

PRESS RELEASE

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Crunch-time for Longstone Edge

The fate of one of the most beautiful landscapes in the Peak District National Park – rapidly becoming scarred due to uncontrolled quarrying – is to be decided in a case to be heard in the Court of Appeal on Tuesday 10 February 2009.

The hearing is the culmination of a lengthy legal battle to try to halt the rate of limestone quarrying taking place at Backdale Quarry on Longstone Edge in Derbyshire. Campaigners hope the Court of Appeal will rule in favour of a stricter interpretation of the old mineral permission, taking into account the sensitive location in a national park. The Court of Appeal's involvement underscores the national importance of this test case.

Quarry owner Bleaklow Industries Limited is currently able to work Backdale Quarry on Longstone Edge under an old mineral permission (1) dating from 1951, which was for the extraction of fluorspar for industrial uses. The controversy centres on how much limestone can be extracted whilst getting out the fluorspar. A previous public inquiry ruled that this should be limited to a ratio of two parts of limestone to one part of fluorspar. This was then overturned last year in the High Court and limestone quarrying has now resumed with a vengeance (2).

The Longstone Edge Coalition (LEC) (3), a national group of campaigning organisations, is calling on Defra to be ready to intervene if the Court of Appeal ruling does not favour an immediate halt to the permanent damage.

A coalition spokesperson, Ruth Chambers, Acting Chief Executive of the Campaign for National Parks, said "Quarries like Backdale, whose planning permission dates from the 1950s, can cause enormous environmental damage to the countryside if they are not subject to modern environmental standards. This case must now be regarded as a priority for Government intervention if landscape protection in our National Parks is not to be made a laughing stock".

John Lambert, chair of the local Save Longstone Edge Group said: "The destruction is occurring at an alarming rate and you would be amazed if someone showed you the site and then told you it was in a National Park. We hope that the limestone quarrying will found to be unlawful and will be curbed immediately. Everyday, more of the Park's valuable landscape is lost forever and so it is vital that the government is ready to intervene."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. Planning permission at Backdale 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”. Bleaklow Industries has since been using the permission to quarry intrusively for limestone.

2. Timeline of recent key events:

2006 - the Park Authority issued a stop notice at Backdale prompting a public inquiry

2007 - public inquiry decision in which a Government planning inspector ruled that excessive limestone quarrying (up to ratios of 93:1 limestone:fluorspar extracted) at Backdale Quarry on Longstone Edge was illegal and must cease. The High Court gave permission to Bleaklow Industries Ltd to appeal.

2008 – High Court judgment in April 2008 overturned the 2007 public inquiry decision, and allowed quarrying, which had been on hold, to resume for another 34 years. The judge stated that he did not accept the Planning Inspector's decision, and did not agree with either the Inspector's or the National Park Authority's interpretation of the original 1952 planning permission. Peak District National Park Authority granted appeal.

2009 – “Bleaklow Industries Limited – v – The secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & ors” case to be heard in Court of Appeal on 10 and 11 February 2009.

http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/listing_calendar/search?NUMBER=20080872&search=10-02-09&page=15

Further information regarding the public inquiry, associated high court judgment and a full timeline of events is available at <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/longstone-edge>

3. The Longstone Edge Coalition formed in the wake of the High Court judgment (April 2008). The coalition includes:

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/>

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust - <http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.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/>