

Lake District zip wire wins approval

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 Chief News Correspondent

The zip wire promises to be the ride of a lifetime but the journey to the 3,400ft plunge down a Lake District peak has been an arduous slog.

Environmental groups have bitterly opposed the attraction on a pass between Borrowdale and Buttermere. After a seven-year battle, the Lake District National Park Authority finally approved the proposal yesterday.

Sir Chris Bonington, the mountaineer, said that he was delighted the ride had been approved but admitted that he would be too nervous to hurtle down the mountain in less than a minute. The wire will stretch down the side of Fleetwith Pike to the Honister slate mine.

Sir Chris, 84, resigned as vice-president of the Friends of the Lake District in 2012 in a dispute over the wire.

"I am heartily in favour of the zip wire," he said. "It will be below the skyline and will encourage the public to enjoy the beauty of the lakes."

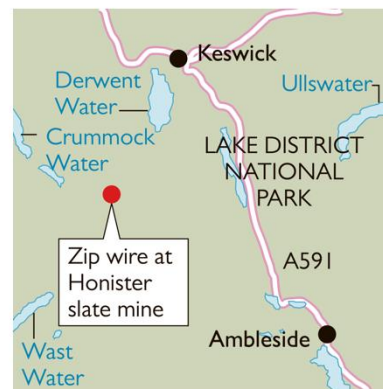


It has taken seven years for the ride to be cleared after facing opposition
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The group had warned that the zip wire, due to open next summer, would damage the area, a Unesco World Heritage Site. "We consider this to be a highly sensitive location and that this development will have a detrimental impact on the landscape, character, tranquillity and biodiversity of the area," the group said in a statement.

The Aerial Flight zip wire is expected to carry up to 57 people a day and will also be used to carry slate down to workshops from the mountainside.

The ride was the dream of Mark Weir, a businessman who was killed in a helicopter crash



in 2011. The proposal was rejected in 2012 but the need for jobs in the area convinced the authorities to allow it.

Jan Wilkinson, Mr Weir's partner and the co-owner of Honister slate mine, said that the zip wire was needed "to ensure the next generation can live, work and bring up families in the area".

In another campaign to protect the area, a petition by villagers to ban off-road 4x4 vehicles from land once owned by Beatrix Potter has been supported by more than 250,000 people. Campaigners claim that the routes on land that the author

bequeathed to the National Trust was being ruined.

A spokesman for the Save the Lake District group, which is behind the petition, said: "The noise of these vehicles can be heard for miles."

Potter bought two farms in the fells which featured in *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* and *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*.

A Lake District National Park Authority spokesman said that vehicles could be barred "where the current approach does not work". ■