

Message from Paul Thompson, Public Rights of way Co-ordinator for Alveley and Romsley

I was kindly copied into an email exchange between yourself and David Rawlinson with reference to the problem of the condition of Byways open to all traffic (BOATs) within Quatt parish. I thought I might share with you some of the difficulties we have had in Alveley. I really think a unified approach would bear the prospect of more success.

To introduce myself: I am the P3 coordinator within Alveley and Romsley parishes. I now have a small team of volunteers and we identify places where Stiles need renewing, Kissing gates could be usefully inserted and overgrown Rights of Way cleared so that both walkers and horse riders can use the network as easily as is possible. I keep in touch with both our local walking group, Strollers and Striders, the PC and Outdoor partnerships in order to improve the state of our footpaths and bridleways. I have no idea whether Quatt has a similar set-up but if it does, we could liaise profitably - especially on the areas where paths cross between the two parishes.

As far as your BOATS go, and on inspection of the definitive map (this is available online) I think you must be talking about the Byway 0136/13/1 which goes from Wootton to join the lane on which Dudmaston saw mill used to operate. The difficulty arises, especially in winter when 4x4s trash the surface so that other users cannot exercise their Right of Way. I think it is always important to point out that Byways are really useful for both walkers and horses as they have to be level...none of those irritating stiles for those who find stiles tricky and none of those horse-gates which sometimes the riders find difficult to negotiate.

Ultimately any decision about the fate of these byways lies at the county level, generally as advised by outdoor partnerships; so it is important to get a unified voice at parish level by employing legitimate arguments. Too frequently I am assailed by arguments voiced by residents that, whilst I appreciate their points, I know they won't "cut any ice" at the next level up. Often Greenlaners and trail bikers (but certainly not always) drive inconsiderately, they drop litter and I hear of incidences of utter rudeness and bad language to other users of the byway. I hear tales of lack of road tax, motoring activity in the small hours reported to me by aggrieved residents. Whilst I share their outrage, those behaviours are of secondary concern and aren't sufficient reasons to argue for downgrading the BOAT status. We have to accept that "greenlaning" is a legitimate recreational activity in much the same way as horse riding, off-road cycling and walking. Greenlaners are therefore doing nothing wrong with exercising their right.

I would therefore advise you to explain your concerns to Richard Knight of Outdoor Partnerships and try to get him onside. The arguments which I think are strong run as follows:

- The damage that greenlaners/trail bikes do to the byway prevent other users from exercising their right of way. They don't have a right to do that!
- There is evidence that the users of motorised vehicles are not using the byway as a "Way" but as part of an "assault course" in fact after poor weather they often increase their usage and delight in "slaloming" all over the way driving up into the hedgebank and causing erosion to fragile environments. Their activities may serve to reduce biodiversity (an important role at the parish level is to enhance biodiversity)
- Often Greenlaners are coming in from areas well away from Quatt, possibly from the nearby conurbation, to trash a resource vital for the health of the local residents. That cannot be right.

These are good arguments, if all local parishes use these and can be backed up by hard evidence then we might get somewhere.

What are the strategies open to alleviating the situation? You could ask for the County to resurface the BOAT (as in 0136/UN1/1) - that can work well. Secondly, if wide enough separate walkers from other users. Thirdly try a temporary RTO - a winter restriction order for vehicles or finally to attempt a temporary or even permanent downgrading to a bridleway (that's the trickiest to achieve, I reckon).

Whatever your chosen course, I would look very closely at the unique nature of the byway under consideration: take photographs, survey exactly who is causing damage by using the BOAT (be careful...ostentatious photo-taking doesn't go down well). It does no harm to engage the local

greenlaners association - they can be quite amenable. Finally, get the local County Councillor on-board. I think David Rawlinson had engineered a meeting with some relevant members at a County level back in November but I think it was postponed. It might be profitable to work with a number of Parish Councils here.

I hope these observations are helpful. I am aware that I have covered quite a bit of ground here. If you want me to address your council on footpath etc. matters I would be only too pleased to be of assistance.

Message from Greenlane Association

Many of us have heard stories about 4x4s 'off-roading' and a lot of councils, perhaps including yourselves, have recently been contacted by a campaign regarding vehicles driving on byways and unsurfaced roads. This can be a contentious subject and certain groups have been known to paint a negative and untrue picture around the topic. Of course bad news travels fast and groups leverage that tendency in a classic tabloid fashion.

The reality is that driving and riding lanes is a positive, valuable, legal and life enhancing activity. It is loved and enjoyed across the nation by those thousands who you will most likely never see nor hear as they quietly and politely exercise their rights.

Here at the Green Lane Association (GLASS), the UK user group supporting the rights of all users to access byways and unsurfaced roads, we thought it would be useful to show you the balanced, factual reality behind the stories you may have heard.

It's a slightly complicated issue as the truth behind any headline often is, but we'll try and be brief!

1. It's not off-roading - you can't 'off-road' on a road, which is what a byway is. Off-roading is driving other than a road either with or without permission. Like you, we HATE it when 4x4s or bikes go into fields or forests where they should not, often doing damage. They should be enforced against by the authorities. This is not 'Green Laning', as the driving of byways is often called, but trespass and criminal damage and it needs action. Shutting lanes won't stop these criminals.
1. Green-Laners are normal, civil people who love the countryside. Many have horses and also walk or ride. A surprising number have disabilities and use their vehicles to enjoy the countryside in a way that would be impossible for them otherwise. We have over 5800 wonderful members and they tell us their stories. You can watch some of them here: [Glass Videos](#)
1. Green-Laning supports a vast industry that benefits our regions. Food, accommodation and fuel is bought locally. Vehicles parts and servicing is undertaken by a myriad of garages. The well-being of thousands of drivers and passengers is hugely enhanced, especially in the area of mental health and stress relief which is in itself a cost saving to the nation. Green-Laners help maintain and tidy routes that would otherwise quickly become overgrown and impassable – and there are numerous example of this on the [Glass website](#)
1. GLASS and its members advise and partner with councils and authorities across the UK and work to deal with hotspots, educating both drivers and the public and ensure that everyone gets the best from our precious and ancient network of rights of way. Members subscriptions are used to waymark and maintain lanes for everyone's benefit. Other organisations do the same for trail bike riding. These are not some fly-by-night network of the ill-advised but career professionals working at the highest levels to ensure countryside access for all.

We have attached a open letter regarding some of the recent untruths that have been put about by negative pressure groups who only work to remove and not enhance access. We invite you to reject that negativism and help build a network fit for all legal classes of user, for everyone's mutual benefit.

Thank you very much for your time and let's all enjoy our wonderful countryside together. Please share this email with your members.

Warm regards,

Green Lane Association

www.glass-uk.org

www.trailwise2.co.uk/

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