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### SUPPORTED BY



## THE MEN WHO PLANTED TREES



Ron Weale, former president of the ACU's Cheshire Centre (left), and Geoff Wilson, ACU chief executive and LARA deputy chairman (centre), hand over a cheque for £550 to Area Ranger Ian Hurst.

The Peak District National Park will be a little greener in years to come thanks to the generosity and hard graft of recreational motorists. Nearly 70 recreational drivers and riders have helped do the spadework to plant 600 native-species trees and erect protective fences. A total of almost £1,600 was collected by motorcyclists and 4x4 drivers from the Auto-Cycle Union, Green Lanes Association, Trail Riders Fellowship and LARA. The area to benefit is Roych Clough, near Hayfield, where unauthorised off-road users have caused bad erosion over the years.

National Park Area Ranger Ian Hurst said 'This project has shown how people can work together to look after the National Park.'

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## HIGHER PROFILE FOR OFF-ROAD SPORT AT THE INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE SHOW

Four of LARA's member organisations worked together at this year's International Motorcycle Show at the National Exhibitions Centre (4-14 November), to raise the profile of off-road sport. This prestigious show is organised by the Motor Cycle Industry's Exhibitions Department and is attended by nearly 200,000 visitors over its duration. Most of them are road riders many of whom would like to experience off-road riding, but are unsure where and how to start.

In order to address this the MCI created an off-road feature that was staffed by staff and members of the Amateur Motor Cycle Association, Auto-Cycle Union and British Schoolboy Motorcycle Association who, between them, provided information on all aspects of off-road sport and recreational riding. Examples of bikes from all the sports were displayed and as well as information on the individual member bodies there were plenty of copies of LARA and MFU publications available as well.

A fifth LARA member organisation, the British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF) had its own comprehensive display as usual, this year launching a new logo as well as signing-up members to assist in the campaign to get motorcycling properly catered for in councils' Transport Plans.

This is another case of LARA members working together for the sport's mutual benefit and it is hoped that the exercise will be repeated in future years.

# SCOTT TRIAL SAVED!

## LARA HELPS ACU CLUB AND YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK ACHIEVE A UNIQUE AGREEMENT

The **Scott Trial** is one of the best-loved events in the ACU's off-road calendar. The event is organised by the Richmond Club and takes place over some of the bleakest terrain imaginable within the Yorkshire Dales. It is a "long distance" trial and, as such, challenges not only the competitors' riding skills but also their stamina and navigation. This year's event was, as usual, a great success and a credit to all the riders, officials, sponsors and spectators involved. However, very few of them, if any, would have been aware of the threat to the existence of the trial that has taken LARA, the ACU, and the Club the best part of 18 months to resolve.

The problems that an event such as the Scott Trial poses an organiser are many and varied. The majority of these are negotiated through constant liaison with the many landowners and farmers who own the land over which the route of the event passes. Through such hard work the organisers have ensured the support and goodwill of the local community and, as a result, the Scott Trial is one of the most prestigious sporting events of any type in that particular part of Yorkshire.

However, not all such problems can be solved nowadays over a friendly pint in a local hostelry. In the summer of 1998 the club discovered that English Nature had declared a large tract of land, through which the event traditionally passes, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Once an SSSI has been declared the continuation of any future sporting use requires planning permission. In this case the planning authority is the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and the club contacted LARA immediately to request assistance with the drafting and submission of a planning application.

With the assistance of David Kersey (LARA Motor Sports Development Officer) the club arranged meetings with the National Park and English Nature. The club then mapped both the traditional route and, more importantly, the revised route that would miss the most sensitive areas of the SSSI. The club also submitted an *Event Management Plan*, as part of the application, which made provisions for the movement and parking of spectators as well as the participation of competitors themselves. Letters of support were forthcoming from local farmers and landowners, residents, and local businesses, with the parish councils particularly supportive.

The LARA-endorsed ACU *Environmental Code* was also acknowledged by the National Park, whilst the inclusion of the land within the *LARA Heritage Motor Sports Directory*, also proved beneficial in establishing the event's credentials. As a result of all this hard work, LARA is pleased to report that the Yorkshire Dales National Park has granted the Scott Trial planning permission for the next five years. Presuming the event continues to be run to the same

excellent standard that it has been run over the past 60 years or so, the renewal of the planning permission in 2004 should be a lot easier to achieve.



Dear Father Christmas... Caught in Yorkshire trials country back in the early 1980s, this works Honda is as 'classic' as the event it was entered in.

### SET-ASIDE UPDATE

Following a series of recent enquiries from both car and motorcycle clubs, regarding possible restrictions when holding events on set-aside land, the MFU has revised its *Guidance Note* on the matter. The *Guidance Note* explains how such land may and may not be used, and if you have not already received a copy please contact the MFU.

# TRAFFIC SUSPENSION ORDERS GO TO THE MINISTER

## LARA'S BLUEPRINT FOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT SHOWS PROMISE

**Traffic Suspension Orders (TSO)** is a concept developed by LARA to allow an effective, flexible and safe way of managing minor highways when these are used for legitimate motorsport and cycle sport events. We are not concerned here with the concept of 'closed roads' for motor rallies, motorcycle races, or bicycle road races. Where there is a proven local need, then the temporary closure of ordinary motor roads can be effected by local Act of Parliament, as has been done so successfully for the Jim Clark and Isle of Mull rallies. The pressing need is to find a way of balancing and managing public access to minor ways like footpaths and bridleways when these are also used, quite lawfully, for motor sport events such as car rallies, hill climbs and some enduros. As the law stands even an authorised motor sport event must share the tracks with ramblers and riders, and marshals have no power to impose even a basic safety code on the public. A very few events enjoy the benefit of having a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to exclude the public, but TROs can only be enforced by uniformed police officers and traffic wardens, require special signing, are cumbersome to make, and do not stop most provisions of the Road Traffic Act applying to the paths anyway.

A variety of solutions were considered and rejected as too complicated or impractical. Then a small team led by Ian Davis, the Motor Sport Association's officer in charge of rally authorisation, came up with what we think is a delightfully simple and fair solution: the *Traffic Suspension Order* (TSO). The concept is simple. Whereas a Traffic Regulation Order does not affect the existence of a highway, but merely regulates who may use it, a TSO will actually suspend the existence of a highway for an agreed short period. This brings with it the ability to manage the event for public and participant safety even better than at present.

Where the character of a motorsport event (or even just part) is such that safe management is difficult if the public and participants can mix, the organising club would be able to ask the highway authority to make a TSO for the duration of the event. There would be proper safeguards for our friends in the equestrian world: signage, alternative routes, etc., but when the TSO is in force (perhaps 08:00 to 16:00 on the day of the event) the public right of way temporarily ceases to exist. This means that the organisers can manage and marshal the site just as if it were private land, although we envisage that the public would be allowed as much access as possible

consistent with safety demands. As soon as the period of the TSO ends the public right of way 'snaps' back into being.

This proposal is also of tremendous benefit to bicycle racing - mountain biking and cyclo-cross have their own set of access law problems. The British Cycling Federation and the Cyclists Touring Club have given TSOs approval in principle and will be supporting the idea to Government. But there are other advantages in the scheme too. Husky dog racing - currently illegal on highways due to the unforeseen effect of an Act of Parliament in 1910 - would benefit, as might local authorities where TSOs would be more appropriate than TROs for temporary closures for repair or other works.

The TSO proposal paper has been fine-tuned by LARA and officers of the BCF and CTC. Now it is to be presented to Lord Gus MacDonald, the Minister responsible in Mr Prescott's Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions. LARA thinks that the TSO is a reasonable and eminently practical way of managing a balance of public and sporting access to the countryside. At a time when ramblers are to be granted additional access to thousands of square miles of land on a plate, TSOs will help the millions of motor sport enthusiasts to safeguard their relatively few events, and establish even better relationships with other countryside users.

### **DON'T PAY THAT VAT... ... UNLESS YOU HAVE TO**

MFU Regional Officer, **Colin Jebson**, reports that clubs may be paying some amounts of Value Added Tax unnecessarily. In an effort to reduce land hire costs to clubs, without lowering the income to the landowner, Colin has discovered that the letting of some land and buildings is exempt from VAT. This is especially relevant when a club is only using part of a large tract of land for an event.

Colin discovered this information in the booklet *Registration for VAT: VAT Notice 700/1*, section 1.3. Any such savings are to be welcomed, and clubs are advised to seek out the booklet via a local HMSO outlet.

# DURHAM SHOWS THE WAY IN BOAT MANAGEMENT



This is one of the ancient roads near Wolsingham, County Durham, set out in an inclosure award of some 200 years ago as a public carriage road. The owners of this hugely valuable shooting moor brought a new dimension to the public inquiry process when they sent for the best Queen's Counsel money could buy to oppose the confirmation of public rights. Local recreational motorists are highly impressed by County Durham's refusal to cave in under a barrage of false spin doctoring and press attacks.

In September Durham County Council's rights of way sub-committee looked at the management of Byways Open to All Traffic in the light of representations received earlier in the year regarding the impact of vehicular use of these highways. In reviewing the council's policies it was concluded "that new measures are required to ensure the protection of the environment and best practice". A list of five points were set out as a framework:

**Byways are an important recreational and cultural asset** and should be properly recorded for horse riders, cyclists and vehicle users, whether motorised or horse drawn.

**Use should be sustainable** and subject to environmental impact assessment.

**Consultation on BOAT definitive map modification orders** should be carried out concurrently with consultation on management issues.

**Durham County Council would co-operate** with user led voluntary restraint agreements.

**The council will establish a forum** for considering management issues.

These points were arrived at whilst having regard to the 'Improving Rights of Way' consultation document and recognising the impact of the European Union Habitats Directive. County Durham currently records 22 miles of BOATs and 51 miles of unclassified roads (of the 'green' variety), with more BOATs to be recorded in the face of powerful pressure from wealthy upland landowners. Council officers stated that there was no evidence of problems caused by motorised vehicles used for recreational driving. Durham recognises that success of any management scheme will be in the hands of the users. Could this be a model for other authorities?

## CONCERN AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Despite the responses to concerns that rights of way volunteer workers receive from the DETR, it would seem that we are not the only ones to perceive a problem with the quality of some Inspector's decision letters that flow from rights of way public inquiries. The *Rights of Way Review Committee* is also concerned. Fortunately, and by serendipitous conjunction, they were stung into action by one person who would not normally wish to be aligned with byway users [and who will remain nameless. Ed].

The Committee has drafted a letter to the Countryside Minister, Mr Michael Meacher, expressing concern over 'the lack of quality, consistency and transparency in the Planning Inspectorate's decisions where rights of way matters are being dealt with.' The Minister is asked to improve accountability and quality of decision letters insofar as how the evidence has been weighted. There is also a request that users should be acquainted with the training Inspectors receive – a point currently shrouded in mystery. By now Mr Meacher should be well aware of the frustrations felt by those working to improve the rights of way network. The hurdle is in sight, but will it be jumped?

# MOTORSPORT PRESS SNUBS ACCESS WORKSHOP

## LARA's 1999 WORKSHOP IS CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST

**LARA's annual workshop** for 1999 was designed as a briefing especially for the motor and motorcycle media, together with the growing band of commercial 'safari' outfits in the 4x4 and motorcycle tour business.

We put together a panel of speakers with a tremendous depth of knowledge of countryside access management and balancing the needs of conservation and the various types of activity that share land and rights of way. The idea was that each speaker would explain their working role, how motor sport and recreation is part of that job and the policy of their organisation. The audience of journalists, safari operators and manufacturers' 'press office' people would then be able to ask questions, conduct mini-interviews, and go away with a much better knowledge of long-standing and new access issues.

Our panel of experts included Audrey Brown, National Forest; Wendy Thompson, Countryside Agency; David Robinson, Lake District National Park Authority; Sue Maberley, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority; Sue Hogg, South Pennines Packhorse Trails Trust; Helen Slade, president of the Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers; and the three principal LARA officers.

But despite circulating every publication, commercial outfit and vehicle manufacturer we could identify, the take-up of places (there was no cover charge) was almost negligible. Of the specialist press only *Motor-*

*ing News* and *Land Rover Owner International* booked, together with KTM Motorcycles and a couple of site-based 4x4 training outfits. Faced with having more speakers than listeners LARA was forced to pull the plug and cancel a week before the event was scheduled to take place - 20th October at the *National Watersports Centre*, Nottingham.

LARA planning officer Alan Kind comments 'we have been told for some time that LARA still has some way to go to get the importance of environmental and access issues across to the specialist motoring media and the manufacturers. If you read the bookstall publications for sports like climbing, canoeing, walking, cycling and skiing, they all regard land use as an important matter and absolutely vital to the future of each sport. Yet the motoring media seems to either ignore or disregard crucial and current issues on which the long-term future of a lot of motor sport and recreation depends. I should have thought - hoped - that editors and safari organisers would have wanted to hear and question the land managers who have to deal with the reality of motor access every working week. This was a great opportunity wasted, but we'll keep working away quietly alongside those club members who appreciate how crucial land access really is.'

**LARA is always ready to help manufacturers, editors and commercial operators to understand the environment in which we operate.**

### IF ONLY IT WERE SO EASY...

Staff journo Rob McDonnell, writing in *Motor Cycle News* for 17th November 1999: 'Until recently I would have classed the Trail Riders' Fellowship (TRF) on my list [of irrational prejudices. Ed]... I had them down as dish-water-dull do-gooders who pandered to the whims of woolly-hatted hikers rather than red-blooded bikers... If the trails don't get used they get 'downgraded' which means no more bikes. This is where the TRF comes in. If you tell them what trails you have ridden, they tell the Department of Environment, which means the trail has to stay open to vehicles. And they do all this voluntarily. So I now say it loud and proud. I'm joining the TRF.'



### A BLAST FROM THE PAST!

Delegates to the recent NFBA training seminar at Halifax were delighted to see former TRF national rights of way officer **Brian Thompson** present to learn more about inclosure awards. A staff RoW officer for Northumberland County Council since the mid-1980s, Brian retains strong views about irresponsible press coverage of motorcycling.

## IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY!

The MFU is increasingly receiving pleas from clubs for advice and assistance in dealing with planning and environmental problems. We are happy to help whenever we can and are able to call on the expertise of LARA's specialist officers, as well as the local MFU regional officer, in order to prepare a case on the club's behalf. However, it is essential that we are given all the relevant details as soon as possible.

It is never too early to tell us that complaints about a venue have been made to a local authority. Increasingly, clubs are finding it far too hard to fend off such worries under the present local government climate, which sometimes sees authorities taking action against our sport whenever they receive a complaint. And local residents increasingly know exactly when and to whom they should complain.

The age of local negotiation and common sense agreements is becoming a distant memory in some places. Whereas clubs could once rely on their own public relations skills to ensure venues were retained, they increasingly find that the first thing they know about a problem is when a nasty brown official envelope drops through their letter box.

It is at this early stage that a club should contact LARA. Or, even better, it is advisable to inform LARA of any contact, from a local author-

ity department or officer, no matter how informal it may appear at the time. The more notice a club can give us, and the more information it can provide, then the better the chances will be of LARA putting together a good case.

In the same way that LARA advises clubs to ensure their venues are documented in the *Heritage Motor Sport Directory*, in order to provide evidence of long-term use, so we advise clubs to keep and collate *any* contact from a local authority (or any Government Agency) and to draw it to LARA's attention immediately.

**To be forewarned is to be forearmed!**

## NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD FEASIBILITY STUDY

Word has reached the MFU from Bernard Baker of the Eastern Motor Sport and Access Liaison Group, telling us that the local authority is to conduct a feasibility study into the future use of this airfield. The airfield is listed as a Grade 5 Venue in the LARA *Heritage Motor Sports Directory* and, like many such venues, is an important one for grass roots motor sport. In the past it has been used for karting, motocross and drag racing, and is currently regularly used for car sprints. The MFU will be writing to the local authority in order to advocate the continued use of this valuable site for our sport.

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## BEWARE 'COLLATERAL DAMAGE', LARA WARNS GOVERNMENT

Clubs fear that competition motorcyclists could get caught up in proposed legislative changes intended to target 'cowboy' motorcyclists unlawfully using footpaths and bridleways.

The proposal causing concern is that the offence of driving on a footpath, bridleway or open land 'without lawful authority' should in future be capable of being committed with a 'mechanically propelled vehicle' rather than a 'motor vehicle'. This change may sweep up not just the noisy idiot fringe, but also, unwittingly, properly organised and insured young trials competitors.

LARA's MRDO, Tim Stevens, tabled this concern to Michael Meacher, the Countryside Minister. We now must wait to see what finally emerges in the Countryside Bill, currently scheduled for publication in February 2000.



The activities of 'cowboys' (here on a public bridleway) continue to blight the reputation of organised motorcycle sport, while upsetting landowners and other countryside users.

# NO MINISTER!

## ACCESS ORGANISATIONS MEET MICHAEL MEACHER TO EXPRESS GRAVE CONCERNS ABOUT GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO 'CAP' THE DEFINITIVE MAP

MINISTER HEARS THAT HISTORY MAY LABEL HIM AS THE 'DOCTOR BEECHING' OF ANCIENT HIGHWAYS.

LARA recently accepted an invitation to be part of a group meeting Mr Michael Meacher, the Countryside Minister, to reinforce certain key issues in the Government's proposed changes to access legislation, and the responses from the various organisations. This group, co-ordinated under the auspices of the National Federation of Bridleway Associations, was made up from people who work in, and actually understand, how the definitive map processes work - where they don't work - and why not. The core message was simple: to 'cap' the definitive map is a negative and cynical act that will choke the administrative machine, arbitrarily remove public property rights, and throw a massive workload on to a few already overburdened volunteers.

Mr Meacher and his 'number two' Chris Mullin MP, listened and questioned for 45 minutes, received further written submissions from each group member, and promised to give these matters further serious consideration. More details of LARA's submissions available on request from Tim Stevens, LARA's MRDO.

### IS GOVERNMENT POLICY DRIVEN BY LANDOWNER PRESSURE GROUPS?

**Tony Blair:** (*Daily Telegraph* Sept. 20) 'Our proposals on rights of way are the best opportunity in recent years to establish a network that meets the modern needs of recreation while taking account of land management and environmental concerns. That's a big claim but, then, they are not my words. They are the words and the view of the Country Landowners' Association'.

**Country Landowners' Association:** 'The Government's proposals offer the best opportunity in recent years to establish a rights of way network which meets the modern needs of recreation while taking full account of land management and environmental concerns,' added Dr Woods. (Press release 15 July 1999)

**Michael Meacher, Countryside Minister:** (March 8) 'We want to strengthen and develop the rights of way network to enable it to respond to the changing requirements of recreational use and



from left: Colin Palmer (CTC), Catriona Cook (BHS), Tim Stevens (LARA) and John Andrews (RA-Suffolk), talk access in the palatial Eland House office of the Department of Environment, Transport & the Regions.

the needs of land managers... There is no question of failing to secure the proper recording and maintenance of rights of way, or of reducing the overall value of the rights of way network.'

**Country Landowners' Association:** (Pg. 2 para 1) '...the process of modernising the network to recreational, environmental and land management needs... the desirability, while respecting the historical value of the network, of meeting the modern demands of recreation and land management.'

**DETR Spokesperson:** (*Keighley News* Sept. 3) '... the time limit imposed is upon the claims procedure is to remove the element of uncertainty for the land owners and to remove the problem of rights of way being reopened on the strength of tenuous, historical and therefore outdated reasons.'

# TRAGEDY TWICE OVER



**Steve Betram**, a volunteer officer of the Northumbria Group of the Trail Riders' Fellowship, suffered fatal injuries when trail riding in the Isle of Man on 20th November. Steve, 39, and his companions were riding the Slieau Dhoo track, near Ballaugh, when he was thrown from his machine. The proprietor of 'KZ Bitz', a busy Newcastle parts shop, Steve was accompanied on his last journey (picture above) by a cavalcade of motorcyclists in a dignified display of sorrow and support for his family.

**Geoff Brookes**, LARA's local respondent for Hereford and Worcester for many years, died suddenly from natural causes at the end of November. Geoff lived and worked quietly in the Herefordshire village of Orleton, pursuing cases of his own interest, and also acting as a consultant for other people.

Never one to court the limelight, Geoff nevertheless achieved a great deal on behalf of the public, doggedly resisting the worst excesses of local county councils over many years. A member of the TRF, Geoff's knowledge and efforts were appreciated by volunteers from across the range of user organisations.

We have lost a respected and well-liked colleague.

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## 'COUNTRYSIDE CONSENSUS' PAPERS ISSUED

The post-conference papers from LARA's 1998 workshop on 'Countryside Consensus' have been issued as Appendix XII to '**Motorsport and the Planning Process: Best Practice GuideNotes for Event Organisers & Planning Professionals**'. Everyone who received a set of *GuideNotes* directly from LARA, or through either the AMCA or NASA offices, should by now have received Appendix XII directly. But we still have a pile of 'spare copies' in the LARA office, so there's some of you out there with the black *GuideNotes* ring-binder who have yet to receive this latest issue.

If you got your *GuideNotes* binder direct through the AMCA or NASA please contact that organisation for Appendix XII. Otherwise please contact Mary Stevens at the main LARA office in Market Drayton: PO Box 20, Market Drayton, Salop TF9 1WR

Full sets of *GuideNotes* are still available at £25, or the £10 special rate for members of LARA organisations.

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## AND FINALLY...

As motorsport and recreation gets ready to leap from its first millenium into its second... Oh, all right, from its first century... everyone in the LARA team - the LARA Steering Committee and Officers, thank you for your continuing support in making LARA **PART OF THE SOLUTION**.

A very happy Christmas, a prosperous New Year, and a new century and millenium with plenty of access to land, that perfect, dab-free trials section, and a twenty mile byway rolling out in front of you...

Wassail! Be of good cheer!