

# The Old Coach Road

(U3132 & U2236)

## Repair Plan

2018



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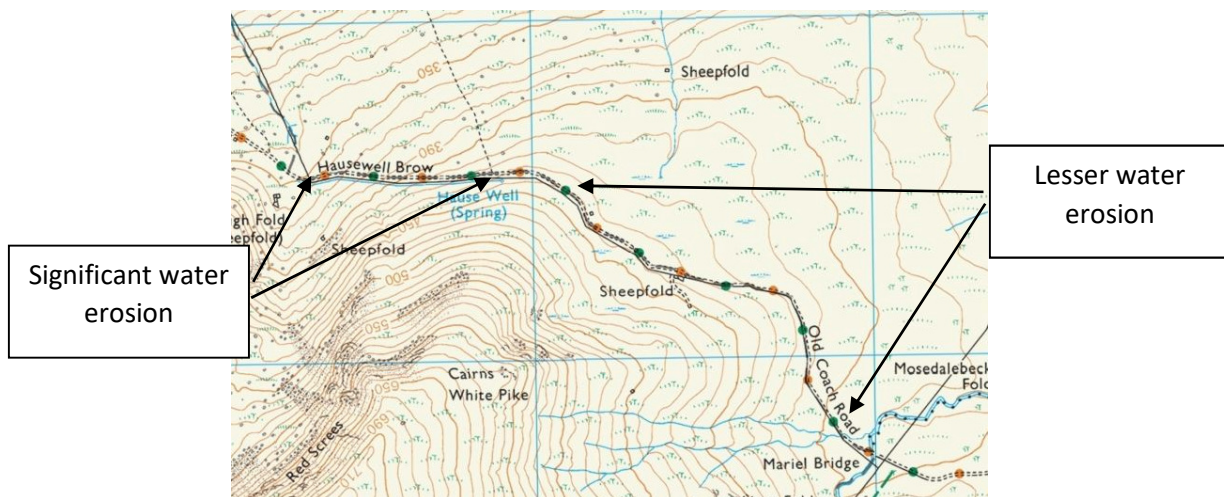
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## Summary

The 'Old Coach Road' is approximately 8 km of unsealed county road in the parishes of St. John Castlerigg & Wythburn, Threlkeld, and Matterdale. It crosses the boundary of Allerdale (U2236) and Eden (U3132) Districts of Cumbria County. It passes through an Environmentally Sensitive Area, for a short distance crosses a Site of Special Scientific Interest and reaches a maximum altitude of 437 metres (1436 ft)

It was significantly damaged during Storm Desmond in 2015. The excessive rainfall left the road heavily scarred in several places. On the western end, a trench opened up running down from Hausewell Brow for almost a kilometer adjacent to the sheepfold at the bottom of the descent. (GR 341232 to 333235). On the eastern end, the damage on Hausewell Brow was not as severe or dramatic but a shallower trench opened up along the surface for approx. 1.5 kilometers to Mariel Bridge.



Maps used are Ordnance Survey OL4 1:25 000

The eastern section between High Row and Mariel Bridge has several large puddles and the drainage gully is blocked for the majority of the route, but at the moment the water damage is less severe than the western end. This however is suffering from a general lack of maintenance.

Last known records of maintenance and repairs to this lane are recorded in minutes of a meeting of a meeting of the Hierarchy of Trails Working Party Group in 2003. It is believed the National Trust & Lake District National Park Authority carried some works to the eastern section as a joint project but this is as yet unverified. Since this time, the drainage gully that runs the length of the lane has become choked with Sphagnum Moss and Juncus effusus, (soft rush) grass and in some places both the bank of the gully and the road surface has become eroded to allow water ingress to the road surface

At various distances along the length of the road, culverts have been installed to take water from the gully to the downhill side of the hillside, these have become blocked by both the moss and the grasses but also by stone and debris washed through. In some cases, these are now exposed and/or broken.

In 2017, after continued significant rainfall, Cumbria TRF decided to try to tackle the problem. In association with other user groups and after discussions with CCC, LDNPA and NT, a repair day was planned for December. This was carried out and showed the need for the drainage gully to be cleared out. Nearly 20 volunteers from around the northern UK came along to help with the day. Approximately five hundred meters of gully was cleared and several culverts opened up again. This showed the work was necessary and also the scope of the works required to complete the lane repair. Borne from that small intervention came the plan in this document.

It should be noted at this point that although Cumbria TRF are heading up this project, it is only possible with the help of many other interested parties. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of those people as without them this would not be possible to accomplish.

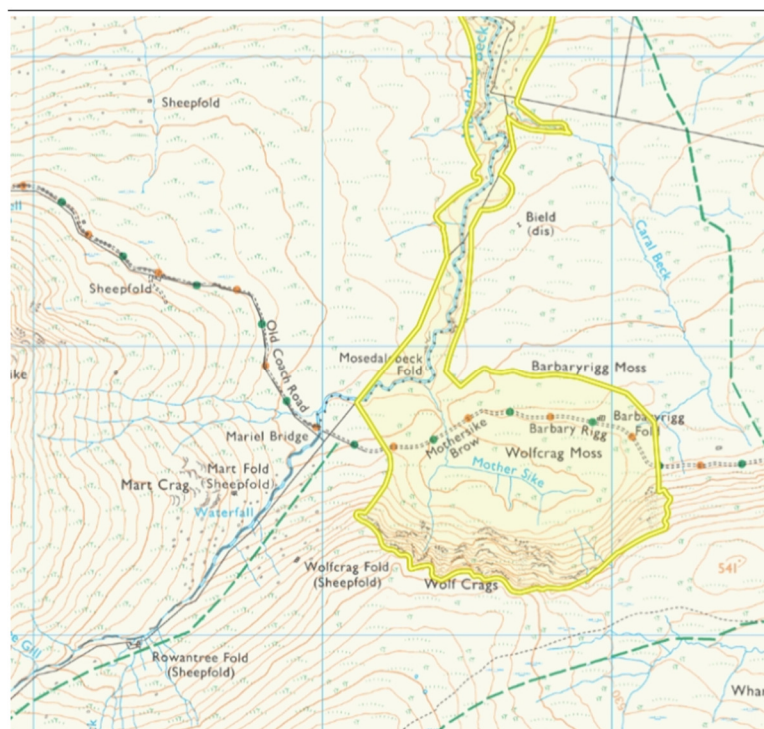
CCC Staff have stated that although they recognise their responsibility with these lanes, they do not have the resources to effect repairs given the significant amount of water damage on the surfaced roads around the county. During discussions, it was agreed that Cumbria TRF could complete the repairs providing certain criteria were met. (see Agreed Criteria section for details)

## SSSI Area Details

Around the area of Thornsgill, Mosedale Beck and Wolf Crag is a Site of Special Scientific Interest which comes under the management of Natural England. It covers 98.3 hectares and the citation states;

*The area is a key locality for Quaternary studies in north west England.*

*Sections show strongly weathered pre-Devensian till overlain by Late Devensian till. These deposits, together with a Loch Lomond Stadial moraine at Wolf Crag and meltwater deposits in Mosedale, provide an exceptional geomorphological and sedimentary record in this part of the country. The weathered tills are particularly significant in providing the clearest evidence available of pre-Devensian glaciation in north west England. They are of considerable pedological interest, and their survival raises implications for the timing and efficacy of glacial erosion.*



## Why Repair This Road?

The Old Coach Road holds a special place in the hearts of the northern 'green lane' users as it carries such a heritage and utilises a beautiful yet diminishing resource. Cumbria TRF has, (for the last twenty years), worked with many aspects of the lane preservation including repairs, management and consultation.

The quarries along the western end provide a backdrop of Lakeland history that dates back some 2700 years with an iron age settlement above Threlkeld housing some 40 huts at this time. (Threlkeld Parish Council, 2017). It was used by the Romans to move materials from the mines in the Pennines and eastern Lakes to Maryport harbour and before surfaced roads were dreamed of, this road was a major link to both the central & western lakes for the emerging vehicles from the late 1800's onwards. (Cumbria Industrial History Society). More recently it was included in the A-Z guide of roads in the Lake District between the 1960's & the 1970's and was a road much sought after to drive because of its position and backdrops. The TRF have several maps and histories of this lane showing its use for the local communities going back to at the 1770's. However, this road is mentioned in documents and histories from before this time. (Alan Kind)

Links with the Threlkeld village and Mining Museum have existed for many years and could well be incorporated into this project to help people understand some of that past history. The original route of the road was changed at some point to accommodate the work at the mines and the iron age settlement, although this is yet to be confirmed. (Hodkinson & Donald Map 1770)

The road is utilised by many users including mountain rescue, farmers, walkers, runners, cyclists, paragliders and recreational motor vehicle users. Thus, repairing this road would be benefit all parties.

In short, the natural heritage of this road is under threat and over a long period of time it has gradually declined to its current condition. Landscape restoration here offers a very tangible mechanism to both build more sustainable connections with the local communities and their natural heritage and could also help to develop a sense of community custodianship which has been promoted in the governments Natural Environment White Paper.

Finally, in relation to the current National Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust programme for restoration of the peat bogs below the road, restoring the drainage to its original standards will have a direct impact upon the water flow into the peat lands below, thus helping the peat to regenerate.

## Agreed Criteria Between CTRF & CCC.

Please see the Appendices for the documents listed below and use this document as a reference.

1. Provide detailed work plans for the project
2. Provide risk assessment for the works to be carried out
3. Provide insurance and qualification details for any contractor using machinery
4. Provide evidence of utilities for the work areas
5. Provide materials and manpower
6. Map of SSSI area

## Pilot Work Party

In December 2017, an initial pilot work party was completed with the help of volunteers from user's groups in a spread from Lancashire, Cumbria, Northumbria, Teeside and North Yorkshire under the supervision of Geoff Wilson. The aim of the day was to clear a section of gully to allow water to flow freely again along the drainage gully and into the culverts. Using hand tools only, approximately 500 metres of gully was cleared, four culverts were unblocked and the removed waste materials were distributed on the lane surface to help to replace some of the eroded surface. The damaged gate at Mariel Bridge was replaced using a local manufacturer and volunteer labour.

After two weeks the lane was reviewed and several areas were noted to be drier. Where water continued to sit on the road surface it was shown that the surface had eroded to below the level of the drainage available and required further intervention.

Other sample work was carried out on the drainage at Hausewell Brow, this visibly reduced the water flow into the damaged area within three hours. Again, using hand tools only, two culverts were dug out alongside the gully clearance works to improve flow to the lower peatland sections. One culvert was found to be broken in the middle and will require replacing, however a strong water flow was opened once the damaged section had been cleared of debris and the exit hole had been deepened. This reduced as the backlog of water flowed freely again.

These sample works and the subsequent discussions and reviews helped to formulate this plan.

## Planned Stages of Repair Works

Repair plans have been developed in collaboration with experienced upland path management experts and are planned to follow the advice laid down in the Uplands Path Advisory Group manuals. (Upland Pathwork and Upland Management) and Repairing Upland Paths, Best Practice Guide 1996)

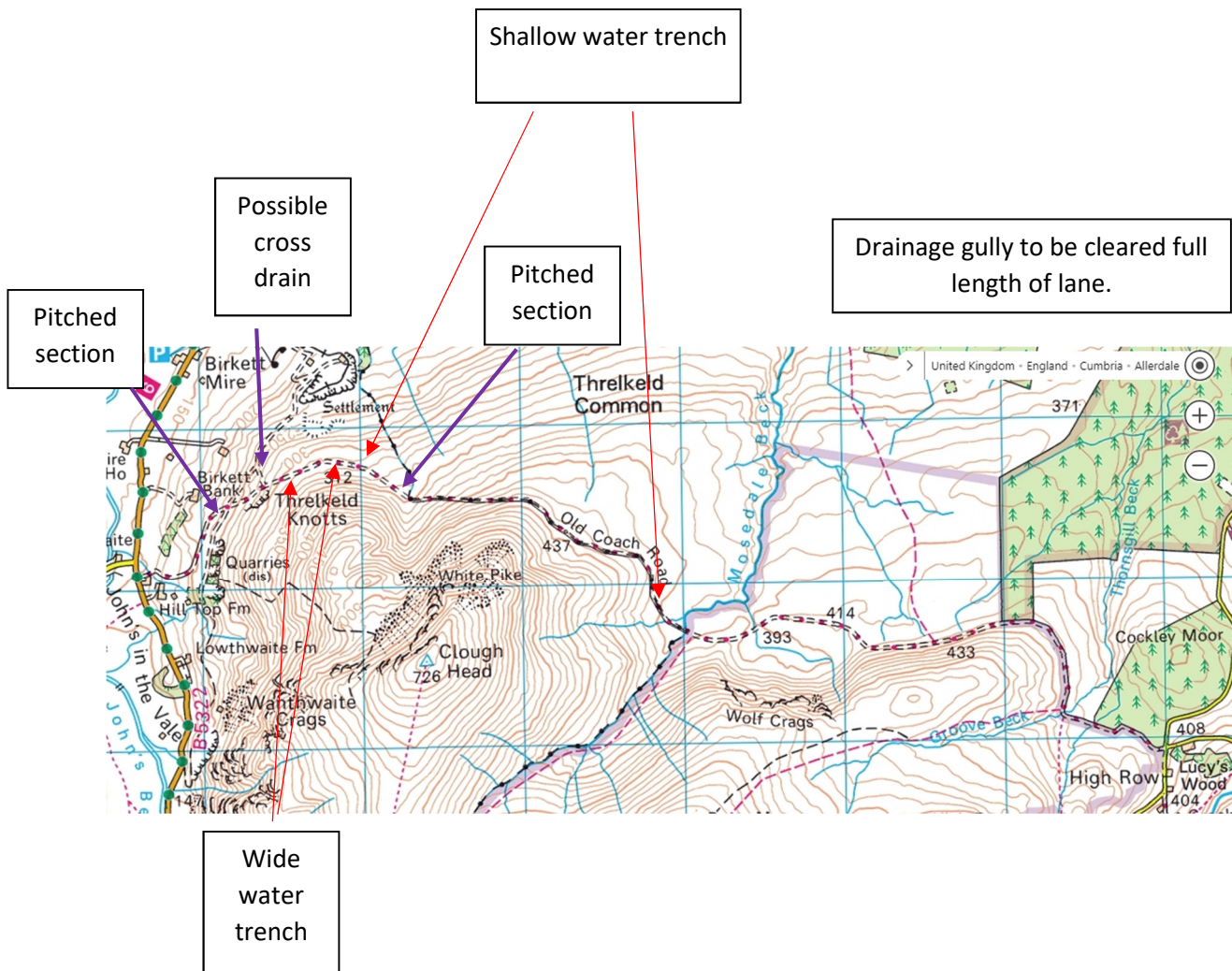
The timescales involved are weather and funding dependent with the aim to complete the project by the end of the 2018 calendar year.

1. Clear the drainage gully and repair/replace any damaged culverts.
2. Fill in the eroded surface where significant water is being retained through surface erosion, clear drainage channels as required
3. Build a cross drain at the base of the incline of Hausewell Brow. Exact location to be confirmed. (GR NY336232)
4. Back fill water eroded gully either side of Hausewell Brow
5. Lay pitched stone at two locations. (GR NY325233 & NY336233).



# Planned Repair Works Map

Map used Ordnance Survey Landranger 90 1:50 000



The repairs will need to be carried out in three phases with a concentration on the drainage at first. Initial gully clearing will be completed the full length of the lane. Culverts will be replaced as they are found to be damaged. Modern black polypropylene plastic pipe is to be used resting on a suitable gravel base with both a stone cover and, where depth allows, a depth of specified road surface to protect it. These will be replacements to the existing damaged ones wherever necessary. Where the road surface has degraded to such a level that infill is required each culvert will need to be reviewed as to it's placement and suitability. It may be necessary to install a cross drain at GR329337. TBC by contractor.

Once drainage works are completed, the next phase will be infill of the main trench, using graded stones. Where possible, stone previously washed out is to be returned to the trench. Once this work is complete, then locally sourced stone is to be laid on the surface of the road wherever erosion has damaged the surface and allowed water to pool.

For the final stage, some pitching works are planned at strategic points to prevent further erosion and damage by both water and users.

## Planning Timeline

Date	Action	Status
October 2017	CTRF discuss possible repairs	Completed
	Meeting with CCC Highways	Completed
	Discussions with user groups to set up repair day	Completed
December 2017	Hand Tools Repair Day, initial pilot works on eastern end of lane	Completed
	Email discussions with LDNPA, NT and user groups	Completed
January 2018	Second and third test works on Hausewell Brow	Completed
February 2018	On site meeting with National Trust	Outstanding
	Meeting with Parish Councilor, (Threlkeld)	Completed
	On site meeting with Contractor	Completed
	Initial funding requests submitted	Completed
	Meeting with stone supplier	Completed
	Meeting with SRM & Ashcroft	Completed
	Meeting with landowner	Outstanding
Spring/Summer 2018	Planned drainage works carried out	Outstanding
	Damaged culverts replaced/repaired	Outstanding
	Stone moved to repair area from upland quarries	Outstanding
	Water gully back filled	Outstanding
	Pitched stone laid	Outstanding
Autumn 2018	Follow up on site meetings	Outstanding
	Planned maintenance review	Outstanding
	Install lane monitors	Outstanding

## Funding and Costs

Expenditure	Description	Amount
Contractor Fees	Drainage and rebuild (This may increase by £1k)	£14,500.00
Materials	100 meters x 300mm breathable Twinwall Pipe	£400.00
	Geotextile 100gms x 1m x 400 m	£400.00
Stone	Mixed weight stone, 1000 tonnes	Donated
Sundry Costs	Diesel fuel	See Contractor fees
	Catering	£200.00
	Insurance	See Contractor fees
History Plaques	Stone base, weather proof prints	TBC
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£17,500.00</b>

The contractor fees may increase slightly if any weather/issues crop up that causes delays. This is to be discussed and managed during the project as the timescales needed are flexible due to the nature of the work to be completed.

## Future Plans

With the project complete, ongoing maintenance becomes a priority. A scheme has been discussed amongst user groups to set up volunteer lane monitors. In years gone by, lanes had Linesmen, Lanesmen or Lengthsmen whose job it was to traverse one or more lane (s) and monitor their status, these were employed by the Council, a landowner or an estate. Their role was to report damage, repair minor damages and generally take a little personal pride in that lane.

Discussions were very positive amongst the user groups and so the next step would be to involve CCC, LDNPA, NT and other local parties to set the programme up.

Training would be needed for team members in basic upland lane management, a reporting structure would need to be set up and liaisons with the local authorities will need to be agreed.

The setting up of this management format would develop a hugely important network of people who would effectively act as a conduit of information for users of the lanes on the Hierarchy of Trails and it would help to develop and install a deeper understanding of the management practices and legalities of the lanes as well as grow a stronger community spirit with the aim of preventing the loss of heritage.

## Conclusions

There are a lot of factors in this plan that will evolve over time. The plan is meant to be a baseline, somewhere to begin and something to harness the passions and the imagination of the local community, the visiting tourists and provide a huge untapped resource for all parties to share in.

Whilst, at the moment, the Old Coach Road is in a regrettably dilapidated condition, the planning behind this repair is meant to be a stepping stone to better relations, improved management and a greater level of engagement by all of its users, stakeholders and authorities.

Only with a positive attitude, a lot of perseverance and some very clear communication will many of the obstacles that exist currently be overcome.

For the future it would be desirable for this road to become an entry point for both the community and visitors to access story boards which explain the landscape, the wildlife, the history and the current techniques used to manage this area whilst retaining its accessibility for all user groups.

## Contacts

Several external sources of information and opinion have been used to develop this repair plan, these are listed below.

### **Consultations**

#### ***Upland Repairs***

LARA	Geoff Wilson
Contractor	Dan Birkett
Quarry owner	Ian Hartland
Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd	Ian Meadows – Site manager
Ashcroft Contracting Ltd	Steven Mattinson – Site Manager

#### ***Authorities***

Cumbria County Council	Amber Sykes - Network Manager
Natural England	Ian Slater – Lead Advisor
Lake District National Park	Suzy Hankin - Area Ranger, East Cath Johnson Area Ranger
National Trust	Stephen Downson - Area Ranger Commoners (via SD).
Parish Councils	Threlkeld – Ian Hartland Matterdale – Unknown as yet

#### ***User groups***

Cumbria Trail Riders Fellowship	Steve Stout
Lake District Land Rover group	Jack Donaldson
Green Laners of Cumbria	Myk Heetun
Green Lane Association	Dale Wyatt
Cumbria Soaring Club	Gordie Oliver
Threlkeld Mining Museum	Peter
Local property owners	Alan Ferguson, Colin Downer

## Other Information

Various other documents should be used alongside this plan, these are listed below. Any external sources for information are also listed below.

1. OCR Survey 02.18
2. OCR Repairs Planning Sheet 2018
3. OCR Utilities 2018
4. OCR Repairs Risk Assessment 2018
5. Map of SSSI area

## References

Alan Kind, Trail Riders Fellowship (Email conversation February 2017)

Roads and Tracks of Britain Christopher Taylor (February 2017)

Cumbria Industrial History Society 2017 - <http://www.cumbria-industries.org.uk/a-z-of-industries/roads/> (Accessed online February 2017)

Hodkinson & Donald 1770 Map (Alan Kind February 2017)

Threlkeld Parish Council 2017 - <http://www.threlkeldweb.co.uk/threlkeld-history> (Accessed online February 2018)

Uplands Path Advisory Group - Upland Pathwork and Upland Management, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2015 and Repairing Upland Paths, Best Practice Guide 1996). (February 2017)