

Off-Roading 4 x 4 Vehicles and Trail Bikes

by Andrew Tait

Many of you may know that there has been much controversy recently around off-roading from 4 x 4 vehicles and trail bikes in the Little Langdale and High Tilberthwaite area. Friends of the Lake District believes that there is a very strong case for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) being applied preventing motorised vehicles (other than those involved in essential land management activities) from using the tracks.

Through the Autumn period the routes have closed for re-surfacing and on a recent walk I very much felt the peace and tranquillity that had returned (albeit temporarily) to one of the most intricate landscapes within the Lake District. As a result of the repairs the tracks are much smoother and it's interesting to ponder whether this will discourage off-roaders because the routes are now much less adventurous,

or whether they will revert, through time and use to a more challenging state.

A TRO can be used to restrict the use of such tracks and a number of them have already been employed to restrict off-road use temporarily or more permanently in the Yorkshire Dales and Peak District National Parks. There needs to be some justification for a permanent order but this can be based upon safety considerations, preserving the character of the road or for the purpose of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty of an area. TROs can restrict all or certain specified types of users. They can restrict use to certain times or certain seasons or even ban use altogether in areas where there is a serious problem.

The process can be long winded and a National Park Authority must carry out

publicity and consultation and people can make representations as part of the process. The process can result in public inquiries being held so it is important that the authority follows the correct procedures.

We do however believe that whilst a permanent TRO can be a time consuming exercise it is perfectly feasible to justify a TRO for the purposes of conserving or enhancing natural beauty; it is, after all, about doing the right thing for the natural beauty and tranquillity of the National Park.

Our attention was drawn to the issues at Little Langdale and High Tilberthwaite area by a local campaign group calling for a TRO to protect this area. You'll find more information about this issue and the 'Save Langdale Green Lanes' campaign group at their website: www.savethelakedistrict.com