

# The 2014 Deregulation Bill: Briefing for Parliament on Motor Sport and Recreation on Unsealed Public Roads and Byways.

## The Motoring Organisations' Land Access and Recreation Association (LARA).

### The Heritage of Unsealed Public Roads.

Driving cars and motor cycles on unsealed public roads and byways open to all traffic (BOATs) is a legitimate and long-established leisure activity that is part of Britain's industrial and social heritage. At the start of the motoring era all roads other than in-and-around towns were unsealed. Before the Great War pioneer motorists were exploring the roads, when simply completing a drive without a breakdown was an achievement in itself. By the 1930s people were touring by car and motor cycle, and already seeking out the minor roads that had so far escaped the tar-sprayers' attentions. Even in the early 1960s a lot of public roads remained unsealed, and people still drove on them, often in ordinary cars straight from the showroom.

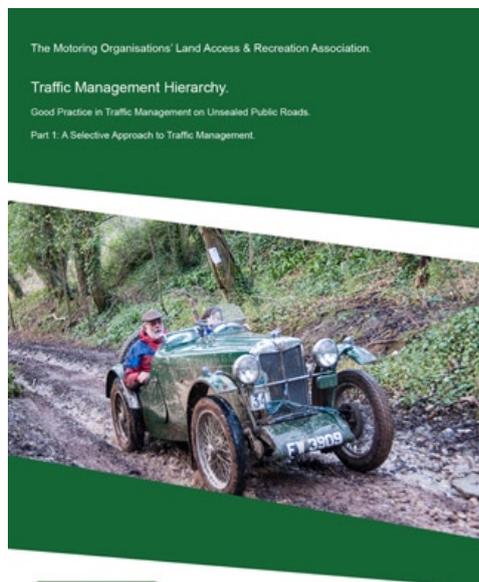
In 2014 unsealed public roads are still an important recreational facility for activities such as vintage car trials and motor cycle touring. In England and Wales the useful network of unsealed roads open to drivers is less than 6,000 miles, compared with the over 115,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways. These roads provide a unique social facility for the public, and engage young people in organised and responsible activities.

### Economic Benefits.

Drivers using unsealed public roads and byways make a significant and direct financial contribution to the communities in the places they visit, staying in local B&B accommodation, eating and drinking in pubs and restaurants, and often returning later with family and friends for extended holidays in the areas they have discovered whilst exploring the highways by car or motor cycle. An example of this 'spend' is on the next page.

### Benefits of Motor Use.

The responsible use of unsealed public roads and byways by motor vehicles helps to keep those routes open for use by others such as horse riders, cyclists, and walkers. There is significant evidence that many *restricted byways*, which were easily passable by non-motor traffic prior to 2006, are now grown-in and impassable since recreational motor traffic on them was stopped by legislative change (CRoWA 2000 & NERCA 2006).



The cost burden on highway authorities of the maintenance necessary to keep unsealed public roads and byways open for motorised use has often been significantly exaggerated. User organisations, with voluntary labour, can carry out effective repairs and maintenance at minimal cost to the taxpayer.

### What We Ask of Parliament.

Amendments now proposed to the Deregulation Bill 2014, to close the remaining unsealed public roads and byways to motorists, would unfairly destroy a pastime enjoyed for decades by thousands of ordinary people, and will in places have unintended adverse consequences for house-holders and others. The better and safer way is to allow the Minister for Rural Affairs to investigate (as he has indicated that he will) what are the issues to be tackled, and for him to then task the *Stakeholder Working Group* to investigate objectively, seek an evidence-based consensus approach, and report back quickly. LARA and its members will engage fully with this process, because solving problems that do occur is in our interests too. We respectfully ask Parliamentarians not to amend the Deregulation Bill, but to ask the Minister to take the matter forward on an inclusive and consensus basis.

### What is LARA?

LARA is a national forum and umbrella group for the leading national and regional organisations in motor sport and recreation. Formed in 1986 on the advice of the Sports Council following their report *Providing for Motorsports*, the individual membership of LARA's member organisations is in excess of 600,000 people, across a wide range of disciplines. LARA engages with national and local government, land managers, conservation groups, and other recreational interests, because motoring in the countryside is seen by some people as inherently and inevitably noisy, and a nuisance to be stopped. LARA is under no illusions and accepts that there are problems caused by drivers, and by recent extreme weather, but our experience over many years shows that these issues tend to happen in pockets, and are amenable to local and problem-specific regulation.

LARA: *Part of the Solution*. Email: [admin@laragb.org](mailto:admin@laragb.org)

Jonathan Laver, President of *The Motor Cycling Club* (MCC), which has run long-distance trials for over 110 years:

“The real financial impact upon the local community of an MCC event is felt when we cancel. In recent years we have had to cancel events on three separate occasions, twice due to Foot and Mouth Disease, and once when Dartmoor was snowed-up. Local communities and hotels had a really hard time since they rely on The MCC to bring in revenue at a quiet time of the year.

“Over our long history of visiting wild locations in the countryside the MCC has always worked with all the local communities. We rarely get the opportunity to tell other people about it, because we have never found the need.”

*The Motor Cycling Club* estimates the value to the local economy of its three principal events each year. Based on estimated petrol, food and accommodation spend in the area where each trial is situated, for 2012:

Exeter Trial:	£54,000.
Lands End Trial:	£65,000.
Edinburgh Trial (Peak Park):	£43,000.

