefore not present any additional impacts to existing in terms of habitat loss. However, where the new path departs from the existing route and turns through and up the field to the south-west, there is potential for some minor increased disturbance.

Proposed Approach

Disturbance effects upon breeding birds can be avoided via the following measures. Ideally, works would be timed to avoid the ground-nesting bird breeding season which is March to August inclusive. Regardless of timing, PAA would undertake a walkover survey prior to the commencement of works was required to determine any nesting and avoid any impacts. Should nesting be confirmed then works would need to be delayed until after fledging has been completed.

The impacts of potential breeding habitat loss are likely to be minimal because the construction works are small-scale and localized. All construction activities would be constrained to the 3.0 metre corridor in this location. All storage of spoil or materials, including vehicles and welfare facilities should be sited outside of these highlighted areas for potential bird interest.

General Principals

In addition to the specific points outlined in the preceding text, the following general principles would also apply to the construction processes undertaken during the works:

- All construction activities, should be constrained to the 3.0 metre corridor in sensitive locations.
- All storage of spoil or materials, including vehicles and welfare facilities should be sited outside of this highlighted area.
- No re-fuelling should be undertaken in sensitive areas, but should be undertaken in isolated/bunded refuelling areas.
- All plant should be inspected daily for leaks etc. and not taken into sensitive areas should leaks be found.
- All materials should be inert and not likely to affect the ecological integrity/chemistry of soils or water.
ADDENDUM TO: HIGH PEAK TRAIL TO BUXTON SECTION: STAKER HILL (REF. NO. 090619: DECEMBER 2009)

BUXTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION

HIGH PEAK TRAIL TO BUXTON SECTION: STAKER HILL INCORPORATING LADMANLOW TO DIAMOND HILL SECTION

Penny Anderson Associates Limited
‘Park Lea’
60 Park Road
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 6SN

Project Manager
Dr Philip J Smith BSc (HONS); MSc; PhD; FRES; MIEEM.

June 2010

This project has been undertaken in accordance with PAA policies and procedures on quality assurance.

Signed:_____________________

Ref No. 100247
Buxton Civic Association
June 2010
Addendum to: High Peak Trail to Buxton Section: Staker Hill (Ref. No. 090619: December 2009)
1. RESULTS (MAP 4)

1.1 From where the route crosses a main road (Map 4) and continuing west along the disused railway on an informal footpath, the vegetation is largely dominated by unmanaged rank grassland vegetation with tall herb species at the edges and meadow vegetation along the footpath itself. Bordering the path along most of its length is a drystone wall (limestone) and there is a business park and further unmanaged grassland also adjacent.

1.2 The rank grassland is dominated by coarse grasses such as red fescue, false oat-grass, tufted hair grass and cock's-foot. Other species include dandelion, rose-bay willow-herb, hogweed, and nettles. Within the footpath confines vegetation is more indicative of MG5 grassland (Rodwell's NVC classification) and includes: crested dog's-tail, black knapweed, meadow vetchling, bird's-foot trefoil, meadow and creeping buttercup, autumn hawk-bit, wild maroram, crosswort, quaking grass, ladies-bedstraw, and yellow rattle. Further west along the path the vegetation becomes more grassy with fewer meadow species.

1.3 Where the section enters a deep limestone cutting with rock exposures the vegetation character is similar the disused railway line (above), but with occasional scrub, some ferns and mosses, including some shade-tolerant species, e.g. black spleen-wort, male fern, hart's-tongue fern, hawthorn, goat and grey willow. Also present was welsh poppy, colt's-foot, snow-in-summer and sweet vernal grass.

2. RESULTS (MAP 3)

2.1 This section is bordered to the north, west, and south by semi-improved grassland (grazed/mown). Although not surveyed in detail as part of this study, the grassland looked moderately diverse in places. A stand of mixed plantation woodland and an area of grassland having heath-like characteristics would, however, be affected by the proposals, also borders much of the existing footpath.

2.2 The mixed plantation woodland is bordered by broken down stone wall. Trees included: sycamore, Douglas fir, whitebeam, larch, and oak. The woodland shows no indicative signs of ancient woodland character and has dense shading that precludes significant under-storey development; all the individual trees are sub-mature. Ground flora is consequently sparse, with some grasses and tall herb encroaching from edge, e.g. Yorkshire fog, annual meadow-grass, common nettle, rosebay willowherb, and broad-leaved dock, with false-oat grass, tufted hair-grass, field horsetail, hogweed, creeping thistle, and creeping buttercup in more open areas near the edge.

2.3 Further west past the woodland a steeply sloping lens of grassland below the road is unmanaged and somewhat acidic in character, and has some heath-like elements. Grassland species include: red fescue, Yorkshire fog, tormentil, heath bedstraw, black knapweed, field and heath woodrush, and glaucous sedge. In localised areas dwarf shrubs such as heather and bilberry are supported in addition to hard fern, soft rush, wavy hair-grass and some mosses and scattered scrub.

2.4 At the north-west extent of this section is an isolated in-line pond (20 x 10m) on a small stream which is dammed up behind the road embankment. This pond has mats of broad-leaved pondweed and fringing vegetation of soft rush and great burnet that could support Great crested newt (GCN) breeding.

Discussion

3.1 An existing metalled surface which is to be retained in its current condition links the two sections (A: Map 4 and B: map 3) along this section.

3.2 The presence of meadow species indicative of MG5 grassland (Map 4) suggests circum-neutral conditions along the disused railway line and is typical of the area; this confers some conservation value at a local level only. However, the vegetation here is not strongly reflective of the surrounding limestone geology which would have made the grassland of high conservation value.

3.3 The woodland (Map 3) has some ecological value at the local level as wildlife habitat. The heath-like grassland (Map 3) also has some botanical interest being moderately species-rich and supporting dwarf shrubs, however, such a habitat type is probably not rare in the locality and therefore also its ecological value is of a local level only as wildlife habitat.

3.4 The presence of dry stone walls, rock cliffs, tussocky grassland and scrub presents potentially good habitat for small mammals and reptiles, and as such caution must be exercised (under ecological supervision) if deconstruction is required.

3.5 The pond presents potential GCN aquatic/breeding habitat that is set within a matrix of scrub, woodland and grassland habitat that has potential to support them in their terrestrial phase. No survey or desk study results are available, however, the impacts of the scheme are considered likely to be minor and temporary at worst and as such unlikely to require a GCN development licence application being made. All works in this area should, however, take place under ecological supervision and to a detailed method statement in respect of amphibians.
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5. REFERENCES
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Penny Anderson Associates Limited (PAA) were commissioned by John Grimshaw Associates on behalf of Cycling England to undertake a baseline ecological survey of the proposed ‘Sustrans’ route at ‘Staker Hill’, Buxton. This section is proposed to form part of the wider network to link Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails.

1.2 The proposed section (c. 3.7km) starts immediately south of Buxton on the urban/moorland fringe and winds its way through a landscape largely dominated by agriculture and quarrying, emerging between Dalehead and Hindlow along a country lane close to High Edge. Approximately one-third of the proposed route follows along the route of a former railway now used primarily by agricultural vehicles and as an unofficial bridleway.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The survey was carried out using adapted JNCC Phase 1 Survey methodologies (JNCC, 2007). This involved a walk-over of the site taking note of any ecological features of note, e.g. locally important habitat types, the likely presence of protected species, and the potential of any habitat features to support UK/EU protected species.

2.2 A full desk study was not carried out for this survey on request of the client. However, a brief desk search was carried out using existing electronic resources, i.e. National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway (http://www.nbn.org.uk) and using OS (Ordnance Survey) maps.

2.3 Refer to maps (maps 1, 2, & 3) provided as part of the ‘Preliminary proposals for linking Buxton to the existing High Peak and Tissington Trails - High Peak Trial to Buxton: Staker Hill’ (John Grimshaw Associates, 2009).

3. RESULTS

3.1 The survey was carried out on consecutive days of the 14th & 15th December 2009 by a senior PAA ecologist. Although the survey was carried out outside the optimum recommended survey period (April-September) it is still possible to gain enough information from carrying out surveys at this time of year to enable a robust assessment to be made.

Desk Search Results

3.3 NBN Gateway search returned records for the following species within the 2km grid-square centred at Grid Ref.: SK 0656 7014 (approximate centre of the proposed section):

- Badger Meles meles: Non-specific location generally occurs within wider 10km grid-square;
- Eurasian curlew Numenius arquata: Non-specific location generally occurs within wider 10km grid-square;
- Northern lapwing Vanellus vanellus: Non-specific location generally occurs within wider 10km grid-square; and,
- Sky lark Alauda arvensis: Non-specific location generally occurs within wider 10km grid-square;

3.4 No GCN records* were returned for the search area, however, records were returned for the adjacent 2km grid-square to the North-East dating from 1996 and 2007.

3.5 No records for reptiles or mountain hare were returned for this grid-square, however, common lizard Zootoca vivipara were shown to occur at numerous other locations within the wider Buxton area, therefore their presence cannot be ruled out.

3.6 * The NBN dataset should not be regarded as offering comprehensive coverage of the area. Absence of a record on the Gateway should not be taken as evidence of the species being absent on the ground (NBN Gateway, 2008).

3.7 Using OS maps it was also noted that three waterbodies occurred in close proximity to the proposed route; one (W1) c.300m from the western end of the proposed route lies 50m to the south of the ‘route’ on a plateau of raised ground above a commercial vehicle storage depot; the second (W2), is a large waterbody associated with the disused quarry workings contained within the northern loop of the site c.80m to the south-west of the proposed route, which was not accessible (refer to map 1 for locations of both of these); and the third (W3), is situated towards the centre-point of the proposed route (see map 2) close to a hairpin bed where the route turns south leaving the disused railway track onto grazing pasture.

Field Survey Results.

3.8 The proposed route starts to the west on land owned by Norbert Dentressangle Ltd (map 1). Here the route closely follows rough pasture to the north of the old railway wall for c.300m. The vegetation here is species-poor, comprising largely coarse grasses such as cock’s-foot Dactylis glomerata, Yorkshire fog Holcus lanatus and false-oat grass Arrhenatherum elatius, and is regularly grazed.

3.9 To the east of a goods vehicle compound, the route rejoins the old railway line and follows this route for c.200m where the route branches. The left hand fork forms a 200m link with Grin Low Road through locally typical rough pastures and a rough track between local properties. The right fork continues to follow the old railway line behind local properties of Burlow Road. The vegetation along the track is again species-poor comprising typical rough grassland grass species with some ruderal incursion, e.g. creeping thistle Cirsium arvense, dock, spp. with some wavy-hair grass Deschampsia flexuosa and mosses in wetter places. The track is heavily poached by livestock and rutted by agricultural vehicles.

3.10 A second link with local roads occurs c.400m east of the Grin Low Road link. Here the route again branches, with the left hand fork dropping down quite steeply via a series of zig-zags between the disused railway track and Burlow Road. The route here passes through some detached allotment-style gardens of low ecological value before picking up a rough track behind some cottages. The right-hand fork again continues to follow the old disused railway for a further c.900m.

3.11 Along this section, below the existing track and running through a small pocket of more rough pasture, a new farm track will be required to keep the cycle track users and agricultural users apart. Again, this is species-poor pasture with low ecological value.

3.12 The entire length of the old railway is of low ecological value comprising largely coarse grasses indicative of a species-poor MG1 rank grassland comprising cock’s-foot, Yorkshire fog, false-oat grass and some perennial rye-grass Lolium perenne, with some ruderal vegetation. Impacts from agricultural vehicles and livestock has
rendered most of the track heavily poached and waterlogged. In drier places common species such as creeping buttercup Ranunculus repens, ribwort plantain Plantago lanceolata, and yarrow Achillea millefolium persist, along with crested dog’s-tail Cynosurus cristatus.

3.13 In strategic places along the old railway line route retaining walls have been constructed to maintain levels and prevent soil slippage. These are of dry-stone construction and could serve as refugia for small animals, e.g. small mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

3.14 At the end of this section (map 2) the track turns sharply west (hairpin) and starts to climb through a large pasture field. Initially the route follows a well used farm vehicle track over shallow soils on top of what appears to be a quarried limestone hardcore. The route follows the western field boundary up an incline before turning east then west forming a zig-zag in mid-field before continuing south.

3.15 This rough pasture is also locally typical, comprising primarily Yorkshire fog, perennial ryegrass, cock’s-foot, and browntop (common bent grass) Agrostis capillaris; typical fodder grasses. Depending upon the level of grazing and the pasturing cycle, the vegetation here has the ability to form tussocky topography in which ground nesting birds such as sky lark, northern lapwing, and Eurasian curlew could use to nest at certain times of year.

3.16 After c.700m from the hairpin and through the rough pasture, the route turns right at the head of the working quarry before heading off south through more heavily grazed pasture (initially map 2, then map 3). The route here follows a well established and well used 3m-wide bridle path marked by wooden posts. This bridle path section comprises short-cropped (possibly rabbit grazed) grassland of low ecological value, and may have been seeded at some point; however, away from the bridle path the field takes on more of the character of surrounding pasture which could also present suitable nesting opportunities for ground-nesting birds at certain times of year depending upon grazing levels and the pasturing cycle.

3.17 After c.800m this bridle path turns east alongside the edge of the country lane between Dalehead and Hindlow close to High Edge (end of section).

**Waterbodies**

3.18 Only two of the three waterbodies noted from the OS map were able to be observed. W2 is contained within former quarry workings and as such was not accessible.

3.19 W1 is an L-shaped pond and is possibly a former small reservoir having stone retaining walls on three sides. The waterbody contained a large volume of pondweed Potamogeton sp. Given the nature of the pond, its surroundings (rough moorland fringe vegetation) and the possibility of cavities within the retaining walls, the presence of GCN cannot be ruled out.

3.20 W3 is a small rectangular pond containing some bulrush Typha latifolia. Its surroundings comprise a volume of dumped rubble and rough tussocky vegetation, both of which could serve as refugia for GCN and other amphibians, and as such the presence of GCN also cannot be ruled out.

4. **DISCUSSION**

4.1 The proposed route passes entirely through rough pasture and along disused railway track. As such, these habitats are typically species poor and of low conservation value. The route passes through no hedgerows or within close proximity to any significant trees.

4.2 The proposed route does, however, pass within 100 metres of three waterbodies, two of which have the potential to support GCN (the third was unable to be accessed); although the limited desk search did not return any GCN records from this grid-square.

4.3 It is, however, considered that given the low-impact of the proposed works along much of this route, that even if GCN were present within any of these waterbodies, that potential disturbance would be minimal; all works being temporary in nature and not requiring extensive excavations. These waterbodies are also quite isolated from each other, the closest two (W1 & W2) being c.300m apart and thus could not be considered as forming a pond cluster. GCN tend to occur in pond clusters rather than isolated ponds.

4.4 It may, however, still be prudent to undertake a full desk study in respect of GCN in advance of scheduling the works in order to quantify a risk-level. If GCN were found to be present, ecological supervision would be required to oversee works in critical areas.

4.5 The construction of the proposed route will require the deconstruction and/or capping of some old railway retaining walls and dry stone walls. These have the potential to serve as refugia for small mammals, reptiles and amphibians and as such care should be taken in their deconstruction. None should be capped without first carefully deconstructing them as this would trap any animals inside killing them. It would be prudent to have an ecologist in attendance during the deconstruction of all dry stone-type walls to check and rescue any wildlife.

4.6 Some of the pasture through which the proposed route will run has the potential to support ground nesting birds at certain times of the year. Before constructing the cycle path, the route should be walked again by a suitably qualified ecologist to check the level of grazing/grass structure, and, depending on this, to check for ground-nesting birds.

4.7 Should ground-nesting birds be discovered it should be noted that they cannot be disturbed whilst they are still on the nest. In addition, ground nesting birds tend not nest close to well used linear landscapes and therefore the cycle path could reduce nesting potential in this area for a distance away from the path edges.

4.8 No evidence of badger use was noted during the survey, with the route itself containing no habitat suitable for badger to use for sett-making.

4.9 Should any European Protected Species (EPSs) be discovered during works then all operations would need to cease and an ecologist brought in to assess the situation. Under such circumstances, a licence may be required from Natural England for works to continue.

5. **REFERENCES**

