

A57 Link Roads Scheme DCO Application

**Representation and response on behalf
of the Peak District National Park
Authority to the Examining Authority's
questions within the Report on the
Implication for European Sites FINAL
requested for Deadline 9**

**Produced by the Peak District National Park
Authority (April 2022)**

Submitted 27th April 2022

Application by Highways England for an Order Granting Development Consent for A57 Link Roads

The Examining Authority’s questions and requests for information which formed part of the Report on the Implication for European Sites FINAL – Issued on 28th March 2022;

Requested for Deadline 9 – Wednesday 27th April 2022

Response on behalf of the Peak District National Park Authority.

Table 3.3 – Issues raised during the Examination by PDNPA, NT, CPRE and the ExA in relation to the Applicant’s screening of likely significant effects (up to Deadline 7)

Site	Issue	Question
<p>Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA</p>	<p>Noise disturbance from increased traffic flows along the ARN – all bird qualifying features</p>	<p>PDNPA are requested to comment on whether the information provided by the Applicant alleviates their concerns about the potential for likely significant effects to the qualifying bird features of the SPA. If not, please explain what further information they consider to be necessary.</p> <p>PDNPA response</p> <p>We note Natural England’s view that “as a general rule of thumb” an increase of 3dB or more against existing noise could be significant; and that the applicant quotes predicted increases below that level (0.2 dB on the A628 and 2.3 dB on the A57). However, it is not just the noise level in dB which will impact disturbance, but the duration and frequency of the disturbance. The predicted traffic flows show significant increases in traffic levels, and therefore on the frequency of disturbance, particularly on the A57.</p> <p>The applicant also quotes tolerance levels for one of the species- Golden Plover- based on the Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit- of up to 72 dB, though caution at levels above 55 dB. Predicted levels on both the A628 and A57 fall between these levels, and therefore within the “caution” levels; furthermore, our understanding is that the Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit is designed primarily for considering impacts on wintering flocks rather than birds on their breeding grounds, as is the case within the Peak District Moors SPA, which are likely to be more susceptible to disturbance.</p> <p>The applicant states that predicted noise levels have the potential to cause moderate to low behavioural change, with or without the development. This opinion does not appear to be backed by clear evidence; nor does it recognize that, whilst existing traffic levels may cause some disturbance, an increase in traffic levels, as predicted, is likely to increase the level of disturbance.</p> <p>Finally, we note the applicant’s opinion that the birds will be habituated to existing roads. We re-state our position that there is no evidence that the birds are habituated. Bird populations may already be reduced by</p>

		existing levels of road use- indeed research into bird disturbance suggests there is likely to be an existing impact; and any further increase in traffic levels (with a particularly significant percentage increase predicted on the A57) is likely to increase levels of disturbance.
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	Visual disturbance from increased traffic flows along the ARN – all bird qualifying features	<p>PDNPA is requested to comment on whether the information provided by the Applicant alleviates its concerns. If not, please explain what further information it considers to be necessary.</p> <p>PDNPA Response</p> <p>We agree with the applicant that the only form of visual disturbance [relevant to the SPA birds] is likely to be an increase in vehicle numbers on the A628 and A57. We disagree that the changes would be de minimis given the significant percentage change in predicted traffic on these routes (in particular the A57). In particular the applicant claims that changes are likely to be minimal at night-time, when the impact of change would be greatest. We disagree with the un-evidenced assumption that the impact would be greatest at night-time. Both Golden Plover and Merlin are diurnal so impact will be greatest in daytime, when both are active. Short-eared Owl are generally crepuscular, i.e. active around dawn and dusk, so again the period of greatest sensitivity is not at night-time.</p> <p>The Applicant also notes that the level of traffic experienced would be a constant visual impact on qualifying features and the projected increase in vehicles would not alter this. No evidence is presented to justify this statement. Traffic flows are likely to be uneven and any increase is likely to increase the period of disturbance.</p>
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	Reduction in species' density from increased risk of collision along the ARN – short-eared owl (breeding) and merlin (breeding)	<p>PDNPA is requested to comment on whether the information provided by the Applicant alleviates its concerns. If not, please explain what further information it considers to be necessary.</p> <p>PDNPA Response</p> <p>On further consideration of the information, whilst we feel that any traffic increase is likely to increase the risk of collision, we accept that there is little information to suggest that road collision is currently a significant issue for the SPA species, and we therefore accept that whilst there may be an increase in collision risk, this is marginal and unlikely to have a significant effect on the population of any of the SPA bird species.</p>
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	Issue- Habitat degradation through adverse changes in air quality along the ARN – blanket bog and upland heath qualifying features	<p>ExA request- No specific request. Noted that PDNPA maintains position that air quality impacts should not be scoped out of further assessment.</p> <p>PDNPA Response</p>

		We re-iterate our concern that no statistical confidence levels for the predicted traffic flows appear to have been submitted, and it is therefore entirely possible that the predicted increases in traffic levels could exceed the AADT thresholds set out in the DMRB, and therefore require further assessment.
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	Issue- Habitat changes affecting availability of prey species	<p>ExA request- No specific request, but assumption that lack of comment from PDNPA means we do not consider there to be a likely significant effect from this pathway.</p> <p>PDNPA Response</p> <p>We confirm we do not consider a significant impact likely from this pathway.</p>