
LARA News

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Incorporating MFU Matters

New LARA Planning Guidance for Clubs
LARA Motorsport and the Planning Process
GuideNotes are now generally available. It is now a reality that the town and country planning processes increasingly affect motor sport - even low-key events like motorcycle trials and autotests. Whilst the national governing bodies do an ever-expanding volume of work, both on national & local policies, and on specific cases, it is now vital that organising clubs become more 'planning conscious'. There are two main aspects to this:

- ◆ Motor sport clubs must take steps to create dialogues with local and regional planners and countryside managers, so that the reasonable needs and aspirations of the sport are recognised and approved in the statutory and extra-statutory planning process (eg structure plans, local plans, recreation strategies). It is ultimately the responsibility of every organising club to ensure that the sport has input into the plans and strategies in their own area.
- ◆ Some event organisers also come up against the enforcement side of the planning processes. When this happens there is a need to understand the system, to know what can be done to rectify the position, what may be done by way of response to official notices, how and when.

LARA recognises that club officers and planning professionals at local and regional level need guidance and information to assist them in this complex and confusing area of the law. To achieve this, in 1997 LARA hosted a series of three regional workshops, with a wide range of professional planning experts and experienced motor sport organisers. The views, comments and advice gained at those workshops have been distilled into the first issue of the new LARA GuideNotes 'fact file':

Motor Sport and the Planning Process.

Our GuideNotes explain in plain English how the planning process works, how it affects motor sport, and what can be done to make the system work for motorsport and recreation you. The main sections look at statutory plans and strategies, the enforcement processes, and more. The appendices set out various rules and regulations, together with examples of good and bad practice.

The first issue of the LARA GuideNotes comes in a strong 4-ring binder, posted directly for £25 including P&P. For LARA clubs and members the price is £10 only - for bulk orders please ring for details. In with this, you will automatically receive the first set of additional pages free of charge, and be placed on the LARA direct mailing list for future planning and countryside access information.

To order, send a cheque (made out to LARA) for £25 - or £10 with LARA membership details - to the address below. Simply ask for the LARA GuideNotes, and please include your full address and telephone number.

Geoff Wilson, Chief Executive of the Auto Cycle Union and Deputy Chairman of LARA, comments: 'I cannot stress too highly the importance for all event-organising clubs to become more aware of the planning processes, how these affect the sport, and, just as vitally, how the sport can influence the planners. This new GuideNotes publication is heavily subsidised by LARA to make it easily available to even the smallest club, or interested individual. Every club secretary should have a set of the LARA GuideNotes - it is an investment for your future.'

Geoff Hughes, Regional Development Officer for the North Region of the English Sports Council, says 'For obvious reasons motor sport and recreation is sometimes seen as an unwelcome and intrusive use of the countryside. Sometimes criticism is justified; often it is not. Rather than fight a series of defensive battles, motor sport must learn to work with, not against, the planning processes. The English Sports Council supports LARA's work in this area. As we move into motor sport's second century, no event organiser can afford to ignore this area of responsibility.'

Consensus Approach goes National!

LARA's 1998 annual workshop was focused on Countryside Consensus - approaching management measures through discussion and agreement, rather than the guerrilla warfare more usually encountered. Taking the success of the Lake District Hierarchy of

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Trail Routes initiative as a jumping-off point, the workshop set about looking at the characteristics of the consensus approach, and how it might be employed within a legalistic framework. This was all about the management of site-based motor sport, as much as green lane access for recreation.

The workshop was built around discussion techniques pioneered by the Environment Council, a national charity that does a lot of work in developing consensus approaches to solving environmental issues.

Speakers (each limited to a mind-saving fifteen minutes!) included Bob Cartwright (Lake District National Park Authority), Mick Presland (English Sports Council), Audrey Wedderburn (Countryside Commission), Schia Mitchell (Environment Council), and Steve Jenkinson (Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers) – seen here at the workshop doing his best to be PC.

As usual, LARA will be publishing the papers issuing from the workshop in the format of insert pages for the GuideNotes. Anyone who already has a GuideNotes file will automatically receive the consensus papers when these are published. If you would like to receive the Consensus Workshop papers, please order a GuideNotes file now (see details above).

Consensus problem solving depends on all parties agreeing to seek a solution that benefits all parties. 'But' observed one participant, 'the real problem lies with those local authorities and national parks that were invited to come along, but declined to do so. Do we assume that some of them aren't keen to seek sustainable solutions?'

Better Guidance?

Two years ago LARA and some of its member organisations took part in local workshops as part of a process of reviewing Planning Policy Guidance 17, Sport & Recreation. PPG17 is a guidance note issued by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) to assist planning authorities in their preparation of statutory plan documents. Whilst PPG17 does recognise that motorsport should be planned for, it uses rather unhelpful language like 'noisy sports' and suggests that our activities might be accommodated down in the waste ground between the railway and motorway. In the real world, the guidance is not particularly realistic.

In 1996 the Department of the Environment (as it then was) commissioned research to be led by Professor Martin Elson, whose team has now published its report into PPG17 (and the other

PPGs as these affect sport) entitled *The Effectiveness of Planning Policy Guidance on Sport and Recreation* (September 1998, ISBN 1 85112 092 0, contact DETR Publications – 01709 891318 – £12 a copy).

The report recommends that every planning authority should provide for all sports by means of a criteria-based policy, and those criteria might include: available locations, alternative sites, impact of noise, visual intrusion of the activity, etc, impact of essential buildings, effect on existing sports facilities. On motorsport more specifically, Professor Elson recommends that strategic plans (structure plans) should have '*positively worded criteria-based policies... [to] ... establish the legitimacy of providing for motorsports...*' and '*Local authorities should also be encouraged to liaise with LARA where specific issues emerge over the use of land for motor sports. Codes of practice, which place emphasis on respect for the environment should be implemented. (Given the above approach the term 'noisy sports' could be removed from the guidance.)*

It is a central policy of LARA to have motor sport and recreation groups working with, not against, the planning processes – and to have planners working with, not against, motorsport. Professor Elson's recommendations to the Secretary of State are moderate, reasonable and beneficial; we hope Mr Prescott takes this advice on board.

Colemanballs? Shurely Shome Mishtake!

Many readers will have heard of the proposal to merge the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission. Meetings have been held around the country to allow public comment to be considered. As an organisation involved with use of the countryside, both by permission and by right, and a major contributor to rural economies out of season, LARA might have expected to be invited to these meetings, but this has not happened. David Coleman, Head of the Strategy Division at the Countryside Commission, was responsible for the list of invitees, and neither LARA nor any of our member groups were on it, until the very last minute, when he was persuaded that a place for us might be found.

David Coleman does not have a good record of taking the opinions of vehicle users into account. It is many years since he led the Commission team seeking a ban on motoring on the Ridgeway. Is it unreasonable to expect a better deal from our public servants?

Seasonal Greetings
from the
Editor and Staff
at LARA HQ
to all our volunteers,
members and
readers.

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Western Nonsense

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority clearly has available to it a range of options for managing access to the Park. But not for them the co-operative approach which seems to be working in the Lake District. Their latest draft Management Plan includes the following aim:

Recreational use of motor vehicles away from surfaced public roads to cease by the end of the plan period.

All LARA members will be discouraged by this, we are sure, especially after their offers to help with maintenance, repair, and management of minor roads in the Park.

Meanwhile, here is a quote from a recent president of the Ramblers Association, following a TV 'Walk':

When I was walking in the Brecon Beacons, the four-wheel-drive came up behind with the crew and the sandwiches.

- Janet Street-Porter, Live from London, 9.1.99
Double standards all round, says LARA.

Northern Nonsense

Northumberland has long been a place where recreational vehicle users and everyone else rub along OK. It's a big county, with few people, and the highway authority has long spent its limited resources on sensible things - not hounding trail riders unnecessarily.

One of the more enlightened incidents occurred about twenty years ago, when the unclassified road at Boulmer, on the coast, was suffering with trippers' cars blocking essential access to the coastguard station. A TRO was imposed on the end of the road by the station, prohibiting cars, but not motorcycles - these were not seen as any problem.

All was fine until recently, when the 'no cars' sign suddenly changed to a 'no motor vehicles' sign (i.e. including bikes in the ban) and big heaps of boulders were dumped on the road.

Local riders queried this with Northumberland County Council's chief highways engineer. The reply was three and a half months in coming (and it took a formal complaint to get it even that quick!). Guess what? The new TRO sign is '*...incorrect and will be replaced*'. No explanation, or apology, but a stark prediction: '*This section of unclassified road forms part of the [Sustrans] Coast and Castles Cycle Route and, I understand, it is likely that a further traffic restriction will be considered in the future.*'

About eight years ago, NCC's rights of way section approached the local TRF/LARA and asked if it might be agreed to close a length of coastal UCR along Druridge Bay, as part of a

reclamation and country park scheme. Vehicle users thought long and hard and, on the understanding that the county was not engaging in any progressive programme of closure, agreed to the proposals on balance.

Now it seems that Sustrans has only to click its fingers and the highways department rushes out to mis-sign, or impose extra restrictions on, minor highways that trail riders have quietly enjoyed for decades. Is this a reasonable use of National Lottery money, or the scarce resources of a cash-strapped council?

Watch out! Your favourite green lane (and, if a horse rider, your favourite bridleway, too) is this very moment being surveyed by Sustrans' acquisitive eye, and measured-up for a nice hard top-dressing ... and no evil motor vehicles, of course.

Black and White Message in Full Colour

The Auto-Cycle Union's newly published eight-page full-colour *Illustrated Environmental Guide* booklet turns a thousand worlds of text into colourful cartoon style pictures.

Three years ago the ACU took a lead by being Britain's first sport governing body to produce its own Environmental Code. The code has played a major role in safeguarding the future of many motorcycle sport sites. The new *Illustrated Environmental Guide* takes the ACU's environmental message a major step further by making it attractive to the many riders who would never read the full code document.

ACU Chief Executive Geoff Wilson explained 'Weekly we face threats to motorcycle sport created by environmental pressures. Just now we are dealing with Local Authority Planning Department questions about events ranging from a world level motocross event to one of the country's oldest and most famous Yorkshire trials. Believe me, neither style nor tradition will protect bike-sport if we don't follow the trends. The new *Illustrated Environmental Guide* carries a heavyweight message in a light-hearted manner'.

David Kersey, head of the ACU's Training and Development Department and Motor Sport Development Officer for LARA is responsible for making motorcycle sport fit into an increasingly environmental climate. David says 'This new Guide is fun to read and shows how to enjoy our sport while still being kind to the environment. We don't have a choice'.

Ron Weale - Chairman of the ACU Environmental Panel - knows from first hand experience in the Peak District National Park how fragile is motorcycle sport's hold on land. 'This colourful booklet puts a lot of words into eight

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pages of informative cartoon strip. Everyone who cares about bike-sport needs to read it'.

Geoff Wilson concluded 'Bike-sport has to stay ahead of environmental pressures. There aren't any second chances in this game. When even the Scott Trial – run for almost 90 years – and World Championship events are under threat, we can take no chances with any of our events. For the sake of the sport organisers and riders must follow this code ... please'.

The ACU Illustrated Environmental Code can be seen on the ACU's web-site on www.acu.org.uk

Leicester & Rutland Emergency Register

For some years, Leicestershire CC has kept a record of volunteers with capable vehicles, in readiness for local emergencies. Drivers of 4x4s have been particularly useful in floods, and deep snow, and after storms, to help clear the roads, deliver meals to pensioners, and generally keep life in the countryside going. New volunteers – with suitably equipped vehicles and relevant skills – are now being sought to ensure that the service can be maintained. Contact Mike Adcock of Leicestershire Emergency Planning Team for more details – 0116 265 6103, or out of hours – 6997.

Lost Roads in Powys

Mid Wales is a favourite area for green lane enthusiasts, and has been for many years. Some time ago evidence came to light that there were more roads than anyone in charge was admitting. Local research showed that the mileage figures didn't add up, although Powys CC asserted at the highest level that nothing in their road records was ever lost, stolen or strayed. Recently, though, the high-level official left, and they were persuaded to have another look – just in case.

As a result of their own recent researches, Powys has re-discovered around 50 miles of road which once was on the List of Streets but which went missing in the 1950s. Quite what is to be done with this newly revealed recreational resource, is under debate. Councillors want the lost roads to go back into limbo, and be 'reclassified just like RUPPs', but local users and LARA members are horrified. 'They have had 40 years to do their existing RUPPs and they say they still need another 20 or more to finish the job,' said a mature local rider. 'That means we will all be dead before the lost roads are properly available again for anyone'.

The Countryside Council for Wales, who helped fund the research, agrees with LARA, that these roads were lost from the List of Streets, and should go straight back there. 'Now that the

Ordnance Maps are showing unclassified roads clearly, this is a simple answer to a complex problem', says LARA, 'and this will be an ideal opportunity to explore the principles of our Lake District Hierarchy system in another area of real trail riding country'. Meanwhile, Powys CC has postponed the meeting at which these ideas were to be discussed. Why? Another member of staff has left.

Countryside Commission Revisit RoW

Even while their own world is being reorganised, officers of the Countryside Commission have been busy with proposals for upheaval elsewhere. '*Rights of Way in the 21st Century*' is a consultation paper setting the scene for new ideas, and remodelling some slightly second-hand ones. CoCo 21, as the new document has been nick-named, includes ten laudable objectives. The Action Plan which follows sets off in the same even handed tenor, but then, base notions creep in. Things will be better for all, it promises, except perhaps those naughty motorists. Extra resources are suggested for horse riders and cyclists, and for walkers – already promised more access to Open Country. LARA welcomes this, as it should reduce the need for others to use roads, but not at the expense of our own limited access away from tarmac.

The LARA response to these proposals has been agreed by our steering committee – anyone wishing to see our response, or contribute further to this process should contact their club representative. In order to help mould policy, we would also like to see any individual responses made by LARA members, and those from clubs within LARA.

CCP 543 is available from PO Box 124, Walgrave, Northampton NN6 9TL. Or, visit www.Countryside.gov.uk

New Title for Governing Body

The national governing body of motorsport, long known as the RACMSA, has now changed. This follows the transfer of the title 'RAC' as a trade name to an unrelated company. The formal extended title will still be The Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Limited.

Voluntary Restraint – Latest News

Recent wet weather has not helped anyone. Farmers, councils and users are all trying to find ways of easing the load on a sodden countryside. Or so you might think.

A couple of RUPPs on the South Downs have needed work for some time, and local volunteers from LARA clubs have been lining up, overalls on,

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spades in hands, to help out. They have also offered a period of Voluntary Restraint to allow the work to be done safely, and for disturbed ground to settle. West Sussex Council, also eager to get things moving, have a sorry tale to tell:

'It is now apparent that some landowners/tenants are not able to agree to a ban on all vehicles, therefore the Sussex Downs Conservation Board is not now in a position to tie in works in the RUPPs with the proposed period of Voluntary Restraint.'

Top Level Committee Reorganised

The Rights of Way Review Committee of the House of Commons brings together experts from the access business to advise government on possible changes to law and practice. The current chairman, MP Peter Pike, has overseen a shake-up in membership, and several of our colleagues in other groups have found themselves, er, regrouped. Not before time, organisations including the British Horse Society and British Driving Society have seats in their own right. Some umbrella groups still have a part to play, though - LARA continues to act on behalf of all its members, and is pleased to note the more active role offered to the Central Council for Physical Recreation, CCPR.

Many of those around the RoWRC table, concerned that one or two anti-access groups were seeking a voting position on this pro-access forum, were pleased that while membership of the committee continued to include organisations with a positive contribution to make, the antis were sidelined.

Latest news from this forum is a change in secretariat. Alan Seyers has now retired, to be replaced by Sue Toland, until recently a leading light in access matters at DETR Bristol.

Green Lane Day - New Plans

Green Lane Day 1999 will be March 28. All LARA volunteers are asked to arrange works on lanes in their own areas, to include cutting back over- and under-growth, clearing grips ditches and drains, removing obstructions, erecting official signs and way-marks, collecting litter, and in general putting something back into the countryside we enjoy. Liaison with highway authorities will be needed, and sometimes with landowners too.

To help in this nation-wide effort, a leaflet has been prepared with advice on the practicalities, organising the day, managing a bonfire, etc, in co-operation with Mike Dyer, recently appointed as Green Lane Day Co-ordinator. This is an entirely voluntary role, like many others in the LARA

network, and in motorsport generally. While he is not able to set your local scheme in motion, Mike can help where necessary, and bring volunteers and authorities into contact wherever there is an opportunity.

Contact Mike by e-mail -
doghouse@cix.compulink.co.uk -
or by telephone on 01276 473907.

Oh Dear, Oh Dear, or, Sad But True

From a county Rights of Way Strategy recently issued - the source is not identified here as we regret that they are not alone:

The removal of the backlog ...&... maintenance targets ...&... maintenance and inspection of bridges ...&... targets for public path orders ... are not achievable within existing resources.

Forums and Sites

Many LARA clubs have set up web sites where information about meeting places and activities is set out. Other sites are helpful in setting out policies and changes. Examples:

Auto-Cycle Union - www.acu.org.uk

Countryside Commission -

www.countryside.gov.uk

Recent legislation - www.hmso.gov.uk

Trail Riders Fellowship -

www.trail.freeserve.co.uk

In addition, many of LARA's rights of way enthusiasts subscribe to an e-mail forum where messages can be circulated and advice sought - there is no charge. To subscribe send an ordinary e-mail message with the text

subscribe RoW to -

MajorDomo@Land-Rover.Team.Net

The heading or title to the message is not significant. You will receive a message confirming your acceptance, and telling you how you can unsubscribe from the scheme.

The Pinochet Principle - How About RoW?

The House of Lords recently decided that it was not proper for a Judge who was a member of an interest group to take part in a decision in which that group had expressed its concern.

LARA members are looking forward to the application of this principle in matters relating to countryside access. Judgements on Rights of Way issues, whether about status or management, seem too often to be based on affiliations and wish-lists, rather than evidence. This should mean that any local authority Councillor who is a member of the NFU, or CLA, or CPRE, or RA, or LARA of course, should withdraw from all decisions relating in any way to access rights. The same principle should naturally apply to

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Countryside Commissioners and National Park
Authority Members. Why not, indeed?

And Finally

LARA News is produced by LARA members for
LARA members. We hope the content is of wider
interest, too. Circulation is free to all LARA clubs
through their own systems, and direct to
Individual Members, regional motorsport officers,
route liaison officers, and rights of way
respondents. In addition, it goes to highway
authorities, and a range of groups and individuals
who share our interest in countryside access. If
you know of others who might benefit from closer
contact with any or all of our extensive
membership, please let us know.