

“They shatter the peace and create anxiety and danger”: A Qualitative Analysis of the Impact of Recreational Motor Vehicle use within the Lake District National Park on Psychological Wellbeing, Mental Restoration, and Nature Connection

An evaluation of 674 responses to a survey by the Lake District National Park Authority on U5001 High Tilberthwaite to Fell Foot and U5004 High Oxen Fell to Hodge Close

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Key findings:

How walkers and cyclists describe the impact of motor vehicles on their relationship with nature:

- Tranquillity and beauty diminished
- Stresses from city life introduced
- Connection with nature disrupted
- Cultural heritage threatened
- Community of walkers besieged
- Physical danger from motor vehicles on narrow sections
- Feeling of apprehension before and while walking the route
- Harm caused to the landscape, flora and fauna

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Context.....	5
Methodology.....	6
Analysis	7
Key Findings	19
References	20

Executive Summary

1. Areas of green space have seen an increase in visits by the UK general public for the wellbeing and mental health benefits they provide during the recent COVID-19 national lockdowns, making them an important space for these benefits when accessing other support services can be difficult. A growing body of evidence shows that meaningful engagement with nature and a connection with it can be effective in producing mental wellbeing outcomes. Ensuring that publicly accessible green spaces are able to offer opportunities to achieve these outcomes is important.
2. Between 18th March and 20th May 2019 the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) carried out an online survey on the future management of two routes U5001 (High Tilberthwaite to Fell Foot) and U5004 (High Oxenfell to Hodge Close). The survey was completed by 522 respondents who had used the Tilberthwaite route and 166 respondents who had used the High Oxenfell route. It showed that for both routes 86% of non-motorised users thought that motor vehicles had a negative impact on the special qualities of the National Park.
3. In order to gain a better understanding of the responses of non-motorised users, 674 (580 on High Tilberthwaite and 94 on High Oxenfell) comments from participants in response to Questions 12, 22, and 26 were selected, covering the enjoyment of the route, of the surrounding countryside and of the special qualities of the National Park.
4. This report evaluates the survey responses using a Realist Thematic Analysis. The results show that the tranquillity and beauty of the park is harmed by the use of recreational motor vehicles which in turn negatively affects people's ability to find mental restoration, improve their wellbeing and relationship with nature. This is due to feeling unable to escape urban stressors given their presence within the park. Recreational motor vehicles were also seen as incompatible with the traditional ethos and landscape of the Lake District National Park, eroding the unique cultural heritage of place. Motor vehicle users (except agricultural) were seen as outsiders to the wider park user community whose presence caused physical and mental distress as well as access issues.

How motor vehicles affect the relationship with nature:

- Tranquillity and beauty diminished
- Stresses from city life introduced
- Connection with nature disrupted
- Cultural heritage threatened
- Community of walkers besieged
- Physical danger from motor vehicles on narrow sections
- Feeling of apprehension before and while walking the route
- Harm caused to the landscape, flora and fauna

5. The impact of recreational motor vehicles on other park users means that while their use is permitted on these routes, those who walk, run, ride horses or bicycles, will be unable to engage meaningfully and connect with the landscape to help improve their wellbeing and find mental restoration. One solution would be to create designated areas for recreational motor vehicle use far away from trails used by other visitors

Context

The UK is currently experiencing an increase in reported mental health issues such as anxiety and depression due to the ongoing pandemic and recent lockdowns (ONS, 2021). This has led to fears of a decline in access to treatment which will likely have long-term effects for the individual and considerable pressure on health services (The Health Foundation, 2021). During the national lockdowns, people made far greater use of outdoor, particularly natural spaces (Gov.uk, 2021) to help improve their physical and mental wellbeing. This is unsurprising given the large evidence base for the benefits of natural spaces for mental restoration from stress and attention fatigue (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008) and for the unique role of nature connectedness for improved mental wellbeing (Capaldi, Dopko & Zelenski, 2014; Pritchard et al., 2021) and mental health (McEwan et al., 2019). Interestingly, nature connectedness has an effect on our wellbeing similar to other established factors such as income and education while being more important than marital status for our feeling good and functioning well (Richardson et al., 2021a). While the evidence suggests nature and our relationship with it is important for these outcomes, rates of nature connectedness in the UK are far lower than needed for optimum wellbeing gains to be made (Richardson et al., 2019), while meaningful experiences in nature to help facilitate this much needed connection are at risk of extinction (Newman & Dale, 2013).

There is hope that the disconnect between people and the wider natural world to which they belong can be addressed through empirically supported activities that best facilitate a reconnection with nature. 'Noticing nature' interventions (Passmore & Holder, 2017) and activities that involve sensory contact, emotion, finding personal meaning, fostering a sense of similarity and compassion with nature, and noticing nature's beauty have been shown to improve nature connectedness beyond simple exposure to nature (Lumber et al., 2017; Richardson et al., 2020a, 2021). These results have since been validated (See Carr & Hughes, 2021) with the Pathways Framework, within which they are encapsulated, being used by organisations to help improve levels of nature connectedness for wellbeing gains across the globe (Richardson et al., 2020b). However, while efforts are being made to increase nature connectedness to help improve wellbeing, people often report low levels of engagement with everyday nature through the pathways framework that would most benefit their wellbeing (The National Trust, 2019; Richardson et al., 2021a). There is a need to encourage participation with the pathways to help improve wellbeing within the general population, and National Parks have a unique and important role to play in achieving this. Identifying the opportunities and barriers to this ability is essential, so that opportunities to connect with nature for wellbeing can be protected and encouraged within public green spaces accessible to all.

Methodology

Theoretical Background

A qualitative design was employed to capture the themes from the survey on Future Management of Unsealed Sections of Public Roads U5001 High Tilberthwaite to Fell Foot, U5004 High Oxen Fell to Hodge Close. As open-ended responses to the survey were provided on motor vehicle use within the Lake District National Park that were independently collected (with the report author not involved), a Realist Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was undertaken so that the responses could be interpreted at face value without attempting to discern hidden meaning. It was important that the report author use a bottom-up approach thereby taking the participant's views into account so that their perspectives led the analysis rather than determining a focus for the themes in advance.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 674 responses were provided for analysis with each response varying in length. This produced 45,125 words making the sample suitable for analysis due to volume of data obtained allowing for data saturation to occur. All participants were users of the two routes who accessed the survey online. The survey asked a total of 30 questions which focused on specific areas of the park.

Ethics

Second-hand data was provided by Lake District Green Lanes Alliance group from the survey undertaken by The Lake District National Park with respondents agreeing to their anonymised responses being quoted in publicly accessible reports. As such, no identifying information was provided to the report author with any direct quotations used in this report fully anonymised through the use of response numbers (R#) that refer directly to their entry in the survey (and which question it covered).

Analytic Strategy

The six-steps of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were followed when analysing the data until data saturation occurred. The responses were firstly allocated line and page numbers, read and re-read to create familiarity with the dataset. Then the data was read again with initial impressions noted before being coded. This allowed themes to be created alongside a thematic map to help organise them into super-ordinate and sub-themes. Finally, the themes were reported in the subsequent analysis section of this report.

Analysis

The Thematic Analysis produced two super-ordinate themes; *Tranquillity and Beauty to Reconnect with Nature under Threat from Motor Vehicle Use* and *The Uniqueness of the Lake District Park and the Impact of Motor Vehicle use*. The first theme to be covered in this report is *Tranquillity and Beauty to Reconnect with Nature under Threat from Motor Vehicle Use*, which covers the role of tranquillity and beauty in finding a sense of calm and connection with the landscape, often to escape the noise and stress of urban living when visiting the park. This super-ordinate theme includes the themes of: *The tranquillity and beauty of the landscape is under threat; Inability to escape the stress of city life in the Lake District; A place to reconnect with nature*. The second theme to be covered, *The Uniqueness of the Lake District Park and the Impact of Motor Vehicle use*, covers the unique cultural heritage of the park and its community of users, how they feel about the impact of motor vehicle use and the fears for the effect this has on the special qualities of the landscape that they love. This super-ordinate theme includes the following themes: *The cultural heritage of the Lake District National Park; A community of park users; Dangers to other park users; Harm to the landscape and the wider environment*.

1 Tranquillity and Beauty to Reconnect with Nature under Threat from Motor Vehicle Use

1.1 The tranquillity and beauty of the landscape is under threat

The Lake District National Park is valued by its visitors for the tranquillity and natural beauty the landscape offers. However, the growing use of motor-vehicles for recreational purposes is putting these special characteristics of the park at risk:

"It's a beautiful peaceful place in the Lake District (where I was born) and I often walk around Little Langdale and the adjacent fells footpaths/bridleways. It is common to meet other people walking there on that 'track' and the people are always lovely. It is a lovely tranquil place to enjoy the outdoors and the Lake District National Park in particular. The few times I have ever met a non-agricultural vehicle are very annoying. The sight and sound of four by fours and motorcycles in particular on this track are particularly distressing for walkers. They ruin the atmosphere of the place and bring air pollution where there was none...and are extremely noisy compared with other vehicles" (R12, Oxenfell)

The aesthetic and tranquil properties of the park are highly valued by participants with walking a favourite pastime for those who visit the landscape; but this is being disrupted by recreational motor vehicles. In particular the effect on appreciating the beauty of the landscape and the natural soundscape are highlighted as being problematic *"The sight and sound of four by fours and motorcycles in particular on this track are particularly distressing for walkers"* indicating it is more than simply being unable to appreciate these qualities of the park but that the presence of such vehicles is causing mental distress in participants when seeking a tranquil walk. This is a particular concern, given the main reason for visiting the park:

“For many years people have come to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity and to pursue outdoor activities without spoiling the experience for other people. The influx of recreational motor vehicles introduced a new kind of tourism which in the short and long-term diminishes the attractiveness of the area.” (R5, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“Aside from the scenic beauty, the silence of the area is wonderful, and therapeutic.” (R90, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The landscape of the Lake District is seen as one which offers tranquillity and beauty and is not only appreciated for these qualities but for their role in providing wellbeing benefits through the therapeutic effect of engaging with natural green spaces. During the recent COVID-19 national lockdowns, green spaces were frequently accessed due to their provision of a safe space to gain physical but most importantly mental well-being benefits derived from the beauty and peace of the landscape. The accounts of the survey participants express motor vehicle use as a growing barrier to receiving wellbeing benefits for those walking in the park who seem to be visiting the Lake District for these very purposes:

“Motorised vehicles are noisy and dangerous for other users. They impact very negatively on our opportunities for quiet enjoyment, peace and communing with nature. I fear that they will become even more of a problem if their numbers are allowed to increase. Where else in Britain have we such a lovely, wild, uplifting landscape that we can enjoy in peace? The Lake District is unique.” (R139, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“The presence of motorbikes and 4x4s has always ruined my enjoyment of walking in the countryside. They shatter the peace and create anxiety and danger in a place we expect to relax and soak in the beauty of Nature.” (R68, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

The natural landscape of the park is seen as an “*uplifting*” place that through its wildness, beauty and peaceful soundscape can produce mental wellbeing benefits.. Motor vehicles impact the potential for engaging with nature in a meaningful way to help provide these wellbeing benefits through the danger they pose to walkers (the anxiety they cause makes it impossible to relax) but also from the noise they generate and the effect this has on being able to appreciate the natural soundscape within the park:

“The motorcycles, quads and 4x4s affect my quiet enjoyment of a world heritage environment, you wouldn’t expect to be disturbed by such vehicles, but they’re having a negative effect on my walking and spiritual and poetic meditations, I cannot fully appreciate my reciting of Coleridge and Wordsworth when it’s being drowned out by vehicle noises.” (R44, Oxenfell)

The opportunity for “*quiet enjoyment*” is clearly important for park visitors who find the disturbance caused by motor vehicles not only unexpected given their mismatch with the landscape (it being seen as a pristine natural world heritage environment) but having a direct negative effect on their walking and ability to engage with the landscape in a meaningful way, for instance through connection with its literary associations.

The noise from motor vehicles is a clear barrier to the enjoyment and wellbeing of survey participants, but the beauty of the landscape is also being affected:

“I absolutely detest those wretched orange 4x4 vehicles” (R 41, Oxenfell)
“...visual intrusion, a convoy of vehicles, sometimes highly coloured can appear incongruous with the more muted surroundings of the fell side. It can be visually jarring particularly where the convoys can be seen from a distance on the Little Langdale end of the route. In what might be layman's terms a snaking convoy of vehicles would not normally be expected to be seen on a fell side regardless of the legality of the current activity” (R13, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The presence of recreational motor vehicles is in stark contrast to the natural “muted surroundings” of the park. They not only spoil the natural aesthetics of the landscape but also hinder the ability to find escape and relaxation which is the focus of the next theme.

1.2 Inability to escape the stress of city life in the Lake District

A key reason for visiting the park is to engage in the cultural tradition of enjoying the landscape through walking, running and climbing to escape the noise and stress of urban living:

There is a long-standing traditional aspect to the use of the Lake District National Park by walkers, runners and climbers in their millions...to enjoy the peace and quiet offered by this traditional landscape. Socially, historically and culturally walking, running and climbing in the Lake district are embedded in the fabric of the land” (R5, Q26 Tilberthwaite).

“The Lake District should be a place of peace and personal mental recuperation and relaxation achieved by physical exercise in a beautiful and tranquil environment. Many of us travel from noisy, busy cities to find a perfect contrast and restore our mental energy. I meet up with other family members from across the country in The Lake District every year and we have always valued the environment but vehicle noise seriously disrupts our peace.” (R65, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The Lake District National Park is seen by many of the survey participants as the quintessential natural landscape, one that offers a refuge from busy, urban areas with many travelling to it for mental restoration and wellbeing. Distance is not a barrier, for people travel across the country to access these benefits.

Interestingly, the park is seen as a “perfect contrast” to the noise and busy urban environment which they seek to escape and is therefore one that should be tranquil so that the mental wellbeing benefits from nature can be experienced. It is clear that the much needed and desired peace is disrupted by motor vehicle use, making wellbeing gains (based as they are on experiencing peace and tranquillity) much more difficult to achieve. This has led participants to describe their feeling of being followed by the very stressors they are seeking to escape from the city to the National Park:

“I go to National Parks to get away from motor vehicles, not to meet them on otherwise quiet rural tracks” (R2, Q26)

“The quiet enjoyment of this area is its main attraction in a world of increasing stress. The fragile environment should be protected but to try and work with local people at the same time. A fine balance. The recreational use of motor vehicles often diesel seems abhorrent to me.” (R171, Q26)

The expectation from survey participants is that the National Park should be a place with “quiet rural tracks” where the only other users they expect to see are walkers, runners, and cyclists. They came to the park to avoid motor vehicles because of the noise and pollution they cause along with other stressors in a “world of increasing stress”. The Lake District is seen as a natural bastion that provides respite through “quiet enjoyment” but the ability to find such peaceful pursuits is at odds with the very thing to which they are seeking an escape and remedy to: motor vehicles. This makes finding mental restoration and wellbeing benefits impossible as escape from the stressor is key for this to happen, as evidenced by the following extract:

“The vast majority of people come here to get away from the pressures of modern life, especially motor vehicle traffic. To meet overbearing, noisy motor vehicles and to have to breathe in their exhaust fumes in this tranquil landscape negates this fundamental quality of the Lake District. But even the fear that at any moment you might be faced with 4x4s or motorbikes and have to be on the alert constantly radically changes the experience of these routes and this landscape.” P5, Q26

The knowledge that motor vehicles may be encountered during a visit to the National Park, let alone meeting one induces “fear”, a state of constant alert to the possible threat. Having one’s attention constantly focused on possible encounters with motor vehicles suggests that paying attention to the landscape and deriving mental restoration from it will not be possible, leading to an inability to counter the “pressures of modern life” which they are seeking to escape.

The use of motor vehicles is also seen as at odds with the ethos or purpose of the Lake District National Park:

“Minority spoiling it for everyone else so there must be a space for motor vehicles. Goes against the tranquil ethos of the National Park. This unique and rare environment should not be exploited by a few commercial interests and private people at the expense of thousands who visit this area for its natural beauty and often to escape the noise and pollution of urban living” (R21, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“There have to be parts of the country where one can go to escape from motorised vehicles. There are vast areas outside of the National Parks where petrolheads can enjoy recreational activities. But where can the many millions of people who want to enjoy peace, quiet and birdsong go if not to areas like the Lake District? Intentionally or not, quad bike riders and 4-by-4 drivers impinge on

that freedom in a way that walkers and horse riders do not, imposing themselves by noise, smell and speed on other park users.” (R107, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“One of the original purposes of National Parks was to foster 'quiet enjoyment' of the landscape...Motorised use does not fit in with this essential feature of the National Park. Noise and pollution are directly inimical to the special qualities and natural beauty of the area. I cannot deny that agricultural use by motorised vehicles also impinges on these qualities, but accept that it is necessary. It must also be said that the special qualities and natural beauty have been directly and possibly irrevocably damaged by the insensitive and heavy handed 'repair' works undertaken on this route. While undoubtedly eroded in a few places due to its heavy use by 4x4 traffic in particular, the rest of the track retained a strong character and a sense of fitting into the landscape. This has now been lost, possibly for ever.” (R158, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The extracts indicate that the majority of respondents are seeking a tranquil natural landscape but this is ruined by a minority who choose to use motor vehicles for recreation instead. This is seen as against the tranquil and beautiful ethos of the park with a fear that this has been lost forever.. They are not opposed to it entirely as they feel that agricultural use is a necessity. Participants also suggest there are more other suitable places where motor vehicles could be used that would not impact on the quiet enjoyment of others. Their presence is perceived as an “*impingement*” or an imposed situation, which has been forced upon the vast majority of park visitors, who feel powerless against it and cannot escape. Further, their own desired activities such as appreciating birdsong are not possible due to the actions of motor vehicle users and the noise vehicles make, suggesting their opportunities to engage and connect meaningfully with nature are being diminished, which is also covered by the next theme.

1.3 A place to reconnect with nature

The Lake District National Park offers the opportunity to reconnect with nature, whether this is found through literary links (poetry), spirituality, quiet contemplation, observance of the natural soundscape or beauty of place. However, the connection with place is being disrupted by motor vehicle use:

“The noise and exhaust fumes have been really unpleasant and harmful...I have been unable to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the surroundings and my sense of connection with landscape has been lost.” (R13, Oxenfell)

“The noise and exhaust fumes have stopped my enjoyment of the route and damaged my peace and tranquillity which is why I visit these areas. I now no longer feel a sense of being at one with nature.” (R108, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“I felt intimidated, and hated noise and exhaust fumes. Quiet enjoyment of the route and the surrounding area was made impossible. I no longer had a sense of spiritual refreshment, wildness.” (R197, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

The use of motor vehicles disrupts the tranquil nature of the surrounding area through noise and pollution, making connection through the senses impossible.

This has led to a loss of enjoyment of the park by some despite it being a key reason for visiting as they no longer feel “*a sense of being at one with nature*”. This inability to find a meaningful connection with nature may lead to an inability to find wellbeing gains, especially for “*spiritual refreshment*”. It is not just the inability to engage the senses, appreciate beauty, or find spiritual refreshment/meaning in the landscape, but also the lack of a sense of relaxation which are lost due to motor vehicle use:

“Whilst walking the route I have felt intimidated by 4x4s and motorbikes. There has not been enough room on the track and I have been forced into the verge damaging paths and infrastructure. This has made enjoying walking the route impossible and impacted on my sense of relaxation and connection with the natural landscape.” (R131, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

It is not only nature connection generally that is being affected by motor vehicle use, but also specific aspects:

“My enjoyment of wildlife, flora and fauna is totally eradicated by noise and fumes and frightening experiences at times due to speed and intimidating driving.” (R1, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

Part of the nature connecting experience is achieved through taking notice of flora and fauna. However, this close observation is no longer possible because of the noise and fumes produced by motor vehicles on routes used for walking.

2 The Uniqueness of the Lake District National Park and the Impact of Motor Vehicle use

2.1 The cultural and heritage of the Lake District National Park

Survey participants see the Lake District National Park as a unique landscape, one formed from traditional ways of using the land that has created a beautiful and tranquil environment, bequeathed to the general public for conservation. But there is now a fear that this unique landscape is under threat. Survey participants saw this as a fundamental betrayal of the principles which originally created the park:

“Their presence in the area - one I grew up in - has completely spoilt our family walks and it is unnecessary in such a beautiful area. As a member of the National Trust and a past resident of the Tower Bank Arms in Near Sawrey I am certain Beatrix Potter who bequeathed many acres of land to you would be ashamed at what has developed.” (R9, Oxenfell)

“the wildness that inspired artists is degraded by the presence and passage of these recreational vehicles... This was land donated by B Potter to the nascent National Trust to be conserved: this pioneering action is endangered for future generations by this incongruous activity, having supported a much less intrusive “Long Tradition Of Tourism And Outdoor Activities”. Opportunities For Quiet Enjoyment - Quiet enjoyment is what the vast majority of people who visit the

track are looking for: noisy recreational vehicles are not going to allow them to continue to get that QUIET enjoyment.” (R76, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The presence of recreational motor vehicles on these routes has affected traditional family walks and is seen as unnecessary due to the effect it has on the beauty of the area. One participant who grew up locally noted the effect and also lamented the adverse effect on much-valued aesthetic qualities of this particular area.

This is seen as a betrayal of the ethos of the park, so that Beatrix Potter would be “*ashamed at what has developed*”. At the same time the traditional pursuits that helped shape the landscape are also under threat:

“I do not think horse riders, horse-drawn carriage drivers and tramper wheelchair users would be able to use the unsealed section of U5001, because of the erosion and now because the loose stone/slate used for the repair has not stabilised. But horses (ridden or pulling vehicles), together with walkers and cyclists, are the traditional users of the route, so the cultural heritage element of natural beauty is severely impacted by their not being able to use the route. Their amenity and that of disabled users and less able cyclists is severely impacted because they are not able to use the route, in spite of its links to other unsealed roads and public rights of way... Agricultural use with motor vehicles of this route is essential to preserve traditional farming and hence the outstanding heritage value and natural beauty of Little Langdale and the Tilberthwaite valley. The visual intrusion of the route (the erosion and now the repairs) has a strong negative effect on natural beauty when viewed from the fells on the northern side of Little Langdale. The natural beauty of the distinctive characteristic of the Coniston Fells, the "other worldly and abandoned feel" of the disused Betsy Crag slate quarry access from U5001 is reduced by the contrast with the erosion caused by modern motor vehicles on U5001 and the works necessary to repair U5001 and to dissuade motor vehicles from leaving the track.” (RP92, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

Traditional activities such as horse riding, walking, and cycling are under threat due to the erosion of the routes and the repairs made which, while allowing access for motor vehicles, are not suitable for some other park users.

In addition to the cultural heritage of the landscape being under threat, recreational motor vehicle use is also having an impact on the community of park users which is covered in the next sub-theme.

2.2 A community of park users

The National Park is used by people with varying interests with some being local, others travelling from further afield. Despite these differences, the survey participants repeatedly described a sense of community within those who visit the Lake District:

“Meeting walkers runners and cyclists has always been a pleasant and friendly experience. Agricultural vehicles are something one expects to encounter and

sometimes the farm workers are friendly. When I have encountered commercial 4 x 4 vehicles this has felt difficult. The noise is heard for a long time and seems to be completely counter to the ethos of the area. Then the vehicles come into view and it is necessary to step aside and let them all pass, which takes time. There are traffic fumes and noise, it breaks the peace of the place. I have never known the drivers to be friendly. There is no sense of companionship or shared enjoyment of the fells.” (R24, Oxenfell)

When visiting this area, survey participants describe a shared sense of community borne out of the “*pleasant and friendly experience*” they have with one another. This also extends to agricultural workers even when they are using motor vehicles. However, when recreational motor vehicles are encountered, the users are considered unfriendly but most importantly are seen as outsiders to this community of park users, as “*There is no sense of companionship or shared enjoyment of the fells*”. Recreational motor vehicle users are perceived as not fitting in with the ethos of the park as seen in previous themes. Further, their sense of enjoyment is not in line with the more traditional ways of experiencing and enjoying the landscape. This has created a mismatch where the traditional is at odds with this form of recreation that has a noticeable impact on the enjoyment of others.. This has created a clear dislike for recreational motor vehicle users because of the way in which the majority of respondents seek to enjoy the landscape:

“People who participate in these...activities derive most of their enjoyment from the speed at which they are travelling therefore it is completely incompatible with the values of the peaceful countryside. I think these users should carry out their activities in areas specifically designed for them so that they can enjoy themselves without impacting negatively on the enjoyment of the many walkers who come for the peace and tranquillity of the area.” (R16, Oxenfell)

There is a clear incompatibility in how recreational motor vehicles are engaging with the landscape when compared with the majority of visitors. This is seen as going against the implied “*values of the peaceful countryside*” indicating their use is not only unwelcome but contrary to what they feel the true purpose of the park is. This schism between the recreational motor vehicles and other park users is unlikely to be solved: if motor vehicle use persists, the enjoyment of “*peace and tranquillity of the area*” cannot be experienced by other park users. The suggestion of a separate space for recreational motor vehicle use away from routes used by walkers and other users is one possible solution and was suggested by several survey participants. Such an area would also help avoid walkers feeling second class within the landscape or even under physical threat from their use as covered in the next sub-theme.

2.3 Dangers to other park users

Those park visitors who use traditional ways of traversing and engaging with the landscape feel under threat from recreational motor vehicles. The first form in which this threat manifests is through the feeling of being second class within the landscape:

“4x4s passing me when I am walking usually mean I have to step off the track while they pass. I accept this for agricultural vehicles; I tolerate it for an individual 4x4; I feel that a group of 4x4s means I am expected to wait while they all pass.” (R18, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“Motorised vehicles occupy the width of the road, forcing their way past walkers and forcing them onto rough ground. Drivers/riders rarely hesitate to intimidate or bully walkers out of the way if they are too slow to move or delay to find a safe piece of ground to step aside onto. This behaviour is positively dangerous.” (R14, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

“4 x 4 vehicles - especially when coming in convoys - mean the walker is displaced from the road and must stand at the side (or trample vegetation at the side of the road to create new paths) as the vehicle passes...The enjoyment is particularly marred when drivers are incompetent, and must make multiple attempts on complex sections of groundrock...There is also an obvious lack of respect for walkers; when walkers pass other walkers, cyclists and farm vehicles there is a greeting; with 4 x 4 vehicles there is an expectation (that obviously must be met) that the walker gets off the road. This is rarely even acknowledged with thanks.” (R42, Q12 Tilberthwaite)

Survey participants who walk on these routes are often forced to the side of the road due to the presence of recreational motor vehicle users. While this is thought to be acceptable for agricultural vehicles, there is a perceived expectation from groups of vehicle users that walkers should move out of the way for them. While the expectation makes walkers feel second class in the landscape they have come to enjoy, the lack of hesitation and the intimidation by some drivers takes this further as they *“bully walkers out of the way”*. Not only will this mean that walkers are intimidated within a landscape where they have come to enjoy the tranquillity and beauty, so *“enjoyment is particularly marred”*, but there is also a sense of fear at being driven from the track and the danger to their physical and mental wellbeing this entails:

“Vehicles have driven too fast making me feel unsafe. I have felt intimidated by people on quad bikes, which are becoming more common every time I go walking. They have not slowed down and have shown no regard for walkers. I understand that farmers use these and have no objection as they need these for their job. However young men who have no respect for other people is spoiling this area for the majority of walkers. I have felt threatened to approach them to ask them to respect other walkers as they have been threatening when I have previously asked them to slow down. I have also seen more 4 x 4 vehicles using these areas as their playgrounds. They do above the speed limit and can easily knock someone down at the speed they are doing. Why are they allowed along these track there must be other places that they can go?? The noise and exhaust fumes have stopped my enjoyment of the route and damaged my peace and tranquillity which is why I visit these areas. I now no longer feel a sense of being at one with nature. (R108, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“Well, as I'm from London, I find it ironic that I feel safer against traffic in a city than on country paths. People who use vehicles for work don't make me feel threatened.” (R225, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

Other users of the routes feel physically threatened by recreational motor vehicles and the speed at which they travel and as such, *“feel safer against traffic in a city than on country paths”*. It is the lack of regard for walkers that is the issue for many survey participants, as recreational motor vehicle users see the landscape as *“their playground”* indicating a sense of ownership of the land, enabling them to use it in whichever way suits their interests.. Within the survey, physical safety was a repeated concern and as *“people on quad bikes...are becoming more common every time I go walking”* the perception of threat and actual risk are increasing for those walking on these two routes. This is affecting their enjoyment and ability to meaningfully engage with the natural landscape and to connect with it In

The final sub-theme concerns worries about the integrity of the landscape.

2.4 Harm to the landscape and the wider environment

Recreational motor vehicles on these two routes are also perceived to be destroying what makes the park's natural environment unique:

“Frankly the qualities that make the Lake district National Park a world class heritage asset are being rapidly destroyed...The smell, particularly of diesel exhaust fumes, is awful and the noise intrusive - both severely polluting the environment...I have experienced many incidents of pollution and intimidating behaviour, I have also seen oil patches on the track.” (R89, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“All users impact on the special qualities of the Lake District—such has always been the problem with people and the natural environment. I believe people should be encouraged to get back to nature but believe that everything between people and the earth should be limited. Bipedal causes less damage than quad anything. Hurling around in cars to live out an advert is not conducive to maintaining the health, peace and tranquillity of this area of outstanding natural beauty.” (R116, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The park, as a world-class heritage site is a unique place within the UK because of the tranquil and beautiful traditional landscape, given by many survey participants as the key reason for visiting. While it is acknowledged that all engagement with the land will have an impact, the unique features of the park are being harmed the most by motor vehicles on unsealed roads. These unique features are being degraded by the pollutants emitted by recreational motor vehicles along with the noise they create, harming the beauty of the land while affecting the tranquil soundscape that is highly valued by many. This has a direct effect on the survey participants' ability to enjoy the landscape:

“These are incompatible with natural beauty which implies gaining enjoyment from natural surroundings. Motorised vehicles are not natural. Certain areas, and

this is one of them, gain in beauty by having minimal man-made intrusion.” P175, Q26

The use of recreational motor vehicles on these two routes within the park is perceived as “*incompatible with natural beauty*”, illustrating the mismatch between their presence and what is acceptable within a natural landscape.. As the beauty of the park is a key draw and reason for enjoyment of the park, keeping man-made intrusion (here, motor vehicle use) to a minimum is deemed essential for preserving this feature of the landscape.

Conservation was frequently discussed by the survey participants as the necessary focus of the Lake District National Park:

“Commercialising/urbanising a road that destroys the natural beauty of the existing path for no appreciable gain, but to the detriment of previous users is breaching the Sandford principles: “Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority” (R212, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“The track passes through an area of exceptional natural beauty and tranquillity and 4x4 use is not compatible with this or with the Sandford principles...I consider it is reasonable to suggest that the Tilberthwaite track should be protected against future damage, either to its fabric or to the wider environment of Low Furness” (R1, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

Given its exceptional qualities, survey participants felt that the natural beauty should be protected above all else, from the continued harm that motor vehicle use causes. They acknowledged that there is a conflict between on the one hand their desire for this area to be free from motor vehicle use because of the damage to the land, its beauty, and tranquillity and, on the other hand, the desire to drive a motor vehicle on these routes. To deal with such conflicts, the survey participants frequently cite the Sandford Principle which prioritises the protection of the landscape over access rights.

In terms of impact on the natural environment, the flora and fauna of the area were also considered to be under threat:

“Motorised vehicles are noisy, which damages the relaxing nature of these areas. The vehicle noise and the associated pollution scares away and/or damages flora and fauna for some distance from the track.” (R8, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“All motorised vehicles using this area cause noise, erosion and intimidate other users if only because of their size and speed. They shatter the peace of the area, scare wildlife and essentially destroy the very ethos we visit this area for. They damage the area and do not belong there.” (R19, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

“Their presence also clashes both with the special qualities of having a unique farming heritage and with a model for protecting cultural landscapes.” (R77, Q26 Tilberthwaite)

The use of motor vehicles was seen to “*shatter the peace of the area, scare wildlife and essentially destroy the very ethos we visit this area for*”. Not only is the reason for visiting the park being taken away from users of the routes, but the wildlife of the surrounding area is also being affected.

Key Findings

The ability to appreciate and meaningfully engage with the tranquillity and beauty of the Lake District National Park is under threat from recreational motor vehicle use on these two routes because of noise, fumes and visual intrusion. This is a mismatch with the traditional landscape and ways in which other park users engage with the land. The inability to engage meaningfully with the natural soundscape, find tranquillity, and notice the beauty of nature while in this part of the National Park is adversely affecting wellbeing and restoration. This is especially vital as many come to this area to escape urban stressors but are unable to do so due to the presence of recreational motor vehicles.

The opportunity to connect with nature, an important part of wellbeing benefits, is also adversely affected because the noise and fumes of motor vehicles numb the senses, while opportunities to find spiritual meaning and to notice beauty are also impacted. This is particularly problematic as reconnecting with nature and enjoying the tranquillity and beauty of the landscape is a key reason for visiting this area.

The use of recreational motor vehicles on these two routes is seen as incompatible with the ethos of the park and the majority of park users because of the harm it is causing to traditional ways of using the land and the negative effect it is having on landscape and wildlife. This has led to users of recreational motor vehicles being regarded as outsiders to the wider community of park users. This incompatibility and the impact of recreational motor vehicles on other park users mean that while their use is permitted within the park, those who walk, run, ride horses or bicycles, will be unable to meaningfully engage and connect with the landscape to help improve their wellbeing and find mental restoration.

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