



## **A year of progress for bikers**

Pennine Mountain Bike Action (PMBA) was formed to be a representative voice for Mountain Bikers in Lancashire and the Pennines. Our aim is to advocate, promote and support better facilities for mountain bikers. We are a group of riders, diggers, event organisers and trail centre rangers who've come together in the belief that putting some effort into diplomacy and digging can make the future of mountain biking in Lancashire Pennines and surrounding area even better.

Mountain biking in the area has really taken off in the last few years with the likes of the developments at Lee Quarry, Gisburn Forest, Healey Nab, the Mary Townley Loop to name but a few. The area already has a strong mountain biking community, what we need now is for that strong group of riders to come together to help shape the future of our riding landscape and take some responsibility for what comes next. PMBA was formally constituted in late 2010 and this is a report of our first year.

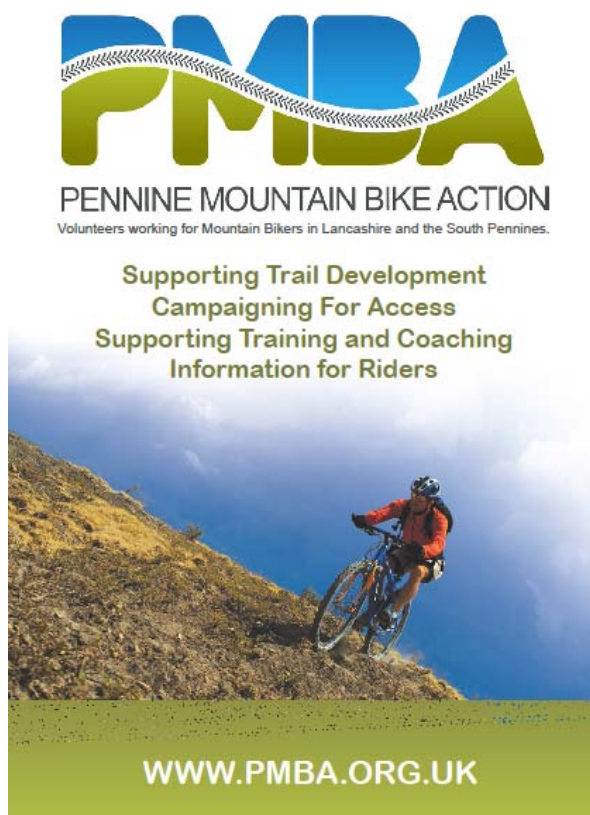
### **Formation, membership and vision**

PMBA was formed of a group of people passionate about mountain biking in the region. We want to ensure there is no lost momentum in investment and progress to make more trails available despite the decline of available funds.

Initially a team comprising a core of individuals who brought Lee Quarry and Healey Nab to the riders as 'must visit' places we sought to grow this and attracted representatives from Gisburn Forest too. We are a visionary team and possess amongst us some useful skills which have brought all of us success in earlier projects. We are motivated to apply ourselves to the task of removing all the obstacles to progress with the determination, analysis and application of professionals.

Our early focus was on raising awareness and building credibility. An early foray onto Facebook demonstrated the level of interest in what we were doing, with over 500 people joining the Pennine Mountain Bike Action group during the first couple of days. This Facebook group has become a very useful network for mobilising volunteers and trail centre support, and the march of Gisburn to the top of the MBR 'trail of the year' rankings is perhaps the best example of that.

In our early meetings we spent many evenings chewing over the issues and getting ourselves organised with an agenda and communication lines to the public. In developing a model for PMBA we had fantastic support from SingletrAction. Tim Sellors and team were able to share their experience in creating an effective trail building and representative



organisation and this made it an awful lot easier for us. We continue to work closely together and the idea is that we can speak with one voice on regional or national issues whilst maintaining our own local focus.

We also set about recruiting founder members - Individuals, organisations and companies that share our objectives and who were prepared to actively support our activities. We would like to thank all our members, and in particular the following organisations for getting behind PMBA from the start:

- **Tarty Bikes.**
- **Ride On**
- **Brownbacks**
- **Back on Track**
- **Hope Technology**
- **Blackburn and District Bikers (BAD)**
- **Cyclejunkies**
- **EDC**
- **Manchester Mountain Bikers**
- **Rosendale Pennine Adventure**
- **SingletrAction**
- **Lancashire County Council**
- **The Forestry Commission**



PMBA now has over 30 organisational and individual members. We have the following promise to our sponsors and members:

- We seek to represent **sponsor support** at our events and on our publications. Subscriptions from sponsors will pay for the low-cost website, training, and publicity, also materials. We will also support sponsor campaigns including funding applications as appropriate.
- We seek to **improve the lot of all mountain-bikers including access and facilities**, together with the information service of where to go and what to do.
- We seek to ensure all volunteer trail building and event support activities, including marshalling are **carried out by competent and trained people**
- Subscriptions from Riders will be targeted towards the trail build and access fund, so all rider subscriptions will benefit riders, and not get lost in admin.

To link in with the national picture we joined CTC and British Cycling. This gives our members access to a range of benefits and discounts.

### **Supporting trail development**

Right from the start we have tried to keep a focus on practical stuff. One of our first actions was to get insurance cover set to allow trail building to take place on LCC land. To back this up, and again helped by LCC, we supported two well attended first aid sessions which provided a nationally recognised qualification for members, who are now a valuable asset whether riding, marshalling an activity or building trails and have an awareness of the hazards associated with equipment and activities in remote places.

When it comes to digging we see our role as supporting and promoting existing trail building groups and helping form new groups where a gap exists. At Gisburn the local dig groups remain very active and work closely with Martin College to continuously improve the

facility. PMBA has written in support of funding bids and we are currently working with Martin to support a key bid for funding to get the proposed new skills area built.

In Rossendale there was no established volunteer trail building group and so here PMBA and LCC facilitated the first Lee Quarry dig day which made important improvements to the new pump track area. Looking forward we are supporting improvements at Lee Quarry where in the short run we hope to have bike racks, temporary toilets and a notice board promoting events and local businesses. Looking further ahead we are supporting Rossendale Borough Councils as they look to develop a permanent base area and in recent weeks this has taken significant steps forward.

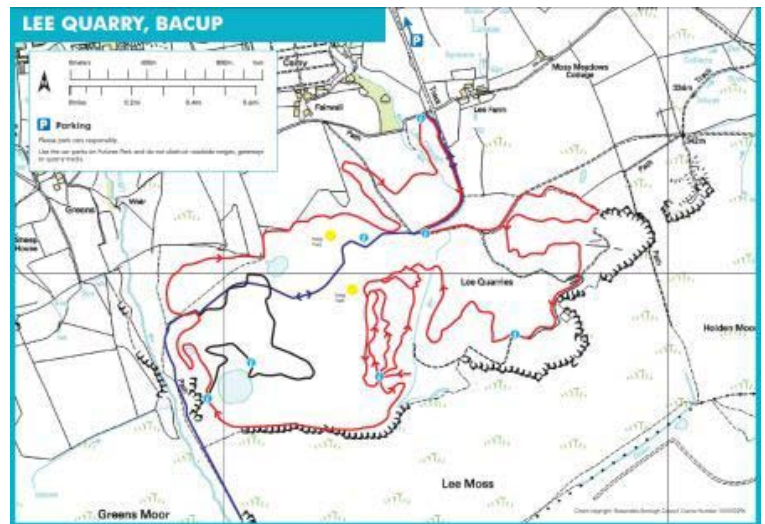
### **Information, awareness and supporting our members**

Raising awareness of where to ride and some of the great trails that we have in the area is another important part of what PMBA does.

Earlier this year the PMBA website was launched. This is a result of some splendid work by Jon Swift who has been teaching himself as he goes along!

[www.PMBA.org.uk](http://www.PMBA.org.uk) has quickly established itself as a key resource for riders with 5000 unique visits to date (16,000 page views). The site aims to collate trail

information from across Lancashire and the Pennines and so has a great 'where to ride section' as well as comprehensive news pages. The site also publicises local events and businesses with an excellent events calendar. Both the website and Facebook site have proved to be effective tools in recruiting volunteer diggers and event marshals.



We have also been supporting the development of information and maps for existing trail centres. The Lee and Cragg Quarry map, produced by Rossendale Council with input from us, is a big step forward. These maps were widely distributed via shops and events, including the Singletrack weekender where we had a strong presence.

And it is not just all about trail centres. In Rossendale Jon Swift has identified nine cross country trails, all starting from Futures Park (Lee Quarry base area), which utilise existing rights of way to give circular routes taking in some of the areas best terrain. The plan is eventually to way mark and publicise these routes but first Tony Lund and Jon are riding them all and checking quality and access. We have approached funders to support this initiative and have had some money set aside to support any costs. The approach is being mirrored in the West Pennine Moors where Bill Ould has identified six further XC routes and is working to address access issues before bringing them forward.

### **Supporting skills development**

We are very keen to support a 'ladder' of skills development in the area. This means getting behind entry level skills courses for school kids through to coaching qualifications for those who want to help develop XC athletes. PMBA's role here is in supporting our members to access funding and support.

In Rossendale the Road Club are building on the success of previous programmes and with the support of LCC and RBC have been able to access funding for Bikeright to run a programme of skills courses for secondary school pupils. This will feed into the clubs

mountain bike arm – Rossendale Rocky Riders, and hopefully lead to more young people developing a long term involvement.

Brownbacks are exploring options for funding coaching qualifications and here PMBA will help in developing an application to Sport England.

### **Access and advocacy**

Access is a very important part of PMBA's role and to carry this out we need make our voice heard in the right places. We need to do this locally, by plugging into access forums and strategy groups, and nationally by adding our voice to wider campaigns as we did during the Forestry sell off debate.

Following contact with CTC a PMBA Right to Ride representative has been nominated and this gives access to a number of key groups in Lancashire, including the steering group for the Lancashire Cycling Strategy. Rossendale Cycling Forum is a new group where PMBA has strong representation. We are also lobbying for inclusion within the Lancashire Access Forum and have now received an invitation to submit an expression of interest.

In partnership with SingletrAction and CTC we are developing an 'access 101' event designed for members of both organisations interested in access campaigning to raise awareness of issues and the sort of approaches we may take to addressing them. Hopefully group will develop into a local access network to take on some long standing access challenges.

### **Looking forward**

Increasingly cycling is being seen as THE sport in Lancashire and strategies are evolving to encourage facilities, routes, clubs and events. In particular there is every prospect that we will see significant developments at both Lee and Gisburn during the next year. It will be very important that MB riders are properly represented as these plans develop and PMBA needs to be seen as representing these views.

As funding gets tighter physical developments and maintenance will increasingly rely on volunteer groups. We can continue to support these groups with insurance, training, fund raising, tools and awareness raising.

The PMBA website has already become a well used and important resource. There is no reason why it shouldn't be seen as THE site for Mountain Bikers in Lancashire and adjacent areas.

In partnership with SingletrAction and the CTC we have the opportunity to develop a strong regional voice pushing for improved and maintained access. Alongside this we can develop a network of high quality waymarked XC routes that enhance Lancashires position as a major mountain bike venue.

And finally AGM next April will give anyone who would like to get more involved in running PMBA to step forward!

**PMBA November 2011**