

PEAK NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PRESS RELEASE

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AUTHORITY SETS TIGHT DEADLINE TO RESOLVE BACKDALE QUARRY CASE

A decision on whether to take enforcement action against a quarrying company at Longstone Edge will be made within weeks by the Peak District National Park Authority's planning control committee.

Over recent months the Authority has been gathering information about the extent of mineral extraction at Backdale quarry, following allegations from protesters that operator MMC Ltd is breaking the terms of a 1952 planning permission and unlawfully extracting limestone.

The Authority has now drafted in a geological expert to complete the jigsaw of background information. The report will form the basis of legal advice on the possible courses of action for the Authority.

A tight timescale has been set for the planning control committee to resolve the issue. It will be considered as soon as the geological report and legal advice have been received at the 18 June planning control committee at the latest.

Planning control committee chair Councillor John Bull said: "The site is covered by a 1952 consent for the extraction of vein minerals - fluorspar, barytes and lead. We accept that this consent allows for the extraction of some limestone in the course of working the vein minerals, but not limestone in its own right.

"This is an extremely complex process and unfortunately things can't happen overnight - it is absolutely crucial that we are sure of our legal position before launching any action.

"Over recent months we have been gathering the information to enable us to decide on a right and proper course of action. Inevitably this process takes time and we understand that this is frustrating to many people.

"However, this is a top priority for us and I hope that all interested parties will welcome that we have set a very tight deadline to resolve this matter."

The National Park Authority started proceedings against the quarrying company in November. A planning contravention notice was served which required operator MMC Ltd and landowner Bleaklow Industries to set out the full scale of mineral extractions at the site. The geological report will soon complete the picture, enabling the Authority to decide on a course of action.

If the planning control committee resolves that the company is breaking the terms of the permission the Authority - as the local minerals planning authority - has powers to launch a formal legal action and serve an enforcement notice to stop the operation.