
LARA News & MFU Matters

Issue 10 – July 1994

South Hams Strategy – nice one!

South Hams District Council (east of Plymouth) has published its Countryside Recreation & Access Strategy for consultation. By and large, recreational strategies are pretty yawn-making with consideration of minor highways reduced to such basics as 'Bridleways? yes, we should have some' before devoting pages to site-based sports. SHDC approaches the matter differently. No less than three pages are devoted to green lanes as a recreational facility in themselves. Our only criticism is that the Strategy appears to confuse the needs of trail riders and green road drivers with the allied, but substantially different, provision of off-road driving sites close by the urban fringe. That can soon be remedied, making this Strategy an excellent example for other councils to follow and develop. □

Dangerous news from Wales

The Sports Council for Wales has issued a synopsis of its findings from the 1993 survey of attitudes to recreation and other activities in the national parks of Wales. This was done because the results of a 1992 survey clearly showed that there is 'a much higher public tolerance of sport and recreation than many people might have expected'. Some elements evidently tried to rubbish the first SCW survey by attacking its methodology, so they simply did it again – and better. The new report shows that

'There may be local trouble spots [but] co-operation and management is quite capable of solving the occasional problems which arise. The general picture of recreation and conservation is one of peaceful coexistence. Despite this, there is still a tendency, almost a temptation, to polarise conservation and recreation and focus on conflict. This is the stuff of good conference themes but it is not supported by the strategic research in Wales over the last 5 years'.

In light of the recent attitudes – maybe prejudices is a better word – coming out of the Brecon Beacons National Park over the last year, we trust that the Sports Council for Wales will be driving home this message to those who most need to hear it. Unfortunately they are not likely to be willing to listen. How long before the Countryside Commission rumbles into action with another of its famous 'user attitude surveys' (remember the Ridgeway debacle?) to prove that the Sports Council for Wales has got it all wrong? □

Bull Bar Backlash

The widespread use of 'bull bars' on the front of 4WD vehicles has been brought into question by road safety experts. The Transport Research Laboratory estimates that up to 15 children and 20 adults will die in Britain next year as a direct result of being hit by these appurtenances, with the risk of injury to a child's head being three times greater than from a normal car. The RAC is backing a campaign to ban such fittings entirely and says that they do not conform to current Construction and Use Regulations anyway. The Roads Minister Robert Key regards bull bars as 'unnecessary and macho'. Meanwhile, informed opinion within the BMF, Britain's largest motorcycling group, supports the view that legislation on the basis of guesses rather than real evidence is unfair and discriminatory. They point to bans of right-hand sidecars when no evidence of any danger, or even a real problem, was produced. □

AMCA Moves House

The Amateur Motor Cycle Association (AMCA) has moved from the romantic Chateau Pleck in Walsall to a posh new office complex in up-market Cannock. Their new address is — 28 Mill Park, Hawk's Green Lane, Cannock, Staffs, WS11 2XT. Telephone is 0543 466282, Fax 0543 466283. □

Countryside Commission gets it right!

Well-deserved plaudits to the Countryside Commission for their new booklet, *A Guide to Procedures for Public Path Orders (CCP 449)*. This small tome deals with orders to create, divert and close footpaths and bridleways, but not expressly with carriageways. That said, all too many 'footpaths and bridleways' actually carry higher rights, so an understanding of these procedures is well worth acquiring. This booklet has an established companion volume, *A Guide to Definitive Map Procedures (CCP 285)* which deals with definitive map orders, and both have excellent flow charts explaining the labyrinthine processes involved. Both are available free on request from — Countryside Commission Postal Sales, PO Box 124, Walgrave, Northampton NN6 9TL, tel: 0604 781848. □

Noise Code is Sound Common Sense

It is now some considerable time since the 'Code of Practice on Noise from Organised Off-road Motorcycle Sport' was drafted and submitted to the Department of Environment for ratification. The draft is still lying in the DoE's dusty in-tray, so the Noise Council has decided to issue the code anyway – a sound common-sense decision. The Code of Practice (dated as 1994 in the issued version) gives practical guidance to event organisers and local government officers, set against the backdrop of legal requirements and powers. The organisations who got together to draft the Code are:

The Amateur Motor Cycle Association, the Auto-Cycle Union, Manchester Area Pollution Advisory Council, the Motor Cycle Industries Association, the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, and of course, the Noise Council. Motorcycle club secretaries within LARA can obtain a copy of the Code from the LARA Motor Sport Development Officer, ACU House, Wood Street, Rugby, CV21 2YX. □

Health & Safety Report for Consultation

The Government's Health and Safety Executive has recently investigated safety at motorsport venues with a view to producing guidance notes for club officials and HSE officers. The very comprehensive draft of these notes has now been circulated to all those organisations who assisted the HSE's Allan Watson in his work. As with the Code of Practice on Noise, this exercise is not intended to make life more difficult for motor event organisers; rather it will set out good practice and explain how to avoid falling foul of what is a rather complex area of safety legislation. All the major motorsport organisations will have received consultation copies; the HSE needs comments and responses no later than 6 July 1994. □

LARA – Part of the Solution

Overleaf – LARA Conference Report, & Job Offers

Secret Highways Conference Summary

The Conference Chairman, Viscount Addison, expressed his hope that the conference would 'give a little colour to white roads'. The journey through the day certainly took us a little further down the road towards understanding what an unclassified county road is [and what it isn't]. However, far from adding colour, it highlighted the differences in artistic interpretation by the sometimes reluctant authorities who usually hold the paintbrush! Viscount Addison also encouraged the conference to 'rock the BOAT – but not sink it' and to an extent his advice was followed. There were many interesting pieces of information offered during the question and ensuing discussions but four main points stood out as being issues worthy of further consideration.

1. – Northumberland's approach to adding BOATs to the definitive map has much to commend it in the sense of actually getting on with the job but in counties where pressures are greater, this may not be the answer they have been looking for. The 'we'll do it unless you tell us we can't' attitude does leave those authorities who genuinely strive to do the job thoroughly [and indeed have been conditioned to do so as a result of O'Keefe and also pressures from other interested parties] feeling that NCC's luck has got to run out sooner or later. John Sugden's glass roads spring to mind, or perhaps thin ice may be nearer the mark. Once the crack is visible, you're sunk! However, Northumberland's record to date is impressive and should not be dismissed too lightly.

2. – Motor competitions seem to be a double edged sword. Managed well and sensitively planned, they can be a huge success in drawing the general public closer to the aims of the motoring organisations. Managed badly, a few unsatisfactory events can destroy relationships with highway authorities which may have taken years to build. The risk is great when so much is at stake in the sense that mutual understanding and working partnerships are the foundations for making real progress on the access front.

3. – What is ordinary traffic and what is extraordinary? Sadly, the questions are simple but the answers appear to be quite the reverse. Yet this issue has massive implications for the management of all un-tarmaced publicly maintained carriage roads. Interpretation of one term, 'ordinary traffic', determines the standard to which authorities must maintain all its highways but it appears there is very little guidance available to them. Nowhere within its remit is it more crucial to address the point than in the very grey area of 'white', 'green' and 'unclassified' roads.

4. – All classes of user share the frustrations of the vagaries of these roads. The suggestion that for those UCRs which have sufficient degree of assurance of their public nature OS should show them on its maps with a minimum of footpath status met with some opposition from those who feared the possibility that tablets may unwittingly be set in stone as a result. However Don Davies showed his willingness to address the issue but, as he said, OS are at the mercy of the local authorities. OS can only take the information that is available to them; it cannot review the definitive map. If sufficiently reliable information is not available within authorities at present then how can we hope to maximise the tremendous opportunity offered by OS to help reveal these otherwise secret highways on its maps? To continue the Chairman's metaphor, never mind rocking the BOAT – let's not miss it!

Viscount Addison closed the conference by suggesting that further research was needed in order to make real progress towards

unlocking the potential of these secret highways. The combined experience and expertise of all those people present [and their absent colleagues] could surely steer this 'overlooked recreational resource' to a more positive future. Perhaps what it needs is a plan to map out its future.

Thanks are due to Sue Arnott, of Countryside Access Management Services, for this independent review of proceedings. Her full report forms part of the Conference Papers, available from the address below, for £12 including postage. □

WANTED: A New MRDO

LARA seeks a Motor Recreation Development Officer to research aspects of motorised recreation. Duties will also include dealing with plans and strategies and helping LARA to educate and inform countryside users and managers. On offer – a two year contract, based at the AMCA offices in Cannock (see overleaf), and around £11,000 a year. You will need a qualification, or long experience, in planning, law, land use, or recreation management, with computer skills and an open mind. We welcome applications regardless of age, sex or physical disability. Please send a brief CV to:

**LARA, PO Box 19, Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE3 5HW**

Please tell your colleagues about this opportunity

Looking for Part-time or Temporary Work?

From time to time LARA needs researchers for specific tasks. This would not require attendance at a central location, and may suit those who are currently engaged in similar work, perhaps as volunteers, but who are not able to consider a full-time post. If you meet this description, please let us know what expertise you can offer, and under what conditions. Please respond now even if you are not available immediately. □

Shoot that old MG, break in them boots

North Yorkshire's two most visited tourist attractions [the Dales and North York Moors national parks] may soon become no-go areas for motorists. Car drivers keen to enjoy the open spaces may soon have to hop on a bus or buy special permits. Countryside Commission spokesman Ken Robertson said he did not want to stop visitors, but only prevent them driving. How long before rambling becomes compulsory, we wonder? □

TRF finds the Final Solution

Faced, as they often are, with objections to Byway claims, members of the Trail Riders Fellowship have learnt to cope with Public Inquiries, even though they involve days off work and other expenses. Now an alternative strategy has been worked out in Staffordshire. Local activist Rod Butterworth solved this problem, which involved a resident on a local lane, in a completely original way – he bought the objector's house. □