

RECONOMICS PLUS

Case Study

South Peak Loop

Aim: To provide a 70-mile circular route for horse riders, cyclists and walkers through the southern part of the Peak District National Park

Project summary

The South Peak Loop (SPL) is a researched, tested, way-marked circular route off the Pennine Bridleway on bridleways/trails/quiet country lanes. Peak Horsepower aims to encourage riders, cyclists to explore the southern half of the National Park, staying and eating in local outlets. It does this by providing detailed maps, written directions, lists of accommodation and advice on 'what to take', all available to download from its website.



Peak Horsepower worked in partnership with the Peak District National Park which managed the 'cycling friendly places' funding and provided rangers to put up way-markers. They also worked with British Horse Society to publicise the route.

Impact

- Prior to the route being way marked and officially opened, it was test-ridden three times by local volunteers who hadn't originally been involved in developing the route or writing the directions. Any confusion or discrepancies in the instructions were then amended.



- By assuring the route is tested and directions are clear, Peak Horsepower is giving confidence to people to ride, cycle or walk a long distance (2-4 days) route to develop their sense of adventure in an area of outstanding beauty as well as a demanding physical challenge.
- It is also provided additional business opportunities to local food outlets, accommodation providers and others such as farriers and outdoor equipment suppliers.

Key learnings

- There is a strong need for circular routes with clear directions and instructions to give people confidence to venture into more remote areas. They are often nervous about setting out in unfamiliar countryside on routes they don't know.
- The process around public rights of way took a very long time and required on-going, close communication with the relevant bodies.

Future plans

- In the future, Peak Horsepower plans to develop 'petals' of half and one day rides off the loop for people who are either unable or not confident enough to commit to such a long route.
- It is hoped that this will encourage riders to eventually do the whole loop and then progress to the other, even more challenging loops off the Pennine Bridleway. It will also allow people to ride the whole loop but to vary the exact route which should encourage return visits.

Further information

peakhorsepowersecretary@hotmail.co.uk

www.peakhorsepower.co.uk

www.peakhorsepower.co.uk/south-peak-loop/4591186779



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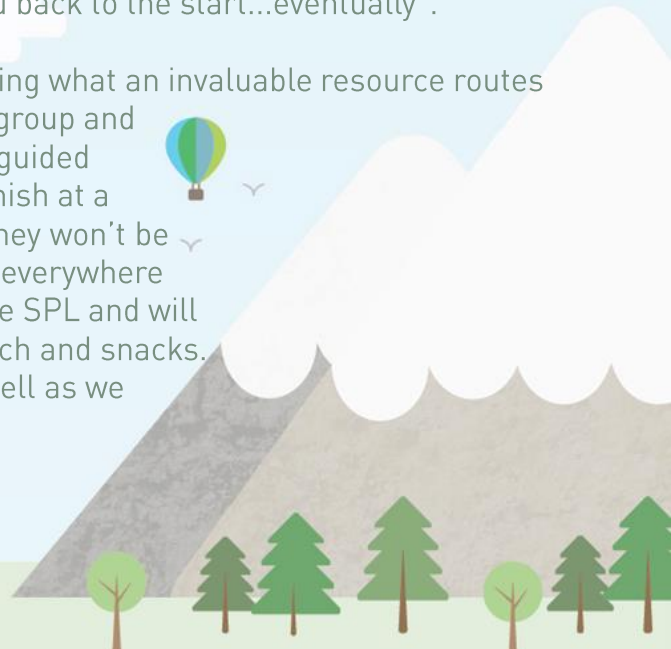
Flick's Story

Flick, who was already an experienced local rider, heard about the proposed South Peak Loop and volunteered to try out the directions/maps for Peak Horsepower. She rode it in spring 2016 to help test the final route but also to experience a "real sense of adventure". Riders usually ride long routes in pairs or groups so 'going it alone' with just your horse changes the experience and increases the need for self-reliance. Since successfully completing and enjoying the ride, Flick has joined the bridleway group committee and has started to work on a series of 'park and ride' guided rides. She has also begun training in rights of way research.

Flick says: "I rode the South Peak Loop in Spring 2016 when all the maps and directions were available but just before it was officially opened. I live fairly close to the route and am an experienced long distance rider so thought I would ride it alone to get a real sense of adventure. I thought it would also be useful to act like a final 'tester' for the loop".

"Although I was familiar with some parts of the route, much of it was a total revelation. There are so many beautiful places that I had never visited despite them being nearby. I often travel many miles with a horsebox to do endurance rides that were nowhere near as wonderful as this one! Having the directions and detailed maps took the worry out of trying to plan a route and knowing that it would bring you back to the start...eventually".

"Since successfully completing the ride and realising what an invaluable resource routes like this are to riders, I have joined the bridleway group and volunteered to work on a series of 'park and ride' guided rides. These will be one day rides that start and finish at a place where you can park a trailer or horse box. They won't be waymarked as the National Park don't want signs everywhere but there will be maps and directions similar to the SPL and will include pubs and cafes where you can stop for lunch and snacks. They should be great for cyclists and walkers as well as we all need similar routes to get out and explore the countryside".



Key facts

Target audience	Local and visiting horse riders, cyclists and walkers
Setting	Peak District National Park
Length of the project	Ongoing from 2016
Funding	Peak National Park 'Cycling Friendly Places'
Number of participants	Exact numbers as yet unknown