

May 2008

Hilary Benn MP
DEFRA
London
SW1

Dear Mr Benn

Backdale Quarry, Longstone Edge

I am writing concerning the illegal quarrying at Backdale Quarry at Longstone Edge and to urge you to consider revoking the permission causing the damage to this beautiful hillside in the Peak District National Park.

In April, Justice Sullivan - a High Court judge – ruled that the Backdale Public Inquiry decision was unsound, following an appeal by the landowner (Bleaklow Industries) and operator (MMC Midland Ltd). The case has now been sent back to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to revisit the decision.

The planning inspector had previously sided with the views of the Peak District National Park Authority, Friends of the Peak District (of which I am a member) and the Save Longstone Edge Group and ruled that any limestone removed in excess of a 2:1 ratio (limestone:fluorspar) was illegal. The Judge has indicated that this is unsound and that the amount of limestone removed is a primarily a commercial matter for the operator. This raises the picture of a huge, mostly limestone, quarry being opened up at the eastern end of Longstone Edge.

According to the Government National Park's website, National Parks were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for the twin purposes of preserving and enhancing their natural beauty and of promoting their enjoyment by the public. The Environment Act 1995 gives National Park Authorities the main purposes of: conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks; and promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public.

National Park status should mean that beautiful hillsides like Longstone Edge in the Peak District National Park should be protected from quarrying on such a scale. The Government should be looking after these important areas of our countryside, not letting such large scale destruction occur in area designated for protection.

I would be grateful if your department will commit to assisting the National Park Authority meet the necessary revocation costs on behalf of the nation.

Yours sincerely

(insert name here)