



Peak District MTB

Unit 10
Eccles House,
Eccles Lane,
Hope,
Derbyshire
S33 6RW

info@peakdistrictmtb.org

26 January 2021

Staffordshire County Council Consultation for Swan and Limer Rakes

Consultation here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=TdGsJLuS1kS7qO2z0DgTzTxe0DHm1SNHkWYUxdbXOK9UMFBXNEhPNk9FOUpDWDBaUkZRWk9TT1YzUy4u>

Background:

<http://peakdistrictmtb.org/staffordshire-county-council-seeking-views-on-hollinsclough-rakes/>

Peak District MTB response

We support Staffordshire County Council taking steps to reopen Swan and Limer Rake, but do not want to see them both flat and smooth. These routes attract mountain bikers due to their challenge and removal of that challenge would significantly change the character of the area for mountain bikers and other current users groups. We ask that further details of the proposed designs, budget and ongoing maintenance budget are shared as part of a more detailed consultation.

The precedent for Highways Authorities is to maintain routes such that they are "*in such good repair as renders it reasonably passable for the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood at all seasons of the year without danger caused by its physical condition*" (Burnside v Emerson 1968)". The 'ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood' is walkers, mountain bikers, horse riders and off-road motorised vehicles. It's not clear from the information shared as to the current dangers; please provide more information on the perceived dangers.

What we want to avoid is solutions that involve material incongruous to the current character of the area. Road planings or similar aggregate that would be washed downhill in heavy rain is a solution we've seen fail multiple times across the Peak District, resulting in the bad ruts the repairs seek to address.

Due to the largely enclosed nature of Swan Rake we don't believe it can be made flat and smooth without significant spend and ongoing maintenance budget to manage the drainage. Since Limer Rake traverses a hillside, drainage should be easier to manage. Providing a smoother, well-drained surface on Limer Rake but maintaining the current terrain and character of Swan Rake would provide an acceptable compromise for many mountain bikers. It would enable Limer Rake to be used as an easier ascent, but maintain the interest of the Swan Rake descent. We'd be happy to discuss this in more detail as part of the consultation process.

These trails are recognised as being challenging mountain bike routes by virtue of their rocky and uneven condition. The popular and well-regarded guidebook '*White Peak Mountain Biking - The Pure Trails*' (2006) devotes a special section to this area due to the mountain biking challenge on offer. Seeking to make the trails more accessible to a broader range of users does not make sense due to the steep terrain that is likely to be a physical barrier to many users.

In summary we do not want to see both Swan Rake and Limer Rake repaired to a standard that removes the rocky and challenging terrain for which mountain bikers travel to the area. Mountain biking and other off-road cycling is growing in popularity; it's therefore important that mountain bikers have access to interesting terrain across the Peak, rather than concentrate them in a small number of 'honeypots'. We also don't want to see repairs that do not adequately address concerns of drainage and ongoing maintenance. Such repairs would quickly result in washed-out, rutted surfaces and would be a waste of taxpayers' money.