

Lake District refuses to ban ‘damaging’ 4x4 tours

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The number of 4x4 tours using two tracks had reached 400 a month in 2017, according to farmersALAMY

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The managers of the Lake District National Park have voted against a ban on recreational off-road vehicles which damage hill tracks, despite pleas from the [National Trust](#).

The national park’s rights of way committee voted yesterday at its headquarters in Murley Moss, Kendal, to continue to allow 4x4s and trail motorbikes to use two lanes across farmland bequeathed to the trust by Beatrix Potter, the author.

Farmers say the number of 4x4 tours taking tourists between High Tilberthwaite and Langdale increased from 30 a month in 2004 to up to 400 a month in 2017, destroying the tranquillity of the valley and eroding landscape.

The decision was made despite an online petition of 300,000 signatures and arguments from the trust and The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICMS), which advises Unesco on protecting world heritage sites such as the Lake District.

The petition, the NT and ICMS urged the Lake District National Park Authority to ban the vehicles from two tracks owned by Cumbria council. John Moffat, from the National Trust, told the committee that the 4x4 use was “damaging” and would never be allowed on trust land, which makes up about 20 per cent of the national park.

He asked the park authority “to defer the decision until a more comprehensive impact assessment is done”.

The ICMS suggested that too much focus had been placed on the commercial benefits of trips in 4x4s.

The rights of way committee did, however, vote to support a report that called for a new management plan to monitor the use and condition of the lanes.

Peter Allen, a committee member, said the Lake District was “for everybody, not just the few” and that the 4x4s may be the only way the infirm or disabled can see the national park.

Charles Hebditch, whose family have leased a cottage from the National Trust for 75 years, said: “The decision is disastrous. We have been telling the national park authority for twenty years that the Land Rovers damage the lanes and drains, causing flooding.

“And the motorbikes are loud, smelly and scary. We are very disappointed that they are to be allowed to continue.”