

Lake District Green Lanes Alliance
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Welcome to the first issue of the Lake District Green Lanes Alliance newsletter. We are a group of concerned residents who got together a year ago to protect the green lanes of the Lake District against the impact of recreational motor vehicles.

We believe that our National Park Authority, in line with its statutory purposes and its sustainable transport policy, should limit the use of recreational 4x4s and motorbikes on these fragile and beautiful fell tracks.

The LDGLA is part of a wider group of green lane alliances and has close links with its sister organisations in the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District. Both have successfully worked with their National Park Authorities to ban off-road vehicles from some of the most vulnerable green lanes.

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After the lockdown

The coronavirus has forced us to pause, to take stock and reassess how we want to treat our National Parks. And it has taught us that we shouldn't take this landscape for granted, that it's too precious to be treated with contempt.

This is true for all those who live in big cities, and who are yearning for the tranquillity of the hills and lakes. But it's just as true for the people who live in the Lake District and who have experienced both the tranquillity during lockdown and the onslaught of visitors behaving badly once travel restrictions were lifted.

So now is the time to rethink and to go back to basics. National Parks were created after the hardship and deprivation of WW2, to give an exhausted nation the chance to recover. As a recently published book puts it: National Parks were a kind of Natural Health Service, on a par with the NHS.

We now need the restorative power of nature more than ever, and we hope both the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and Cumbria County Council will tackle the issue of motor vehicles on our green lanes with renewed determination. Other National Parks and Highway Authorities are using Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to stop motoring for the sheer fun of it on vulnerable tracks. The Lake District needs the same degree of protection.

High Nibthwaite to Parkamoor (U5051)



We wanted to update you on one of our green lanes because there have been some troubling developments there recently, compounding an earlier lack of action by the authorities. This track is an unclassified county road, U5051, maintainable by Cumbria County Council. It climbs from the hamlet of High Nibthwaite, at the south-eastern corner of Coniston Water over Bethcar Moor towards the ruined farmstead of High Parkamoor. Although this route is a cul-de-sac for recreational motor vehicle users, it is popular with them because of the views it gives over Coniston Water. Some of these users apparently hold the mistaken belief that it is legal to continue from near High Parkamoor along bridleways into Grizedale Forest.

There has been a Traffic Regulation Order on U5051 since 2000 and in 2003 Cumbria County Council replaced it with the current TRO prohibiting recreational motor vehicle use on U5051 and connecting bridleways. Unfortunately, the status of this TRO seems unclear, as the LDNPA says it is discretionary and that they and Cumbria County Council work together to decide when it should be activated. In fact the TRO has not been activated for many years, probably because there are no criteria for activation in the TRO

itself and the criteria used during the 2000s by the LDNPA were ineffective.

For example, in February 2005 the LDNPA reported:

*“The TRO on the Parkamoor route has been in place since September 2000. It is a discretionary TRO which means a decision is taken each month on whether it should be open or closed depending on weather and surface conditions. In its early stages the route was closed for the winter months and open during the summer. **Vehicular users raised concerns about the apparent inflexibility in this system so a monthly inspection regime was introduced. A local trail rider was asked to carry out the inspections and advise the Authority as to whether the route should be open or closed. This was to give vehicular user groups more involvement in the management of the routes and to take ‘ownership’ of the problem. However following criticism from some other motorcyclists that he was closing the route unnecessarily, he stood down from the position.**”* [emphasis added]



This failure to activate the TRO has played a role in the amount of damage caused to U5051 and adjacent land over the years. In winter 2005/6 rainstorms led to “bedrock steps, deep gullies and large loose boulders on the surface” and drivers were warned about causing further damage to the surface if they were not very careful, particularly in wet weather. Even then neither authority appears to have considered activating the TRO.

Recently, at the end of May 2020, Kankku, a company offering 4x4 tours of green lanes in the Lake District, “repaired” about 200 metres of U5051, by covering rock steps and filling ruts with stone. They did this without seeking authorisation from Cumbria County Council or from the landowner and commoners of Bethacar Moor.

The publicity about these repairs, and the fact that they have made U5051 easier to drive, have attracted a lot of recreational motor vehicle users during June 2020. There have been many reports of illegal and inconsiderate driving and damage being caused. Cumbria County Council and the LDNPA could stop this damaging and illegal use of Bethacar Moor and Grizedale Forest by activating the TRO on U5051 and making it permanent.

Their failure to do so is in contrast to the speedy action taken by Cumbria County Council, supported by LDNPA, to make a temporary TRO on the minor tarmac road along the eastern side of Coniston Water following reports of inconsiderate parking and anti-social behaviour.

It seems that over the last week the closure of the tarmac road has had the knock-on effect of reducing the number of off-road vehicles on U5051. But we fear there may be a massive increase in July as facilities reopen in the Lake District. It makes no sense to use TROs to manage vehicle traffic on narrow tarmac lanes but to ignore the even greater need for traffic management on unsealed fell tracks.

TRO policy in the Lake District

In their response to the campaign for two TROs on green lanes in the Langdale area the LDNPA says there are currently four TRO’s on unsealed roads in the Lake District. According to their website these TROs are:

- U5331 Little Langdale Ford
- U5051 Nibthwaite to Parkamoor (discretionary depending on weather and condition)

- U5566 the fords of Ashes Beck and Force Beck at Rusland Pool (seasonal)
- The byway crossing Gatescarth Pass (limited by a permit system)

These were all made before the National Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 gave National Park Authorities (NPAs) the power to make TROs on green lanes. Previously the LDNPA had delegated powers to make TROs in certain circumstances and used these at Gatescarth Pass. In the other instances Cumbria County Council made the TROs.

In February 2005 the LDNPA published a report for public consultation on issues and options for trails management, as part of a review of its Hierarchy of Trail Routes. One issue was whether the LDNPA should have extended powers to make TROs. In November 2005 the report on the consultation said that there **“was strong support from local residents, Parish Councils and other users for us to have greater TRO making powers”** but motor vehicle users **“were against us increasing our TRO making powers”**.

In June 2005 the Council (now Campaign) for National Parks published a report in which it asked government to give NPAs adequate powers and resources to take action against recreational motor vehicle damage and nuisance. In this report the LDNPA said it would *not* cite its Hierarchy of Trail Routes project *“as a success, since there are routes where management and TROs are ignored”*. It supported extending the ability to make TROs to National Park Authorities.

During discussion of the NERC Bill this issue was considered by Parliament and an amendment was included in 2005 to give NPAs the power to make TROs on unsealed roads. This amendment, which was wholeheartedly supported by National Park Authorities became law when the NERC Bill received royal assent in 2006.

Given the level of support for these TRO powers, which the LDNPA itself asked for, why has the authority not used them since they were granted in 2006? Has it forgotten that in 2005 it clearly stated that it was “opposed to green lane driving”? (*Trails Management in the Lake District National Park: Report of consultation, LDNPA, September 2005*)

The real Beatrix Potter – a new biography by Nadia Cohen

Beatrix Potter was of course much more than a children’s book author. With singular energy she went about protecting the Lake District and making sure that it wasn’t changed by new developments, whether buildings, sea planes or motor cars. She bought up vast stretches of land so that they couldn’t be ruined by construction or motor vehicles and so that traditional sheep farming could continue.

Nadia Cohen, author of the new biography, has agreed to be an honorary member of the LDGLA. She writes:

“Beatrix would not be happy to learn that only five of the fourteen farms that she bequeathed to the National Trust survived intact, most of them have been broken up to the fury of those who remember her express wishes to have them preserved forever. It's pretty certain what she would have told people driving across her land and through one of her remaining farms in convoys of motor vehicles, just for the fun of it: she would have told them to get out and walk.”

