



Colton Parish Council

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16th June 2008

The Chairman
Cumbria Highways Authority
c/o Cumbria County Council
The Courts
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA3 8NA

Dear Sir or Madam

Condition of Unclassified Country Roads in Colton Parish, South Lakes

I am writing to you on behalf of Colton Parish Council. I understand that the Highways Authority is responsible for the maintenance of Unclassified Country Roads (UCRs) in Cumbria (if I am incorrect, then please forward this letter to the appropriate person). We have eight such roads in our parish, most of which are in serious need of attention. The condition of one of these is so bad that local farmers cannot use it to access their stock and, instead, have to take long and expensive detours. Farmers are being severely hampered in their ability to grind out a living from this marginal hill land and this is one more unwelcome pressure that they face in these most difficult of times. The condition of two more UCRs is deteriorating and we would confidently predict that if nothing is done, these too will become impassable within months, rather than years. The others are not far behind.

In our opinion, the indisputable cause of the deterioration is the use of these roads by recreational motorised vehicles, and especially trail-bikes. It has been said that farmers themselves are responsible for some of the damage; we would categorically dispute this as (a) residents observe farmers driving with care and consideration, (b) comparable tracks which are not UCRs, but which only farmers use, are not damaged, and c) off-road drivers, particularly trail-bike riders, are frequently reported as behaving in an unsociable and dangerous manner: driving too fast, skidding to a halt at gates, roaring off at high speed, wheels spinning, carving open the top surface of the road, eroding it down to base-rock in places with crags of two-ft high or more (pictures attached).

In addition, the terrible condition of the UCRs is encouraging vehicles off the track, where they are doing lasting damage to moorland and farmland. Once off-track, they seem to be tempted to use the surrounding area for 'playing' and there are now significant areas of severely damaged habitat in places, for example on Bethacar Moor above High Nibthwaite (pictures attached).

The situation is now so bad that **something has to be done**. If the Highways Authority does not have funds to effect lasting repairs to UCRs, sufficient to allow responsible, non-damaging use of these tracks, then the cause of their deterioration has to be removed. We suggest that this means imposing Traffic Restriction Orders so that recreational vehicles no longer have access, until such time as money is found to carry out proper repairs.

In the attached Annex are a number of photographs which have been taken over the last few months and years. They show examples of the appalling state of repair of some roads, the damage being done to adjacent land, flooding due to the erosion and subsequent loss of road

materials, and some destruction of road-side notices and infrastructure. We would be grateful if you would look at them carefully; they contain important information.

I am happy to show you, or your colleagues, instances of the situations described above. However, you should come prepared to walk. It will not be possible to visit some of these places by motorised vehicle.

Meanwhile, we look forward to a response to this letter at the earliest opportunity.

Yours faithfully,

Colin Barr
(Chair, Colton Parish Council)

cc Mr Tim Farron, MP
Cumbria County Council Countryside Access team
Lake District Local Access Forum
Lake District National Park Authority
National Farmers Union, Ulverston Office
Natural England, Kendal
Cumbria Constabulary, Ulverston
Mr Tony Hill, Local LDNPA Warden
Mr Bobbie Dobson, Chair Bethacar Moor ESA Association
Mr John Atkinson, Nibthwaite Grange Farm
Mr Brian Jackson, Oxen Park Farm
Mr John Milburn, Stock Farm