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**To:** Mr. Mark Stafford-Tolley, Secretary to the Powys LAF & Countryside Access Officer Powys CC.

**Cc:** Mr. Richard Tyler, Chairman Powys LAF,

Councillor Aled Davies Councillor representative on the Powys LAF.

**From:** Peter Foulkes, for the Trustees.

## Motorcycle Access along a Powys section of the Monks Trod

Dear Sir

The Trustees of the Cambrian Mountains Society (CMS) have just been made aware of the recent reopening of the “Monks Trod” to motorcycles. The Society is adamant that this relaxation of TROs, so as to allow motorised vehicles along the line of this medieval track, is a huge step backwards in its protection. The Society realises that it may be crying over spilt milk but it believes that this track, linking two important monastic settlements, should never have been designated as a BOAT. C12th Monks travelling between the two monasteries did not have the use of motorised vehicles, just their own feet, together with their horses perhaps pulling carts. Nor did the drovers and shepherds have the “advantage” of the internal combustion engine when they undoubtedly used the track in later centuries. It is also probably the case that parts of the way were already ancient before the Cistercians started to use it. **The Society repeats that this “Ancient Road” should never have been designated as a BOAT and to now allow the return of motorised vehicles along it is an extremely retrograde move.**

CMS does appreciate that Powys CC. may have been persuaded into reopening the track to motorcycles, and that the Authority has tried to mitigate the damage these vehicles may cause. Nevertheless the Society believes that the Authority should have stood its ground! It is not enough to allow only a limited number of “permitted” motorbikes along the track on specified days, this, in the Society’s opinion marks the thin end of the wedge. Neither is it sufficient to suggest that this provision is only for a short length of the track, the section opened up is perhaps the most vulnerable to damage, evidenced by the very fact that PCC. withdrew licences for Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March (2019) due to inclement weather, and poor ground conditions. (Here the Society must admit it is a little perplexed over how much of the track has been reopened, some reports suggest 3km. whilst others state that it has been reopened all the way up to the Ceredigion border – clarification on this would be useful). Undoubtedly PCC. is aware of the long term damage that motorised vehicles did to the track the last time they were allowed to use it. CMS is also cognizant of the very real problem of policing this reopening of the track, together with the cost implications for the Authority.

But it is not just the line of the track that CMS is concerned over but also the extremely fragile landscape and habitats that it passes through, or close to. This can clearly be seen in the several designations that this opened up section of the track either passes through or runs close to;

- **Special Area of Conservation / SAC** – the track enters this international designation at the Cerrigllwydion area,
- **Special Protected Area / SPA** – the track enters this international designation on Esgair Rhiwlan and also briefly as the track crosses the Afon Elan near Pont Elan,
- **Site of Special Scientific Interest / SSSI** - again the track enters this UK based designation on Esgair Rhiwlan and also briefly as it crosses the Afon Elan near Pont Elan,
- **National Nature Reserve / NNR** - The track enters the Claerwen NNR near the Cerrigllwydion area,
- **Historic Landscape** – Although the track does not go into this designation it runs parallel with it, and only a few metres off, for several km.

As well as these important conservation designations the land is under the management of a conservation based organisation – the Elan Valley Trust. How many more indicators of what a special landscape the track passes through are needed to prevent it from further “off-roading” damage? Over recent years, as evidenced by the outdoor press, this section of the Elenydd has become well known for its walking routes, people from far and wide taking in the beauty of a landscape renowned for its remoteness and solitude. The area is an oasis of calm, a place to watch merlin quartering the ground for prey, a place to take in the beauty of sheets of Bog Asphodel in flower, no place for recreational mechanised transport!

CMS asks that you bring this letter to the attention of all concerned in PCC and the hopes that if the Society can be of any assistance in preventing further damage to this outstandingly beautiful area you just have to get in touch. We all owe this, not only to the landscape, but also to this and future generations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Foulkes', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Mr. Peter Foulkes