

Save Longstone Edge Group is very pleased that its recent increase in campaigning activity has again attracted the support of local MP – Patrick McLoughlin.

We very much hope that he succeeds in raising an adjournment debate on the issue, and we will support him in every way on this.

If a debate takes place we have every intention of attending in as large a number as is practicable.

We also look forward to his robust support for our cause, when he participates in the live 'Politics Show' on Sunday 22nd October, from Calver Village Hall at 12:30pm.

MP CONTINUES QUARRY BATTLE

West Derbyshire's Member of Parliament, Patrick McLoughlin, is urging the Government to support the Peak District National Park Authority in its fight to halt further quarrying at Backdale, Longstone Edge. He has sent strong letters to ministers ahead of the meeting with the Peak Park.

Patrick has been involved in this struggle since 1997. He commented,

‘I have been in regular correspondence since then with a succession of Government departments responsible for quarrying, from the Department of the Environment, then the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and following the abolition of that department earlier this year, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the new Department of Communities and Local Government. ‘I first asked the Deputy Prime Minister to ‘call in’ the application in December 1997. I obtained an Adjournment Debate at the same time, solely to debate Longstone Edge. The Government refused, saying, ‘the issues are of local significance’. I have raised Longstone Edge in the Commons and unofficially with ministers many other times, too and asked Parliamentary Questions. Even so, this summer, the Government’s exact words were, ‘the review of old mineral permissions are essentially local matters’. That is depressingly little progress on such an important issue.’

Indeed, in July, in a Parliamentary Answer, a minister from the Department of Communities and Local Government admitted, ‘No recent assessment of the impacts of mineral operations on residential areas or areas of outstanding natural beauty has been undertaken by my Department’.

Patrick added,

‘That is why I am now seeking a further debate in the House of Commons’.

Ends

7 October 2006

Editor's note:

Here is some of the text of Patrick's letter to the relevant Government departments ahead of the Authority's meeting with the Government.

"I am writing to you about quarrying activity at Backdale, at Longstone Edge in Derbyshire. It did seem earlier this year, that real progress might finally be made, following the visit of the then minister, Jim Knight, to this area. We were all bitterly disappointed when the 'stop' notice was declared by John Prescott to be void and the public enquiry postponed again until next year. Then, over the summer, new quarrying activities began. As the Chairman of the Authority said to me recently, 'in the mean time, the scars in the landscape are worsening and the financial pressure on the Authority is increasing.' They would like to investigate invoking the 1952 consent, but can not afford to do so. It has also been suggested to me by a local pressure group, that if a minister could 'recover jurisdiction' in the appeals process, the inspector in charge of the public enquiry could make the decision, which might be an advantage. I understand this aspect comes under your department, and I would be particularly grateful for your views on it.

"This is not, contrary to what Government ministers have been saying to me and others since 1997, simply a local issue. This is a *national* park, enjoyed by huge numbers of people from an enormous geographical area. They as well as local residents, find it hard to understand how it seems impossible to prevent such large and ugly workings being carried out in the heart of an area of outstanding natural beauty. I can understand their desire to explore every conceivable avenue to find a solution, as outlined above.

"However, no-one, least of all the Authority, is pretending to you that finding a solution is easy, straightforward, or indeed, inexpensive. They have been trying to find an answer for as long as I have been a Member of Parliament for the area, but I believe that this is a national issue of concern and I hope you will work with the Authority to find a constructive and positive way forward."

7 October 2006

You can write to:
The Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
E Mail: mcloughlinp@parliament.uk

(Please include your full name and address when writing)