

Motor Sport & Recreation and Climate Change:

Trying to See into the Future.

On 30 January 2008 the *Countryside Recreation Network* (CRN) hosted a seminar in Birmingham titled, "Preparing for Climate Change in the Outdoor Recreation Sector." CRN is the unofficial professional body, and principal professional forum, for countryside recreation managers. LARA went along to take part.

The speakers for the day were:

- Mark Broadmeadow, Forestry Commission.
- William Crookshank, Environment Agency.
- John Atkinson, National Trust, Lake District.
- Richard Gunton, North York Moors NPA.
- Georgina Coombes, Futera.

A lot of the day's proceedings looked at the effect of climate change on species – trees, low growth, birds, and – not least – pests and disease. Mixed in were small warning bells on issues that may – some will – bite on outdoor sport and recreation:

Coastal inundation and resulting costs. This is happening now. People's lives are actually threatened. Major roads will have to be moved. Rights of way will have to be remodelled radically over quite large areas. It is not the actual local impact of this that will affect general land use, but rather the measures taken by government to arrest the rate of global warming, which is responsible for the local inundation.

'Severe weather events'. These are happening now, more frequently, and in greater numbers. Richard Gunton gave the example of flash flooding in Pickering in 2005, and the damage to footbridges and other infrastructure. The repair costs from this one 'half day event' are eating much of his budget for some six years. The clear outcome of these weather events will be a loss of budget in other, 'normal' areas of work, and a hardening of attitude to non-emergency issues that eat the budget.

Education and ethos. All governmental bodies and agencies are going to start developing and applying policies that are 'climate change compatible' (our phrase). For example, Mark Broadmeadow from the Forestry Commission said that all FC's policies and decisions will be taken with a view to national government policies on climate change.

Shift in recreational patterns. There was a strong feeling across the seminar that there will be a shift in behaviour in that more people will holiday at home more often (e.g. one flight abroad per year instead of three) and recreation at home will have to be facilitated closer to centres of population – the constant pull of people into the remote areas has to be reined back.

Absence of joined-up thinking. This was also evident right across the seminar. Attendees thought that central government is currently lagging badly in implementing real measures, but that this would come (probably via the Climate Change Bill – see below) and that then the various local government organisations, and governmental agencies, will get much greater powers, duties and burdens to put national policy into local practice – which they will mostly do enthusiastically as regards countryside use and management.

The Climate Change Bill.

This Bill is in progress in the House of Lords – usually an indicator that it is not particularly contentious, but demands a lot of time in committee to develop it. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 followed this route. It is very much a Bill to set out targets and a long-term framework for attaining these. Its preamble is:

A Bill to: Set a target for the year 2050 for the reduction of targeted greenhouse gas emissions; to provide for a system of carbon budgeting; to establish a Committee on Climate Change; to confer powers to establish trading schemes for the purpose of limiting greenhouse gas emissions or encouraging activities that reduce such emissions or remove greenhouse gas from the atmosphere; to make provision about adaptation to climate change; to confer powers to make schemes for providing financial incentives to produce less domestic waste and to recycle more of what

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is produced; to amend the provisions of the Energy Act 2004 about renewable transport fuel obligations; to make other provision about climate change; and for connected purposes.

One particular provision stands out as ringing alarm bells for sporting and recreational motoring (including on-tarmac):

*49 Programme for adaptation to climate change
It is the duty of the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament from time to time a programme setting out —
the objectives of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in relation to adaptation to climate change,
the Government's proposals and policies for meeting those objectives, and
the time-scales for introducing those proposals and policies, addressing the risks identified in the most recent report under section 48.
The objectives, proposals and policies must be such as to contribute to sustainable development.
[our emphasis].*

How will government policy on climate change be brought into effect? Three obvious avenues are:

- Taxation.
- Transport.
- Planning & infrastructure.

There is already change in these areas – from micro level (phasing out traditional light bulbs) to national level (a new generation of nuclear power stations). ‘Planning’ will be a major area of impact – changing housing design (insulation, water use, etc.) and land use (stopping the development of urban gardens) – and in the future proposed changes of use of land will very probably have to have a ‘climate change audit’ as an assessment of each proposal’s ‘sustainability’. The bottom line of this is that it will be difficult to make out a case for many motor sport events, not specifically because the competitors use petrol engines, but because the ‘whole event carbon footprint’, out in the countryside, does not meet criteria.

During one of the workshops, an attendee from Ireland – a national park officer – told how some sports, including his own of fell running, had implemented internal policies to encourage car sharing to get to remote events. Is this a pointer for motor sport?

What can motor sport and recreation do now?

The first step has to be taking on board that ‘climate change’ and governmental responses to it are not ‘maybe, and in the future’, but ‘definitely, and here and now’. Many people in motor sport express doubts as to the causal link between man’s activities and the manifestations of climate change. They have every right so to do, but the UK government – from top to bottom – is accepting the ‘very probable’ cause and effect scenario advocated by leading scientists and is going to change the way we live and are governed accordingly.

All sport organisations need to consider not just the emissions of competition vehicles themselves, but the ‘whole event footprint’, including ‘transporter and spectator carbon miles’. How to achieve this? Principal elements are:

- Closeness of venues to population centres (particularly for spectator events).
- Availability of public/mass transport for spectators.
- A shift back to smaller and more economical transporters.
- Transporter/car sharing policies.

Recreational organisations need to consider more the ‘recreational vehicle whole life carbon footprint’, plus the ‘immediate use footprint’. A very good case might be made for saying that a 30-year-old SII Landrover, looked after, and not used a great deal, is one of the most environmentally sound motor vehicles of all – but are there figures to show this? Given the loss of routes in some areas post-NERCA, do recreational organisations need to implement policies so that members take fewer ‘distant trips, but stay over longer when they do, spending more into the local economy’?

Whatever, motor sport and recreation is in the early stages of adapting to the ‘climate change era’ in planning, transport and land use policies. Should organisations simply wait and continue as-is, to see how things firm up, or should every organisation make and implement a ‘**Climate Change Plan**’, stating that this will inevitably mature and evolve as time progresses? Can the organisations carry the ‘ordinary clubman’ along, or will the grass roots response be ‘yet more restriction – I am just going to carry on until I am forcibly stopped’?

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