

Newsletter 6

April 2021

Lake District Green Lanes Alliance

www.ldgla.org

contact@ldgla.org



What's the difference between Venice and the Lake District?

It's not a trick question. On 30th March the LDNPA told us in an email: the Rights of Way Committee has still not seen or considered [a crucial UNESCO report](#) about the two green lanes near Little Langdale. This is the committee that ultimately decides whether a ban on leisure motor vehicles should be imposed or not.

Why is this so serious, and so different from Venice?

In this issue:

UNESCO ignored p. 1

The Partnership Management Group p. 3

The sustainable use of green lanes p. 4

National Parks in North America and Europe p.5

Ruskin's insights for today p. 6

Douglas Worrall – green lanes pioneer p. 8

For the peaceful and quiet enjoyment of our fell tracks

- The report was written by the UNESCO advisory body ICOMOS, a world authority on the state of conservation in World Heritage sites. The World Heritage Centre fully endorsed the report and sent it to the LDNPA (via the State Party, the DCMS).
- UNESCO and ICOMOS asked for this report, written in September 2019, to be taken into account when the Rights of Way Committee met on 8th October 2019. The LDNPA says that this did not happen “due to the limited time between receipt by the State Party and the committee meeting”. But the LDNPA did not even alert the Committee to its existence so that the decision could have been delayed.
- This is what ICOMOS says about the LDNPA’s recommendation to the Committee: *“The National Park report analyses the situation and makes recommendations for the Committee to consider. In summary these are not to take direct action but to try and engage with stakeholders. **ICOMOS does not consider that this response is adequate.**”*
- The Committee then proceeded to **adopt the very recommendation opposed by ICOMOS**: a partnership management group.
- What it should have done is comply with the ICOMOS/UNESCO request to take action: *“**Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) that since 2006 have been available to National Parks to remove the right to use motorised vehicles on certain ‘green’ roads appear to be an appropriate tool from the details set out in the report. The issue is not limited to the physicality of the roads and whether and how vehicles are eroding the roads. The issue is wider than that: it revolves around how 4x4 road use impacts on the character and tranquillity of the landscape.**”*

Meanwhile, a day after we heard about the disappearance of the ICOMOS/UNESCO report, the Italian authorities announced their response to a request from UNESCO: a ban on cruise ships. The question arises: is the Lake District not worth protecting? Is the 4x4 and motorbike lobby so much more powerful than the owners of cruise ships?



Or did someone simply choose the wrong ending to this story? Because the same Lake District National Park Authority insisted in a leaflet in 2003 that green lane driving **was incompatible with National Park purposes**. And according to its then director of corporate operations the LDNPA wanted to **make green lane driving ‘socially unacceptable’** - at a time when vehicle numbers on our fell tracks were well below today’s levels.

For the peaceful and quiet enjoyment of our fell tracks

Anyone who doubts the impact on this incomparable landscape can do a quick search on Youtube for 'Greenlaning (or trail riding) in the Lake District'. The 4x4 and trail bike enthusiasts like publicising their own exploits, [like this clip](#) from the High Nibthwaite – Parkamoor track.

The Partnership Management Group

On 25th March the partnership management group established by the LDNPA to discuss the Tilberthwaite route met for the first time. We never thought this was going to be a particularly cheerful occasion, but as the participants appeared on Zoom and introduced themselves it dawned on us how thoroughly imbalanced this group is:

Motoring organisations	Non-motorised users	Less mobile	Other stakeholders	Landowner	Conservation Groups
1. Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) 2. Land Access and Recreation Association (LARA) 3. Kankku Ltd 4. Green Lanes Association (GLASS) 5. Auto Cycle Union (ACU)	Ramblers	CALM (This group is against TROs and has close links to motoring organisations.)	LDNPA Cumbria County Council Local Access Forum Cumbria Bridleways Society	National Trust	Friends of the Lake District LDGLA GLEAM

No cyclists and no Parish Councils attended.

Given that according to the LDNPA's own data motorised users represent less than 20% of all users, the imbalance is striking, and we have complained to the LDNPA.

The LDNPA wants the group to work out a management plan for the Tilberthwaite route, so on the agenda were the terms of reference. We made our position clear: any management plan has to take account of National Park purposes and obligations arising from the World Heritage status. They are at the core of the debate: we believe that the National Park's conservation remit and its duty to protect the World Heritage site have to guide the discussions of this group.



Green lanes form an integral part of many upland farming landscape's cultural heritage, designed to enable people to move stock and quarry products long before motorised traffic and those of the Lake District WHS are no exception. They are simply not designed to support modern off-road motor vehicles.

Professor Lois Mansfield, Director Centre for National Parks & Protected Areas, University of Cumbria

The motoring organisations objected: they think that National Park purposes are too subjective and open to misinterpretation. We disagree. Next meeting: 21st June 2021.

A question of probity, accountability and governance

If **strong governance procedures** had been in place, LDNPA officials could not have

- produced a severely biased assessment report, systematically prioritising the rights of motorcyclists and 4x4 drivers over conservation
- ignored the results of their own surveys, which showed a clear majority in favour of Traffic Regulation Orders
- ignored a technical review from ICOMOS, issued by UNESCO's World Heritage Centre in response to the assessment report
- ignored the views of the National Trust, the Friends of the Lake District, the Ramblers and over 380,000 people who signed a petition
- recommended a 'partnership management group' as a solution to the Tilberthwaite track, the very solution UNESCO and ICOMOS describe as inadequate
- invited five motoring representatives to be part of this group, although motorists represent less than 20% of users of this track

The Lake District Green Lanes Alliance becomes a member of the Cumbria Sustainability Network

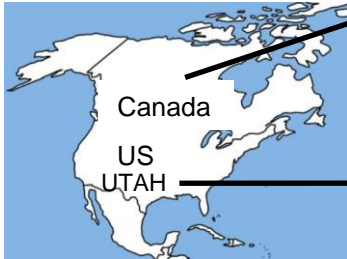
Our green lanes campaign addresses two aspects of sustainability:

- Off-road vehicles have high carbon emissions
- They also directly degrade the integrity and harmony of the landscape.

The Cumbria Sustainability Network was established as an informal initiative in 2008 by Sustainable Brampton and a number of other groups including Killington & District Sustainable Energy Trust, Sustainable Energy Network Staveley, Cumbria Action for Sustainability, Riversmeet (Cockermouth), Sustainable Carlisle, Towards a Community Transition and Ambleside Climate Change Forum. The groups involved have a wealth of knowledge and experience of a wide range of environmental issues and have a particular interest in encouraging individual and organisational behaviour change to help achieve zero-carbon emissions goals and other environmental objectives.

We are now part of a strong groundswell of public action to protect nature and curb carbon emissions in Cumbria.

How National Parks in North America and Europe handle driving on unsurfaced tracks



"No person shall operate an all-terrain vehicle in a park except for purposes of administration of the park and with the permission of the superintendent."

National Parks Utah in October 2019 (about the time the LDNPA decided against TROs)
After significant public pressure, including thousands of messages from NPCA supporters, the National Park Service reversed a decision that would have allowed certain off-road vehicles on paved and dirt roads in national parks and monuments in Utah.

Report by the American Wildlife Conservation Society

"All forms of recreation have some effect on the local environment, but ATVs [All Terrain Vehicles] represent an extreme in the continuum of recreation use impacts."

Germany

Motor vehicles are banned on all forest tracks in the Harz National Park. Their impact on the natural landscape compromises the duty of National Park to protect the area and to preserve a tranquil environment and the quiet enjoyment of visitors.

For this reason motor vehicles are effectively banned in all National Parks and nature reserves in Germany, except for purposes such as agriculture or park maintenance, Recreational motor vehicles are therefore not permitted. We find it difficult to understand, why they would be allowed on unsealed roads in any National Park.



France

Strict regulations for the central zones of National Parks to protect both natural and cultural aspects of the landscape. This means, as in the Parc des Pyrénées, a ban on motor vehicles using unsurfaced tracks.

Spain

Strict regulations for central zones, as for instance in the Parque Nacional de Aigüestortes on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees in: the central zone can only be accessed on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

John Ruskin's insights for today

John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) was an artist and art critic, a social visionary, philosopher and early environmentalist. Brantwood, his beautiful home in the Lake District, overlooking Coniston Water, is today a museum and a place of inspiration.

The [Brantwood website](#) sums up Ruskin's legacy:

John Ruskin left a legacy of influence that stretches from Frank Lloyd Wright to Mahatma Gandhi. He championed many of the tenets of the welfare state, and inspired the founders of the National Health Service, the formation of Public Libraries, the National Trust and many other cornerstones of civil society in the last one hundred years. His influence reached abroad in such areas as women's education, the minimum wage, child labour, and environmental protection and has served both as a restraining influence on unbridled capitalism and a moral conscience for the nations of the world.

Q&A with Howard Hull, Director of Brantwood

How did Ruskin see our relationship with nature?

First of all, that nature 'treats well, those who treat her well'. In contrast he warned that nature would become malevolent if treated badly. He recognised that we are never in a passive relationship with nature, so we have to make decisions about our treatment of the environment all the time, because everything we do has consequences, good or bad. Secondly, that nature is the great teacher, which we should approach with humility and respect. Unless we know nature, how can we enter into a positive and fulfilling relationship with it? Ruskin put a primacy on 'seeing clearly'.



What endangers this relationship?

Ruskin elaborated what he called ‘the law of help’ in which he describes how competition is in all things the law of death and collaboration the law of life.

We are familiar with competition between people and within nature, but Ruskin also targets competition between people and nature, showing how our bid to dominate nature and bend it to our will leads ultimately to barrenness and the depletion of vital forces.

Ultimately, on a global scale, this dysfunction in the relationship is catastrophic. Ruskin observed that nurturing forms of cultivation and husbandry of the land where nature is supported are not only healthy for both man and nature, but have a positive effect on the human spirit.



Ultimately, on a global scale, this dysfunction in the relationship is catastrophic.

Why does Ruskin matter today?

Ruskin recognised the special nature of the Lake District. He wouldn't look kindly on all the development that has taken place here but he would certainly treasure its remaining beauty and bio-diversity. He would also value the continuing association of the area with the values of Romanticism and the birth of the conservation movement. In a world that is under such environmental threat, he saw the Lake District even in his time, as standing for a different way of relating to nature. He wanted people to come here to walk and travel slowly and take time to see the detail of this landscape – even down to the tiniest of moorland plants.

How would he have reacted to motor vehicles on fell tracks?

Well he could express himself pretty powerfully! Underneath a colourful rebuke would be his concern for the ways in which they damaged and degraded the tracks and surrounding environment for purely personal satisfaction, and how their presence would spoil the ability of others to slow down and enter into a more meditative engagement with nature.

What role did Ruskin's vision for the Lake District play in the World Heritage nomination?

Ruskin played a vital part in the transition from Romantic-era thinking into the early conservation movement. He opened people's eyes in detail to nature, especially mountain scenery, in a way which embraced both scientific and aesthetic perspectives. He studied our impact on everything from climate to soil and landscape integrity, helping to define the positive social values inherent in Lakeland communities and agriculture and enumerate the threats. He was one of the key figures in the World Heritage definition of the Lakes as a Cultural Landscape of global importance.



In a world that is under such environmental threat, he saw the Lake District even in his time, as standing for a different way of relating to nature. He wanted people to come here to walk and travel slowly and take time to see the detail of this landscape – even down to the tiniest of moorland plants.

Douglas Worrall, early campaigner for green lanes, 1933 – 2021



Born and educated in Nottingham, but with family connections to Kirkby in Furness, Douglas knew the Lake District from childhood. In the early 1960's after a spell in the RAF, he abandoned city life hoping to work and live in the Lakes. He was soon involved in National Park matters and became a voluntary warden, and later was their representative on the National Park's Access and Accommodation Committee. He was out every weekend in every weather on the fells, footpaths, sometimes in a work party, or leading a guided walk.

In 1969 Douglas and his wife Judy moved to Elterwater where they started a business and lived next to the Common for 38 years.

Passionately interested in local environmental issues, Douglas

was part of the Langdales Society and became the second editor of its newsletter Langdale Valley News, after the death of David Fry in 1995. The Green Lanes matter was first raised in 2000 and Langdale Valley News was already questioning the National Park's lax approach to motor bikes and 4WD vehicles. The subject rumbled on in many subsequent editions. The quiet sanctity of green roads was a cause close to Douglas's heart and he was pleased and impressed when a new group evolved to take on a renewed struggle to protect the Lake District's fell tracks.

Douglas died of Covid-19 in February this year.



The LDNP have not just advertised the fact that 'green roads' are in fact legitimate highways; they have not just given permission for certain types of vehicles to use these tracks; they have positively issued a challenge which has been taken up by entrepreneurs.

**Langdale Valley News,
December 2000**