



**Peak District MTB**

c/o Paul Richardson,  
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17<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017

Mr Robert Dalby,  
Public rights of way office  
Kirklees Council  
Civic Centre 1,  
High Street,  
Huddersfield,  
HD1 2NF  
[rob.dalby@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:rob.dalby@kirklees.gov.uk)

**RE: Recent work to the surface of Holmfirth public bridleways numbers  
68 & 189**

Dear Mr Dalby,

On behalf of the members of Peak District MTB, I wish to express my concerns regarding the recent surfacing work to public bridleways 68 and 189, Holmfirth.

These bridleways are very popular with our members. They form part of a number of recommended circular routes featuring in guidebooks and are part of the Holme Valley Challenge annual cycling event. As has been recently highlighted by the Kirklees Public Rights of Way office<sup>1</sup>, there are limited numbers of bridleways in Kirklees and routes of such quality in this tranquil area north of Digley Reservoir warrant protection. We would agree: our members use them for recreation, to avoid the danger of cars and also because of their outstanding natural beauty, their wild and historic character and their place within the Peak District National Park.

We understand that, with council permission, these routes have been resurfaced by a contractor on behalf of Yorkshire Water. I have inspected the route on behalf of Peak District MTB on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November with a member who uses the route regularly. We examined both the area that has been surfaced and areas around it that have not.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kirklees Council written submission for Public Rights of Way ("PROW") consultation regarding Planning applications: NP/K/0317/0323 & NP/K/0317/0324. <https://pam.peakdistrict.gov.uk/files/52878020.pdf>

We have the following concerns:

1. **The nature of the surfacing work.** They are not acceptable and have substantially changed the character of the route. The material used (fine stone, not locally quarried material) is unsuitable in extent and nature and is an eyesore, spoiling the natural surface of the route and is out of keeping with the local environment in the National Park.
2. **The risk of the surface to users.** The surface is unsustainable and hazardous; there are already potholes appearing and ruts have started to form where the fine particles have been washed away. Previously effective drains are already blocked by these fine particles making the surface at high risk of flooding. It is our experience that using such fine material and not addressing drainage means water damage quickly occurs. Not only does this mean that the surface quickly deteriorates but the potholes and ruts also become a hazard for all user-groups.
3. **The justification for the work.** There did not appear to be any justification for the need for repair of any kind to these routes, particularly not the nature and extent that has occurred. We could not identify any problem with the original surface, which consists of firm, stable rock that is unlikely to degrade and is accessible for any type of bicycle. As a substantial change in character we presume this required planning permission but we are unaware of whether this was sought or approved.
4. **The lack of consultation with user groups.** We understand local user-groups were not consulted on these repairs.

Our requests are:

1. An explanation for why this work was undertaken and who sanctioned and carried it out, whether Kirklees council or the Peak District National Park Authority permitted the work, what they understood were the details of the work (materials, plans for drainage etc.) and whether the council planned and carried out any supervision of the work.
2. That the surface and drainage is returned to its previous condition.
3. That future work of this nature are not undertaken and that the council maintain oversight where there is a risk of such significant damage to the right of way.
4. That due consideration is given to the nature, sensitivity and sustainability of any works carried out on bridleways as well as a commitment to the necessary maintenance that might be required. This should be agreed prior to work being agreed.
5. That user-groups, including Peak District MTB, are consulted on such works and are provided with sufficient time and information to inform the methods of repair.

Peak District MTB is a volunteer advocacy group who works with organisations such as the Peak District National Park and local councils in order to preserve, improve and promote mountain biking within the Peak District National Park. We would be happy to advise on such routes and the suitability of any proposed changes. We'd love to meet (indoors or out on the hills!) to discuss how we can support the council and the PDNPA to fulfil our shared objectives in ensuring these bridleways are sustained in a way they can be enjoyed. We are already working with Peak District NPA rangers to conduct bridleway maintenance and are keen to develop similar successful collaborations.

We welcome a timely and clear response to our concerns.

Yours truly,

Dr Esther Hobson  
Peak District MTB

**Peak District MTB** is a voluntary organisation that aims to preserve, improve and promote mountain biking within the Peak District National Park.  
[www.peakdistrictmtb.org](http://www.peakdistrictmtb.org)

CC.

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