

Fury over lane closures

The Trail Riders Fellowship is disappointed but not surprised by the decision of the Peak District National Park's Audit Resources and Performance Committee to make Traffic Regulation Orders to close two historic routes to motor vehicles.

It is the second attempt by the PDNPA to close Chapel Gate and The Roych.

A TRO for the Roych was originally agreed in July 2013 but since then, a small section has been repaired by Derbyshire County Council so the decision was brought back for review before it was implemented. Members of the Authority's Audit, Resources and Performance (ARP) Committee confirmed the TRO after deciding the repairs had made no difference to their original grounds for the order.

An earlier attempt to close Chapel Gate was ruled "illegal" and "irresponsible" by the High Court, and a subsequent public consultation yielded 1391 objections to the Order and only 994 submissions in favour.

The TRF has to point out once again that the ARP Committee is chaired by a Mr Christopher Pennell, who is also a Gold Guardian of the Friends of the Peak District: the organization which has coordinated the campaign for the closure of the two routes in question and announced this January that it intended to campaign for a law to make off-tarmac motoring in the Peak District National Park a criminal offence.

No lanes were closed by PDNPA prior to Mr Pennell's appointment.

The Trail Riders Fellowship can only wonder at how a situation where a key supporter of a political group that has led the campaign to remove vehicular rights was allowed to chair a committee tasked with making a series of quasi-judicial decisions on the same issue was allowed to arise.

Residents of the Peak District should note that, although the PDNPA is putting up charges, sacking staff and cutting services in response to budget cuts, it has allocated yet more funds for the coming year to its campaign to drive motorcyclists away from the National Park.

The TRF asks who is driving this agenda and what their motives might be.

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