

# Illegal Use of Public Rights of Way and Green Spaces with Public Access by Mechanically Propelled Vehicles: Final Report, September 2007.

defra issues a report that might have further consequences for off-tarmac motoring.

The post-NERCA 2006 impact on 'off road' competition and recreational motoring continues with the publication on 11 March 2008 of this 160-page report researched and drafted for defra and the Countryside Council for Wales by Faber Maunsell.

It is easy to say that there is nothing new in this comprehensive set of research findings – and that is largely true – but this is the first time that it has been set down and referenced in such detail. It might be wrong in places, but it will be up to anyone who thinks that it is wrong to demonstrate where and how: for example, the definition of 'off-road trail riding' will raise some hackles.



The report is not a direct attack on legal trail riding and driving, nor upon authorised events, and it finds that the impact of illegal motoring bites on less than 5% of the public rights of way network, and that 'more serious problems are localised.' Certainly, the report does not reflect any picture of the widespread 'blight' resulting from off-tarmac motoring that organisations like GLEAM and CPRE say exists. Problems arise from noise and tyre impact on the ground, and a relative few vehicles can, in places, have a disproportionately high negative effect: *"the effects of illegal MPV use were significant, particularly at a local level."*

As regards 'remedies', the report is rather disappointing. In setting out 'stick' and 'carrot' approaches it is rather bland – verging on the superficial in places – and dismisses the provision of 'trail parks' with, *"provision of facilities/opportunities for legal motor use is challenging and not without pitfalls in terms of finding, funding and operating a site."* Well, yes – but it can be done and is being done in more places than before.

The summary of 'Recommendations for action by defra and CCW' comes down to just four heads:

- Whether further 'advice' should be issued.
- That defra/CCW should look for suitable cases to secure prosecutions for damage to Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- That defra/CCW should 'explore', with DfT and the motorcycle industry, ways of lowering exhaust noise emissions.
- [And this one should worry law-abiding competition motorcyclists the most] That defra and CCW should 'evaluate' with DfT, DVLA and the Home Office, the viability of some form of "record or registration for MPVs which are not to be registered for on-road use." The 'Stringer Bill' may yet rise from the ashes?

STOP PRESS! defra has confirmed to LARA that this report cost the taxpayer £138,625. Money well spent?

Download the report at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/public/illegaluse-finalreport.pdf>

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