

## **5 years on, major agencies back call to Government to save Peak District from mining devastation**

Immediate release

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**On the 5th year anniversary since quarrying resumed at Longstone Edge in the Peak District, a major coalition has warned the Government to ‘act now’ or lose 350 hectares of irreplaceable landscape forever.**

This summer marks the five year anniversary that Bleaklow Industries and MMC resumed the mining of a 1952-granted mineral permission at the outstandingly beautiful Longstone Edge in the Peak District National Park. This week, the Longstone Edge Coalition (LEC), an alliance of 8 major environmental and conservation agencies, has written to the Government urging Defra to provide immediate financial support to the Peak District National Park Authority to halt continued devastation caused by the quarrying.

In a letter to the Environment Secretary, Hilary Benn MP, Ruth Chambers, Deputy CEO of the Campaign for National Parks has warned the Government to “give the highest priority” to saving Longstone Edge. She comments: “The irreplaceable national park land at Longstone Edge has, this year, suffered five years of devastation from quarrying.

“The Government must act now to save this precious land that it is bound to protect, because fresh ground is being cleared for further quarrying.”

She adds: “The Government’s actions towards Longstone Edge are of national significance; a positive response from Hilary Benn would boost this government’s track record on protecting our finest landscapes”.

David Murray, Countryside Campaigner for the Ramblers' Association added “We’ll soon have to rename this beautiful, much walked and cherished landscape ‘Long-gone Edge’ if the government doesn’t step in immediately to help the national park authority stop the demolition. Without funding the authority will not be able to take the necessary action to save Longstone Edge for future generations”.

### **Background**

The Longstone Edge Coalition (LEC) call follows a decision by Government and the Peak District National Park Authority to appeal a recent High Court judgment that left Longstone Edge vulnerable to destruction from accelerated mining activities. The ruling in March 2008 overturned a public inquiry and a ‘stop notice’ served by the Park Authority, to prevent Bleaklow Industries and MMC quarrying at Longstone Edge using a mineral permission granted in 1952 (2). Since then, resumed quarrying has renewed destruction at Backdale on Longstone Edge (3).

The Longstone Edge Coalition, has welcomed the decision to appeal but has called for urgent revocation of the 1952 mining permission to prevent continued damage. It has called on the Government to prepare a rescue package to meet the costs, warning that the National Park Authority would not be able to meet these without Government support.

### **The LEC is calling for:**

- Revocation of the 1952 mining permission
  - Full financial and legislative support from Defra to the Peak Park Authority
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### **Note to Editors:**

1. The coalition includes: the British Mountaineering Council, the Campaign for National Parks, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Peak District, Plantlife, the Ramblers' Association and the Save Longstone Edge Group.

Information about each coalition group member can be accessed on their respective websites at

British Mountaineering Council - <http://www.thebmc.co.uk/>

Campaign for National Parks - <http://www.cnp.org.uk/>

Campaign to Protect Rural England - <http://www.cpre.org.uk/>

Friends of the Earth - <http://www.foe.co.uk/>

Friends of the Peak District - <http://www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk/>

Plantlife - <http://www.plantlife.org.uk/>

Ramblers' Association - <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

Save Longstone Edge Group - <http://www.longstone-edge.org.uk/>

The coalition has formed in the wake of a recent High Court judgment, which overturned a public inquiry decision in 2007 in which a Government planning inspector had ruled that excessive limestone quarrying at Backdale Quarry on Longstone Edge was illegal and must cease.

2. Planning permission was granted in 1952 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to allow "the winning and working of fluorspar and barytes and for the working of lead and any other minerals which are won in the course of working those minerals, by turning over old spoil dumps, by opencast working and by underground mining". Further information regarding the public inquiry, associated high court judgment and a timeline of events is available at

<http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/longstone-edge>

3. The case has exposed a loophole in the 1995 Environment Act, which has allowed the owner to evade 'best practice' regulations. The Act should have forced the operators at Backdale Quarry to draw up a new set of environmental conditions for working the site. However, the review process requires environmental information to be provided by the quarry operator and the Park Authority (as the Mineral Planning Authority) has been given no power to demand this information. This leaves sites like Backdale in a permanent state of limbo as information is withheld, effectively halting the review process indefinitely. New regulations which would close this loophole are expected to come into force in July.

### **Contact**

Ruth Somerville, Ramblers' Association Media Officer, 020 7339 8532

[press@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:press@ramblers.org.uk)

Photos available on request.