



PENYBONT UCHAF  
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POWYS  
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Councillor Jackie Charlton  
By email: [cllr.jackie.charlton@powys.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jackie.charlton@powys.gov.uk)

5 February 2024

Dear Councillor Charlton

**Conversion of the Monks Trod/ Llwybr y Mynaich to a surfaced track**

The Trustees of the Cambrian Mountains Society wish to express their intense shock and disapproval at learning that, far from moving to protect the delicate heritage and natural environment of the Monks Trod, Powys County Council is proposing measures guaranteed to lead to its devastation and that of the surrounding incredibly fragile peatland environment.

You are, certainly, already fully aware of the ecological importance of Powys' upland peats, including their irreplaceable role in capturing carbon. Likewise, you cannot fail to know of the severe and extensive damage caused to both the Trod itself *and* surrounding heathlands (including National Nature Reserves) by motorised transport and in particular offroad trail bikes. Finally, we remind you that experts such as Professor Andrew Fleming (to whom by copy of this email we refer you for further details, if required) identify the Trod as an irreplaceable heritage asset, a rare example of a surviving medieval engineered trackway.

Yet the January 2024 update to the Local Access Forum shows that Powys County Council intends to use money from the UK Levelling Up Fund to replace the current historic, environmentally appropriate path with a modern engineered track whose sole practical advantage will be to facilitate access for motorised vehicles deeper into the Elenydd. Whilst law-abiding bikers may keep to the track provided, even the presence of these is a major disincentive to non-motorised users. When in truth many track bike riders do *not* keep to available tracks but use them as launching pads for scrambling over the surrounding hills, well knowing that policing of their access rights is scanty, the foolhardiness of this proposal is little short of breathtaking. Rather than "support long distance walking, horse riding and other recreational activities" as the Update suggests, the increase in noisy motorised traffic, not to mention the distressing damage to surrounding terrain, would be a serious deterrent to other track users. Evidently, the interests of a small, well-organised and funded, minority of visitors is here being prioritised over the majority of peaceful, non-motorised visitors seeking the tranquillity of the uplands, without any possible justification.

Finally, we strongly oppose the misuse of Levelling Up funds for this purpose. The Transport Investments theme is explicitly intended to improve transport for localities – that is, making it easier for local people to travel about their local business. The theme funding is to aid investment "including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. We are requesting proposals for high-impact small, medium ...local transport schemes to **reduce** carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth, and **improve the safety, security and overall experience** of transport users." In no honest way can this be read to include building, for purely recreational use, a new track which will **increase** carbon emissions, air pollution and environmental degradation in a



relatively pristine area whilst **endangering the safety and overall experience** of walkers, horse-riders, cyclists and mountain bikers who are the majority users of the Trod. Further, surfacing the Trod would only increase congestion on the small roads and limited parking visitor facilities used to reach it, and in future years spread even more thinly the budget for road maintenance whose inadequacy for existing roads around the County is already evident.

In short, the Council must reconsider this wholly inappropriate, and potentially unlawful, use of government funds. The Trod does not qualify under any aspect of the Levelling Up scheme. If the Council is unable to identify other potential uses for the capital, we will be more than happy to present alternative suggestions.

We look forward to receiving your confirmation that this proposal will not be proceeding further, as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

**Lorna Brazell**

**Secretary,**

**On behalf of the Trustees of the Cambrian Mountains Society**

**Ysgrifenyddes,**

**Ar ran yr ymddiriedolwyr o'r Cymdeithas Mynyddoedd Cambria**

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