

Annex 1: Hierarchy of Trails Executive Summary

1. The aim of the Hierarchy of Trail Routes (HoTR) Experiment has been to eliminate irresponsible green road driving, manage the current level of activity, reduce conflict and sustain route quality. It tested the hypothesis that voluntary restraint can be at least as effective as statutory control. Vehicle users are asked to comply with advisory signs and with the guidelines set out in a Lake District Green Road Code of Conduct. This approach reflects Government guidelines laid down in the 1997 document 'Making the Best of Byways'.
2. The Lake District National Park Authority is opposed to recreational driving on unsealed routes ('green roads'). The activity is considered incompatible with the special qualities of the National Park. The ability to enjoy the area in tranquility is threatened by vehicle intrusion into its quietest parts. When vehicles are encountered or their physical impact is witnessed, the sense of peace and quiet is lost and enjoyment is diminished.
3. Yet the public's right to drive vehicles on some unsealed routes remains and is less certain on others, even though those routes were created by and for vehicles from a different age. Evidence of attempts by highway authorities elsewhere in Britain to control such activity in a unilateral way, however, suggested that consensus management should be tested, involving users, land managers and the highway authority. The HoTR Experiment, formally commenced in April 1999 but with its roots established in 1995, is the manifestation of that philosophy. It has evolved from a willingness among vehicle users to develop ideas for trail route management and to be involved in their implementation. This original HoTR Group, comprised of only vehicular users still meets but has been supplemented by the Trails Management Advisory Group. In this Group other authorities, land managing and user organisations, many of which are known to oppose vehicular activity, work together in search of an acceptable reconciliation of views.
4. Though not envisaged as part of the original experiment, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) have also been employed with the support of all partners, where voluntary restraint has not been achieved. This has not proved as effective as the Trail Management Advisory Group would have wished. There is evidence that motorcyclists in particular ignore the TRO signs. Enforcement is a problem. Minor traffic offences in remote areas are not a police priority. In most cases, witnesses cannot provide sufficient evidence for the police to believe that a case can be brought to the courts.
5. Since June 2000 use levels and route condition has been monitored on a number of routes. Other information from a Green Road Activity Register and from a Voluntary Lengthsman Scheme has also been evaluated.
6. Route condition varies considerably. Upland routes show the greatest signs of erosion. Vehicles clearly cause damage but many routes have deteriorated because of a lack of regular maintenance. The action of water and pressure from all users, not just recreational vehicles, has gone unchecked for years. The Experiment suggests that without a properly funded and sustained management regime, routes will continue to deteriorate, no matter how much control is applied to vehicular use.
7. **Continued tolerance of recreational green road driving as of right undermines the potential of the National Park to present itself as a special area where such activity will not be encountered. But it is also true to say that the activity does not create**

conflicts in equal measure in all parts of the Lake District. Use is concentrated in the south-eastern area, where perhaps 25 routes are heavily used, many of which are also popular routes to the fells and in the valleys for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

8. The Experiment has suggested that voluntary restraint *can* work, although not in every circumstance. The number of reported incidents of conflict between users has reduced by

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50% since the advisory signs were erected, although compliance has been lower on some routes. The designation of *Privileged Use* routes, however, (available only to members of clubs affiliated to LARA) has proved to be an inadequate management tool. It has been impossible to assess compliance. The maintenance of low levels of use on *No Use* routes seems also to be due more to their intrinsic unattractiveness to users rather than any new constraint applied by the Experiment.

9. It is not clear to what extent it has been possible to reach out to 'un-clubbable' vehicle users and commercial operators. Many have responded but others have turned their back on the approach. Local reaction to the Experiment has been equally mixed. More Parish Councils prefer management than prohibition but many individual respondents seek a ban.
10. These conclusions provide a valuable foundation for reaching decisions on managing green road driving in the Lake District.

