

Legal battle to block 4x4s from hills of Beatrix Potter

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December 16 2019, 12:01am, The Times



Scores of off-roaders a month roam between Little Langdale and High TilberthwaiteALAMY

The authority that runs the Lake District National Park is facing a legal challenge over its refusal to ban recreational off-road vehicles from tracks on hills once owned by Beatrix Potter.

[Lake District National Park](#) Authority (LDNPA) rejected advice from a world heritage body by deciding in October to continue to allow four-wheel-drive vehicles and trail motorbikes to use two tracks near Little Langdale, north of Coniston Water.

The number of 4x4s travelling between High Tilberthwaite and Little Langdale increased from 30 a month in 2004 to 160 a month by 2017.



Beatrix Potter bequeathed the land to the National TrustPOPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

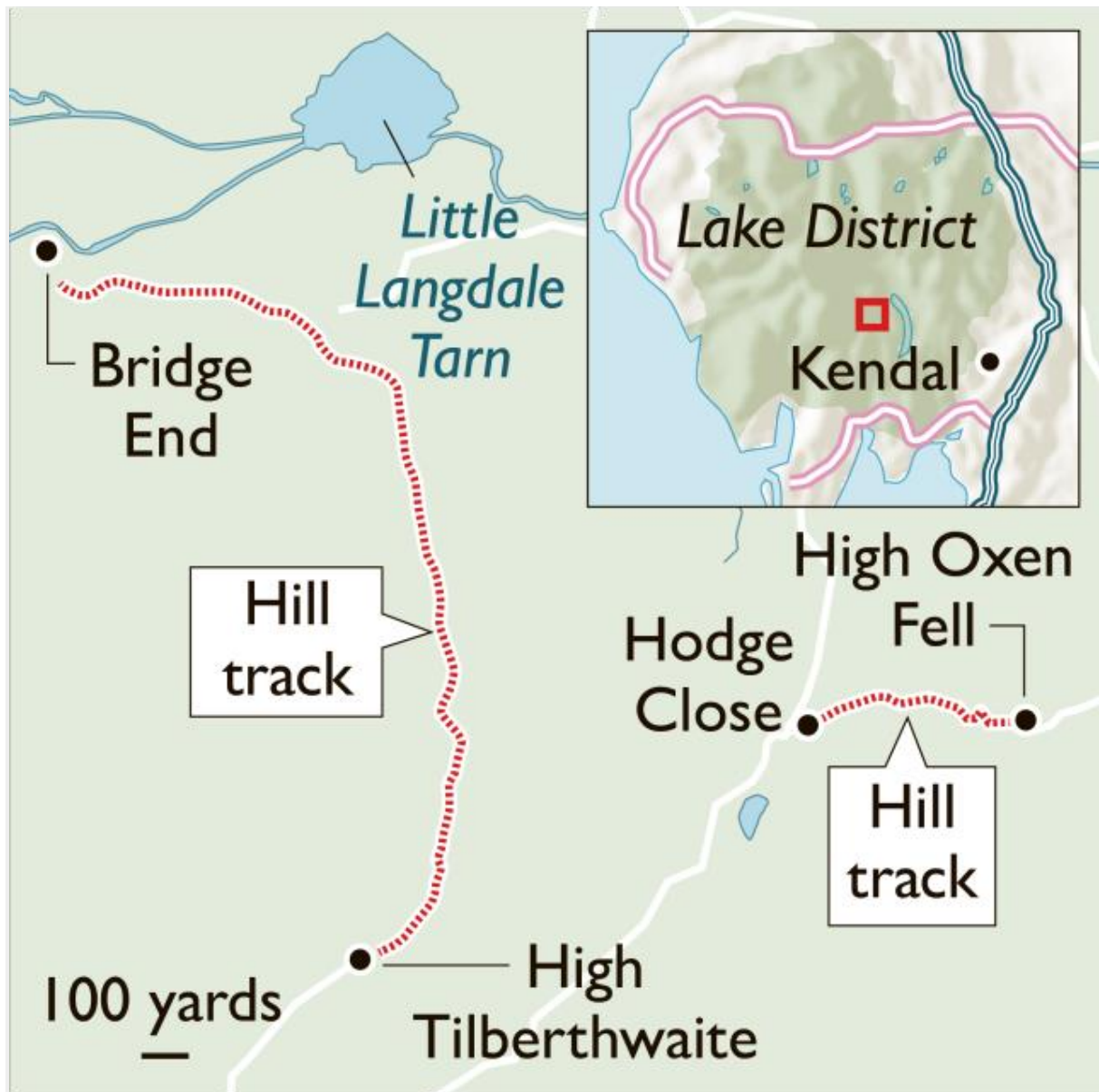
The International Council on Monuments and Sites, which advises Unesco on protecting world heritage sites, said that the huge increase in the vehicles was damaging the “aesthetic and historic qualities” of the landscape, which was declared a world heritage site in 2017.

The National Trust, which was bequeathed the land by Potter, who was a conservationist as well as an author, had also called for 4x4s to be banned from the tracks, as had 350,000 signatories of a petition sent to the authority.

The ban was opposed by the Motoring Organisations’ Land Access & Recreation Association, which represents 4x4 clubs.

The Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (Gleam) is seeking a judicial review of the authority’s decision not to use its power to introduce traffic regulation orders to ban 4X4s and motorbikes from the High Tilberthwaite and High Oxen Fell tracks

It has accused the authority of failing to fulfil its primary statutory duty, “to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Lake District National Park”.



Gleam argues that the tracks should be restricted to walkers, cyclists, horse riders and mobility scooters as well as farmers' vehicles and those of the emergency services. Michael Bartholomew, its chairman, said: "This is a crucial case for anyone who cares about the beauty and tranquillity of the Lake District. The LDNPA is refusing to protect one of the most beautiful places in England from intrusion and damage by motor vehicles."

Gleam plans to seek a judicial review unless the authority backs down and has so far raised £23,000 via a crowdfunding website towards the cost of taking its case to court.

The authority confirmed that it had received the letter but declined to comment.

The National Trust said in October that the 4X4s' use of the tracks was damaging and "at odds with what people want from their national parks in the 21st century".

A spokeswoman for the trust said that it would not be supporting the legal challenge because it wanted "to give the LDNPA time to move their approach forward to see if a resolution can be achieved".

Today is the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the legislation that enabled the creation of the Lake District National Park and 12 others in England and Wales.

The Conservative election manifesto promised "to create new national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty, as well as making our most loved landscapes greener, happier, healthier and open to all".

The Campaign for National Parks called on the new government to place a legal requirement on public bodies to "take far more account of the need to protect and improve these areas in their decision-making".