

Public Consultation on Pelter Bridge to Grasmere Cycleway

Report on Consultation Response and Next Steps

Background

The Go Lakes Travel (GLT) Programme is a four year, £4.89 million initiative funded by the Department for Transport and delivered in partnership by the Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Tourism. Between 2011 and 2015 we are delivering a variety of schemes designed to generate a step change in how visitors travel around the central and south east Lake District and enable them to make greater use of sustainable modes of travel. The aim is to increase the opportunities to get around the Lake District without a car, to reduce the impact on the local environment and community, and to help make visitors' trips to the area more enjoyable and relaxing.

One of the nine projects within the GLT Programme involves enhancing the cycle network. Our aims are: to improve the real and perceived attractiveness of the leisure cycle network in the project area; to make the most of what already exists by making key improvements to enhance the network; and to increase awareness and its appeal to a wider range of users through improved signing, mapping and other information.

We have already made significant progress towards our goal. Routes such as the Windermere West Shore Road and the Torver Trail have already been improved and we now have a virtually all off-road cycle route from Wray Castle to Ambleside. By Easter 2014 we will also have created a promoted route from Brathay to New Dungeon Ghyll via Skelwith Bridge and Elterwater.

Our other key proposal is to create a route from Ambleside to Grasmere, via Rothay Park, the Under Loughrigg and Pelter Bridge roads and along the Rydal and Grasmere shorelines to the Red Bank Road. Several concerns were raised by residents and local communities about:

- the safety implications of promoting Red Bank Road for a family orientated, leisure cycling audience
- the possibility of conflict with walkers on popular routes
- landscape impact of our proposals

Because of these concerns, we carried out a public consultation into our proposals to gauge levels of overall support for the route and for the various elements of work needed to make it happen. This included a drop in day at Grasmere on 19 November and a three week postal/ online survey from 7 to 28 November.

The Headlines

We asked people to answer six questions relating to the proposed cycleway plus a section for further comments. 149 people responded but not everyone answered every question and not everyone chose to make additional comments at the end meaning not all figures in the table below add up to 149.

More than twice as many respondents support the overall proposal than oppose it. The numbers are remarkably consistent across all questions asked, showing that both support and opposition are unconditional i.e. people are either completely for the cycleway or completely against and the individual elements of work needed to construct the cycleway are secondary to the route itself.

Question	Support		
	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Overall do you support the proposal for a cycle route from Pelter Bridge to Grasmere	92	42	11
2. Do you support the proposals to create a route around the rock outcrop of Jobson Close at Rydal Water to make it easier to negotiate and protect the eroding shoreline either side of the outcrop?	93	44	1
3. Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway through to White Moss, a new cycle accessible bridge across the Rothay, and upgrading the public footpath to bridleway through Penny Rock Wood?	95	34	4
4. Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway alongside the Grasmere shoreline with measures to protect eroding sections of shoreline?	92	41	2
5. Do you support the proposals to upgrade the public footpath through Deer Bolts Wood to bridleway?	93	40	2
6. Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway through White Moss Wood car park and A591 improvements including a crossing of the A591?	100	34	1

Comments from those opposed to the proposals can be grouped into five categories and ranked as follows:

- Landscape impact
- User conflict
- Loss of amenity/ tranquillity
- Unsuitable topography/ roads
- Unnecessary and a waste of money

Comments from those in support of the proposals can be grouped into four categories:

- Improved safety
- Improved access, including the elderly and those with limited mobility
- More connected network of routes for cyclists
- Encourage children and families to be active

The following section looks at the comments to the individual questions in more detail. They will be summarised rather than quoted verbatim and we have provided a response and an outline of our next steps. Many of the general comments attributed to question 1 were repeated for all other questions. This is because they all relate to essential facilities that will allow cyclists to complete the link between Ambleside and Grasmere so comments on one type of improvement will inevitably be similar to another. Only comments that are specific to the issues raised in questions 2 to 6 will be dealt with below to avoid duplication.

Question 1: Overall, do you support the proposal for a cycle route from Pelter Bridge to Grasmere? Please explain why.

Opposition comments:

- The majority of comments focus on the landscape impact of our proposals and how the outcome will potentially ruin the amenity for walkers and the tranquillity of the area. In terms of landscape impact the main accusation is that we would be urbanising and sanitising a beautiful and natural part of the Lake District and the changes we have made to the Windermere West Shore Road are cited as an example of ruining the character of an area. Two mountain bikers were against the bridleway improvements as they smoothed out what they view as enjoyable rocky sections.
- Strong views were expressed regarding the loss of peace and quiet for walkers and the potential for conflict. This example is typical of the comments received: *'this proposal will pose a serious and irreversible threat to the quiet enjoyment of walkers along this route and, if used by large numbers of cyclists may well destroy the beautiful views of the largely unspoiled shoreline from the higher fells'*. The perceived loss of amenity is a recurring theme; that it would become dangerous for walkers because cyclists ride too fast with little regard for others; that cyclists will deny walkers the pleasure of walking and enjoying this route; and why should walkers have to be constantly on the look-out for, and startled by, cyclists when they have had sole use of the area for years.
- Five comments focussed on the unsuitable nature of the local topography, saying sections of the proposed route were too steep for family friendly cycling. Four comments mentioned how inappropriate Red Bank Road would be as a promoted cycle route as it is narrow, steep and already busy with traffic and walkers.
- Some respondents felt the proposals were unnecessary for two reasons; firstly that the existing rights of way were in a suitable condition anyway; and secondly that it was a waste of money and it should be put towards making the A591 safer.

Supporting comments:

- Not surprisingly the bulk of those in favour of the proposals centred on improved safety. Many respondents said that the A591 was effectively a barrier to cycling because of the volume of traffic, the behaviour of some drivers and the state of the road surface in places.
- The proposed route would be a much more attractive alternative away from motorised traffic and a number of comments specifically mentioned that it would encourage young families and children to cycle too.
- Reducing the dependency on the private car, especially for small journeys was also a valid reason to support the proposals. It would increase the tourism offer for easier cycling routes in the Lake District, which is poor at present, encourage people to use more sustainable forms of transport and reduce congestion on the road. Cycling is a massively expanding activity for utility journeys, sport and recreation and the Lake District needs to be able to build and accommodate this. Valley roads linking towns and villages like Ambleside and Grasmere are congested and are not safe or viable for young children so safer links need to be found.
- One Grasmere business owner commented that it would be a huge bonus to them as safe, traffic free cycle routes will mean other users travelling to Grasmere, including families with pushchairs and buggies.

Go Lakes Travel Programme response:

- We appreciate the concerns raised by those opposed to the scheme but we do not recognise the levels of conflict that are alleged

between users. We accept that there will be frustrations on all sides because of inconsiderate behaviour by a minority but there is no evidence, both locally and nationally, to suggest that walkers and cyclists are in frequent conflict with each other. There have only been two recorded accidents between a pedestrian and a cyclist in the whole of the National Park in the last five years. There are already a number of public bridleways in the Rydal and Grasmere area (Rydal shoreline, Loughrigg Terrace, the old Coffin Route) which are very popular with all users and we have received no complaints about cyclists on these routes.

- Nationally research has shown that actual conflict between users is rare and perceptions of conflict outweigh reality. A study in the Royal Parks, Kensington showed that after a one year trial allowing cyclists to use the Gardens, park users considered the main changes were a substantial reduction in pedestrian/cycle accidents, near misses and a general increase in consideration for each other. 18% considered near misses a regular or serious problem before the trial but a year after this fell to only 2%. When asked about consideration that cyclists and pedestrians showed to each other, there was a substantial improvement noticed: the proportion who considered cyclists behaviour to be good or very good rose from around 40% before to around 80% a year after, with the same result for pedestrians behaviour. Most users felt the situation in the park was better than outside, and this number has risen steadily since implementation. Other studies by Natural England and the University of Surrey, Sustrans and the Department for Transport produced similar results.
- Our own user surveys back up these national studies. During the summer of 2013 we interviewed over 350 people at Red Bank Road, Under Loughrigg Road and the Windermere West Shore Road on their attitudes and experiences of shared use routes. We also asked them whether they supported or did not support the Pelter Bridge to Grasmere proposals. 96% of people rated walkers as considerate to other users and 69% rated cyclists as considerate to other users. 90% of route users were happy to share with others while 88% of people supported the Pelter Bridge to Grasmere proposals.
- The Red Bank Road is a public highway which cyclists have a right to use and already do so. It is not unlike many other minor roads in the Lake District in that it is between high dry stone walls, is narrow in places with blind corners and bends. It is however very well used by walkers who access Grasmere shoreline from the village and in many respects walkers use it in the same manner as they would a right of way i.e. in groups walking abreast and in the middle of the road rather than following the highway code (single file at the roadside, in the direction of oncoming traffic). Despite this, there have been no recorded accidents between walkers, cyclists and vehicles in the last five years. There has only been one accident recorded on the road in the last six years, between two vehicles at the top of the road, and far above where our proposed route exits onto the highway.
- Surveys have indicated that traffic speeds are much lower than suggested. Surveys carried out in July and August showed high speeds of over 30mph are infrequent and consistently recorded between 6:00 - 9:30am and after 7:00pm suggesting work commutes or delivery vehicles servicing local businesses. These are outside the main recreational hours for walkers and cyclists which tends to be 10:00am to 5:00pm. The average speed for vehicles was 18mph.
- We accept there will be some landscape change because of our proposals. We disagree that it will amount to an urbanisation of the countryside. Historically many of the routes were constructed to service the local quarries and Loughrigg Terrace was built as a Victorian viewpoint. For the sections of public bridleway and footpath that we want to improve, it will be more akin to restoring them

to their original condition. We have decades of expertise in creating, constructing and maintaining access routes and as the majority of our proposals require planning permission, they will be subject to the closest scrutiny in terms of policy and landscape impact.

Next steps: We will proceed with our proposals for a Pelter Bridge to Grasmere cycle route but amend the route away from Deer Bolts Wood to the Grasmere shoreline.

- Our original intention was to create a loop around Grasmere from White Moss with a crossing of the A591 creating a northern route into Grasmere via Wishing Gate Lane. However because of withdrawal of support by Lowther Estate as landowner, this is no longer possible. Therefore the only route currently available is via Rydal Water, White Moss, Penny Rock Wood and Grasmere shoreline. We will be submitting planning applications for:
 - Public bridleway improvements at Jobson Close, Rydal Water
 - A new public bridleway through Rydal Estate land to link the existing bridleway with White Moss Bridge
 - A replacement bridge at White Moss that will be cycle accessible
 - Creation of a wheelchair and cycle accessible route through Penny Rock Woods
 - Construction of a new public bridleway and associated shoreline protection work at Grasmere
 - Improvements to the existing permitted footpath along the Grasmere shoreline to create a cycleway to reach the Red Bank Road at grid reference NY 335063. This is a modification on our original plan to upgrade the public footpath through Deer Bolts Wood, will cut out approximately 300 metres of the Red Bank Road and will bring cyclists out onto the road at a lower elevation, thereby reducing the potential for them to pick up speed. Although we realise this will still not appease all concerns over Red Bank Road, we hope it will show that we have taken those concerns on board and made changes where we can.

Question 2: Do you support the proposals to create a route around the rock outcrop of Jobson Close at Rydal Water to make it easier to negotiate and protect the eroding shoreline either side of the outcrop? Please explain why?

Opposition comments:

- All but four of the comments against this proposal were on landscape impact grounds and that the natural shoreline and therefore the scenery would be altered irretrievably. Many people felt that protecting the eroding shoreline either side of the rock outcrop wasn't sufficient justification for the work proposed.
- Three comments felt it was an inappropriate development without specifically mentioning the landscape. Their perspective was that the Lake District is a rugged place and most people are prepared for a challenge and adventure and the rock outcrop provides this. Creating a flatter path around the bottom of the outcrop would be like building a pavement. Alternative suggestions included creating a better route across the rock outcrop or to go behind it.

Supporting comments:

- It was the improvements to access for cyclists, the elderly and those with limited mobility that gathered most support. If this and other access improvements were to happen, it could enable wheelchair users to get from Rydal to Grasmere. One person commented that similar infrastructure such as stone bridges, stepping stones and causeways have underpinned the footpaths and bridleways of the Lake District for centuries and this should be seen in the same light i.e. it will circumvent a natural obstruction.
- The trickiness of scrambling over the rock was mentioned as a deterrent on onward progress as was the depth of water around Jobson Close in winter and that resolving these issues would be beneficial for many people. Throughout all the comments of support was a desire that it had to be done with sensitivity and in sympathy for the surrounding area.

Go Lakes Travel Programme response:

- The Lake District National Park Authority is responsible for maintaining all public rights of way within the National Park and for many years has been aware that when water levels at Rydal are high, the rock outcrop at Jobson Close can act as a barrier to some people. We have seen both walkers and cyclists turn back because of this and on such a popular and busy route we do not think this is acceptable. The proposals will provide much easier access but still allow people to either scramble over the rock or climb up behind it if they want to.
- The shoreline of Rydal Water is eroding from Steps End to beyond Jobson Close where the existing public bridleway moves away from the lake. This is a combination of visitor pressure and high lake levels as a natural response to flood and storm events. We cannot achieve shoreline stabilisation along this entire section but the work at Jobson Close means we have the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of a low rock causeway.
- We are very aware of the landscape sensitivity associated with such a development. We have looked in detail at other options such as improving the scrambling route across the rock. This would involve breaking up the rock surface to create a flatter ramp and we feel this is more 'invasive' than constructing a raised causeway across its foot. The potential drop from this ramp down to the lakeshore

may also mean a handrail or parapet would have to be installed for health and safety reasons. We do not think this is appropriate and have chosen the low rock causeway option to avoid having to build any form of safety fence.

- We employed an engineering design company to carry out a topographic survey of the area and produce some photo-montages of what the causeway should look like. These were prepared for the 19 November public drop in day at Grasmere and although they did not appease everyone, they went some way to address the concerns of some people who thought we were building a viaduct or a jetty.

Next steps: we will proceed with a planning application for a low rock causeway around Jobson Close.

- We will continue to work with our planners, landscape architect and partners such as the Environment Agency to ensure we strike the right balance between the needs of users and protecting the special qualities of the Rydal lakeshore.

Question 3: Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway through to White Moss, a new cycle accessible bridge across the Rothay, and upgrading the public footpath to bridleway through Penny Rock Wood? Please explain why?

Opposition comments:

- Of the three separate elements mentioned in the question, it was the upgrade of the public footpath through Penny Rock Wood that generated the most specific comments. The proposals would alter the aesthetic of the wood and remove the '*rooty, knotty and difficult*' character of the paths and replace them with bland paths more commonly found in leisure parks. The peace and quiet of the wood would be lost and it will just become a busy thoroughfare rather than a pleasure to walk through.
- One comment stated that the current White Moss Bridge was an attractive feature and should be left as it is. Two respondents said the current bridge is already accessible by bikes as they can carry them over and another felt it was unnecessary and a waste of money to replace the bridge as cyclists could just push their bikes up to Loughrigg Terrace and continue from there.

Supporting comments:

- The opportunity for improved access and better provision of flatter and easy cycle routes were the main focus for the supporters of the proposals. It would take cyclists off the A591 and would be a much more scenic and attractive route. It will provide better bridleway links throughout the area.
- Some supporting comments were conditional in that the new routes would need to be wide enough to comfortably accommodate all users.

Go Lakes Travel Programme response:

- The route we have chosen is the result of careful consideration. The new section through Rydal Estate fields was favoured because it takes a lower and less steep line into White Moss Wood and towards the River Rothay. This means we can leave the existing public footpath through the upper part of White Moss Woods as it is and reduces the possibility for conflict on this steeper section. We are grateful for Rydal Estates for allowing access across their land.
- White Moss Bridge is an integral part of the landscape and we want it to remain so. However the steps up to each end of the bridge are impassable for pushchair users as well as wheelchairs and the narrow width of the decking means pedestrians cannot pass two abreast. The new bridge will incorporate the existing pillars and their triangular structure will be reflected in the local oak decking boards. The new width will be 1.5 metres (the maximum possible without altering the pillars) and will be ramped at either end to allow cycles, wheelchairs and pushchairs. We would be using a local blacksmith and designer who designed and installed the Woodburn Bridge at Skelwith and the Staveley Riverside bridge.
- White Moss meadows and Penny Rock Wood are owned by the LDNPA. There has been a promoted "Miles without Stiles" limited mobility route from White Moss car park through to the entrance of Penny Rock Wood for almost 10 years. We have been looking at extending this Miles without Stiles (MwS) through to the Grasmere outflow bridge (which is already ramped) for a number of years now and these proposals are a culmination of this. The current path is 2 metres wide so we would not be making a wider path, just

providing a better surface. The initial slope as you enter Penny Rock Wood now has eroded ground approximately 20 metres wide as walkers pick the easiest line up the bank. Any ground vegetation has been trampled away and the ground has compacted to the detriment of tree roots. We can create an 'S' shaped path up this slope that will be at a 1:10 gradient, achievable by wheelchair users and by improving an old timber extraction route to the north of the existing footpath, we will take cyclists away from the steep drop down to the Grasmere outflow bridge.

- We disagree that formalising the path through Penny Rock Wood will irrevocably alter the character of the area. Penny Rock Wood is designated as open access so people are free to walk over the whole area. In this way they can find quieter and more 'natural' areas to walk if they so wish

Next steps: we will proceed with planning applications for Penny Rock Wood, White Moss Bridge and the new section of bridleway over Rydal Estates land.

- We have submitted a planning application for Penny Rock Wood, as it is programmed and budgeted for in 2013-14. We have also submitted a planning application for the replacement White Moss Bridge. There is a long lead in time to this because of Environment Agency consent for working in main rivers and we will have a four month window from June to September to install the bridge.
- We will submit a planning application for the new bridleway through Rydal Estate land as soon as we have formal written agreement from Rydal Estate.

Question 4: Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway alongside the Grasmere shoreline with measures to protect eroding sections of shoreline? Please explain why?

Opposition comments:

- Of all the proposals outlined this section generated the most strongly worded comments in opposition, in terms of conflict and landscape impact. The majority of comments were about perceived conflict and are predominantly from walkers who argue that they *'should have prior claim to the enjoyment of the area over cyclists'*. The comments are very negative towards bridleway users; it would be *'both unsafe and destructive; large groups of cyclists pose both a danger and are a threat to walkers; mixing cyclists and pedestrians is dangerous; the shoreline is our beach and really don't want a busy bridleway slicing through it'*.
- Comments on the landscape impact are equally strong. The draft designs for the shoreline revetment are described as *'the most dreadful piece of shore vandalism I have ever seen; it would radically alter the aesthetic of the lake shore; turns the countryside into a playground and urbanises it'*. There was one comment from a mountain biker who said it would spoil his view of Grasmere from Loughrigg Terrace above.
- There are also comments on the loss of amenity for non-cycling visitors. The shingle beach is for people swimming and picnicking and sitting down enjoying the peace and quiet and this enjoyment will be spoilt by cyclists who don't stop and just rush from place to place. The result will be that the functionality of the area will change from a place to sit and relax to a thorough-fare.

Supporting comments:

- The supportive comments are, unsurprisingly, predominantly from cyclists who see the overall project as developing *'family cycling from the doorstep which will mean less families driving somewhere to go for a ride and reduce congestion'*.
- The ability to take young children cycling without having to use the A591 was also a major factor for many people supporting the proposals, for example, *'It's a wonderful part of the Lakes that I would like to experience with my young family safely on a bike'*.
- A local horse-rider stated they would *'love to be able to ride around the village I love and live in'*.
- There was recognition that the improved route would also benefit disabled people and walkers too as currently the route is only accessible for *'able bodied walkers and a few well equipped cyclists'*.
- There is a greater degree of tolerance for walkers by cyclists and acceptance that responsible use is the way forward.
- There were a number of comments referring to the shingle beach as a social gathering area and that any bridleway or cycleway should not impinge on that and that any route should be wide enough to accommodate all users without them feeling restricted for space.

Go Lakes Travel Programme response:

- We think there has been some misunderstanding about where the bridleway/ cycleway would be located. It would not be along the shingle beach but above it on top of the revetment wall that would be built. It is not the intention of these proposals to allow cycling on the beach. We are aware that the photo-montages and designs for the shoreline protection we produced for the 19 November 2013 drop in caused some consternation on the day but we made it clear these were the first steps in a long process to get a design we

were happy with and that could proceed to the planning application stage. The intention is to create an embankment similar to the one that protects the southern bank of the Grasmere outflow bridge and the start of the River Rothay. Where we can we will use natural stone to 'face' the structure and build in access down to the shingle beach in places, as requested by some people at the drop in day.

- We do not agree with the comments about cyclists being a danger to other users. As we have stated previously there is no evidence to back up this claim and it is based on perception not reality. We do not believe that cyclists will just travel through without stopping; regardless of whether on bike or on foot Grasmere and Rydal will be a place people will want to stop and explore. The attitudes of walkers to these proposals are similar to those in other studies and research into shared use routes which found that walkers are the most territorial and antagonistic to other users and most reluctant to share with others whereas cyclists and horse-riders are more prepared to share and moderate their behaviour.

Next steps: we will proceed with a planning application for a bridleway above the Grasmere shoreline and associated shoreline protection work

- Given that there is two to one support for this proposal we will continue to work with our planners, the engineering design company and the Environment Agency to develop and submit a planning application for this work. This allows an important and large scale project to undergo the appropriate levels of scrutiny and for interested parties to have a further opportunity to comment.

<p>Question 5: Do you support the proposals to upgrade the public footpath through Deer Bolts Wood to bridleway? Please explain why?</p>
<p>Opposition comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objections here focussed on the outcome of the proposal rather than the proposal itself. There is a strongly held view that Red Bank Road is not suitable for cyclists because it is narrow, steep and without any pedestrian footways and adding cyclists to this <i>'imposes a significantly enhanced risk to all users'</i>. • Other comments felt that the public footpath through Deer Bolts Wood was fine as it is and that it was unnecessary to improve the surface. Others felt it was too steep for cyclists and that an alternative route continuing along Grasmere shoreline should be found.
<p>Supporting comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with previous questions the improvement in off-road access and the greater degree of safety that this brings is the major factor in supporting the proposal • Upgrading to bridleway would provide safer and better access for local horse-riders • It would improve access for everyone including walkers and wheelchair users. Responsible shared use is the way forward although education and signage might be necessary to encourage appropriate behaviour.
<p>Go Lakes Travel Programme response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that the Red Bank Road is a very popular recreational route for walkers accessing Grasmere shoreline from the village. We know from traffic surveys carried out in July and August 2013 that approximately 4,500 to 5,000 vehicles use Red Bank Road on a weekly basis. Red Bank Road is a public highway which cyclists are entitled to use already, and they do so now. There have not been any reported accidents on this road between cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles in the last five years. This supports national research which shows that users moderate their behaviour according to the conditions and we wouldn't expect cyclists to be any different.
<p>Next steps: instead of improving the Deer Bolts Wood footpath, we will submit a planning application to improve the existing permitted footpath along the Grasmere shoreline to create a cycleway to reach the Red Bank Road at grid reference NY 335063</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not think promoting Red Bank Road will be as hazardous to all users as people suggest. However we have looked at ways of reducing the length of Red Bank Road that users would have to cycle on and, with agreement from the National Trust, have come up with the alternative of using and upgrading the permitted path that continues along the shoreline. We will draw up a specification of works for this route and submit a planning application in 2014-15.

Question 6: Do you support the proposals to create a new bridleway through White Moss car park and A591 improvements including a crossing of the A591? Please explain why?

- As mentioned in the Go Lakes Travel Programme response to Question 1, this scheme is no longer taking place because Lowther Estate, owner of White Moss Common, has withdrawn support. Because of this we do not think it is necessary to provide any details of the consultation comments here, though it was found that the majority of respondents were in support of the scheme.