Two of several organisations offering reasons for and against Green Lanes.

GLEAM

Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement

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An opportunity to end use of green lanes by recreational motor vehicles.

The Government has issued a public consultation on its response to the Glover Landscapes Review. The consultation document includes questions that give respondents the opportunity to call for the prohibition of the use of green lanes by recreational motor vehicles. We urge you to respond. This chance won't come again. You will find the online consultation at https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/.

The background. The Government recognises the vital role of nature for the nation's wellbeing. Since the pandemic, this has become even more obvious. Equally, the Government acknowledges the urgent need to reduce our dependence on motor vehicles. Green lanes - the thousands of miles of ancient, unsealed tracks that criss-cross the English countryside - are much more than just access routes: they are a historic, precious part of the rural landscape. Some green lanes are ancient drovers' roads or cart tracks. Others are older, dating back to Roman, or even prehistoric times. They have survived for hundreds of years as precious features of the rural heritage. They need protection.

The impact of recreational motor vehicles on green lanes. Recreational motors – chiefly motorbikes and 4x4s – are noisy, intrusive, polluting, and sometimes dangerous. They destroy the fabric of green lanes, often reducing them to rutted quagmires. Beautiful, tranquil places have been made ugly. Recreational motor vehicles damage not just the tracks themselves, but the amenity and enjoyment of other users – farmers, disabled people, walkers, cyclists, equestrians. The lives of those who live alongside green lanes, or who need them for essential access, are made difficult. The health of the natural environments of which the lanes form an important part is degraded.

The need for legislation. The Government has recognised that protecting green lanes has become a pressing issue. It has devoted part of the consultation on its Glover Landscapes Review response to a series of questions on the future use of green lanes – questions 14 to 17. Please take part in the consultation and use your answers to these questions to call for an end to the use of recreational motor vehicles on green lanes.

GLEAM campaigns to protect green lanes from the danger, difficulty and inconvenience caused by recreational motor vehicles. It is calling for such vehicles to be prohibited everywhere, leaving the lanes open only to motor vehicles with a legitimate need for access.

Green Lane Association
www.glass-uk.org

Dear all,

There are many inaccurate representations proliferating about what green laning actually is. This brief document is designed to offer some balanced information about a countryside access hobby enjoyed by thousands.

The Green Lane Association is a national organisation founded in 1995. We are dedicated to protecting our heritage of multi-user rights of way and access for all without prejudice to method of travel.

We are aware that other organisations exist not for the benefit of the public at large or to contribute anything to countryside users, but solely to remove public rights and reduce an already dwindling network from those who already have the least.

Members of the Green Lane Association see themselves as custodians of the network they use:

- Their membership fees are ploughed directly back into protecting and preserving our nation's precious network of unsurfaced public roads for all to enjoy.
- Their time and energy is donated to physically assisting with projects they fund from their own pockets that benefit every member of the public who comes after them.
- Their voices champion responsible use and respect for the countryside they cherish and enjoy.
- Their skills learned driving off tarmac, and often their own vehicles, are used to voluntarily assist

  response services and aid other users in need of vital help and support.

- Their time is spent assisting the police to tackle illegal and irresponsible use of green lanes.

  A significant number of our members could not access our beautiful countryside without the use of a vehicle. Discrimination towards any form of disability or protected characteristic is illegal in the UK. Here at The Green Lane Association, we believe that access to the countryside should be for all, without prejudice to age, health, gender, physical, sensory, mental, cognitive, developmental, or intellectual challenges.

While our members act directly to improve the network we use, or rely on it to access green spaces, we watch anti-access organisations campaign with public money to attack that work and reduce rights. This money has been used to fund court action that has failed on numerous occasions to agree with the anti- access rhetoric presented, yet campaigners continue to make further attempts to push exactly the same worn-out arguments at additional cost to the public purse when authorities are forced to defend these egregious legal actions.

This money could be far more proactively spent on the rights of way these campaigners profess to protect. With authority budgets stretched to breaking point nationwide and public rights of way falling into disrepair, the money spent on attempts to reduce a network that is already at risk could be used for the benefit of all instead of to the detriment of the few.

The repercussions of these campaigns are causing clash points to inflame, often to dangerous and costly levels. The misguided belief that motorised users cause harm has led people who believe the untruths to illegally block, lay spikes and other objects intended to cause damage/harm, and physically destroy rights of way to prevent access, this then has to be remedied using public funds, although GLASS often assist where possible. In other cases, verbal and physical threats and assaults have been reported by legal responsible motorised users simply wishing to enjoy the countryside.

Our concerns are that:

i) National anti-access organisations are promoting misinformation to the public at large which leads to added pressure on the network and those who use or manage it,

2. ii) These organisations are using a platform of blatant bias and untruth in an attempt to guide the hand of the public, seeking to reduce access rights nationwide. They are doing so with unaccounted, donated money gathered on the back of this misinformation,
3. iii) These organisations focus the sum total of their activities on reducing public rights while failing to inform the same public of matters that are inarguably pertinent to the activities of those interested parties. They give nothing of benefit to the network or the public, nor do they provide education or value to anyone, they simply seek to take.
4. iv) Closure is not management! Reducing the network has historically proven to cause more problems than it solves. Forcing the same number of users onto a far smaller network simply increases overall traffic and the associated maintenance requirements and clash points, while reducing enjoyment of all. Any further reductions will simply make it appear that all the concerns mentioned in the anti-access rhetoric have increased, but in reality, actions to reduce the network will cause increased problems.

Green lanes with legally defined vehicle rights make up only 3% of the UK's rights of way network. Users only equate to tens of thousands of people, some of whom are the most vulnerable in our community or face additional challenges to countryside access. Conversely, those trying to remove public rights in their entirety visit National Parks in their millions every year, receive more funding to repair the network they frequent than any other

user type, and have access to 100% of rights of way in the UK. But it seems this is not enough for the militant anti-access groups among them, they now want that 100% to themselves.

“Damage” is a common stick used to beat motorised users with, but this viewpoint makes no consideration for the fact that all users inevitably cause maintenance requirements, or the failure of some local authorities to carry out their legal duty to protect and maintain public highways and to assert public rights to use those ways. This is a matter our organisation is heavily and continuously active in addressing at a financial cost to our members and a saving to local authorities.

Millions of car journeys carry pedestrians across the UK to use footpaths, descending on local communities in numbers that outweigh the national total of green laners by tens of thousands to one. Significant money has been spent to manage that impact, including large swathes of tarmac laid at cost to the public for walkers to park on.

These projects permanently change the landscape in the most beautiful, sensitive, and cherished areas of the UK while simultaneously costing the public more money. It is entirely wrong to allege that “green laners” are guilty of such impact and devastation when evidence exists that far greater and more costly repair work is ongoing on routes, and within the natural environment that are not accessible to or impacted by vehicles.

As an organisation that works for the benefit of all user types, we have a unique perspective of viewing public access from all sides.

We fully support proportionate access and use of legislation to manage the public network, but we cannot sit back and watch the proliferation of misinformation that is aimed at taking money from the public to reduce their rights and further a niche political agenda, particularly when public money should be used for the benefit of all and the land that we share.

The Green Lane Association

www.glass-uk.org

Useful links: https://glass-uk.org/accessibility.html https://glass-uk.org/other-info/smile-and-wave.html

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