

## **Thirlmere West Road to be Permanently Closed to all Motor Vehicles.**

**This is a wake-up call for recreational and sporting motorists and motorcyclists everywhere. The first attack was on 'green roads'; next it will be on the network of tarmac roads in the countryside – particularly in the National Parks. If you value your freedom to drive on the minor roads of Britain, now is the time to object.**

West Road is what the name suggests: a minor tarmac road running north-south along the western shore of Thirlmere Reservoir in the Lake District. Like many such roads it gets a small and sustainable level of visitor traffic, and is regularly used by touring motorcyclists, classic car drivers, and people simply 'out for a drive'.

Now Cumbria County Council is spearheading a consortium of organisations that wish to impose a permanent 'prohibition of driving order' prohibiting the public, with motor vehicles, from using this road at any time. Why? For the benefit of pedal cyclists, who should, apparently, enjoy traffic-free roads at the expense of the majority of road users.

It is certainly true that the A591 road, up the eastern shore of Thirlmere, is narrow and not at all 'bicycle friendly', but this is not any good reason to prohibit motors off the West Road completely. The level of motor traffic on the West Road is not particularly high, and cyclists can safely use it now.

The promoters of this scheme say that they want to make the West Road 'family friendly'. Well, 'families' tend not to come out at all times of the year, on all days, at all times, and in all weathers. This scheme would take away the rights of the drivers who wish to enjoy this road, for the occasional benefit of a limited sector of society.

LARA has always championed the idea of sharing Britain's minor highways and byways, and the Government has itself introduced the designation of 'Quiet Lane', where all types of user are expected to respect the others. We see no good reason why simply designating the West Road as a 'Quiet Lane' would not be sufficient to make it 'family friendly'.

If the level of 'family use' is genuinely sufficient that there does need to be some regulation of motor traffic, there is still no need for a 24/7/365 prohibition. There may be a case for just a summer holiday months prohibition of motors, or weekends only. The West Road is not going to be particularly 'family friendly' at 15:00 on a February Saturday, in a sleet shower, but those are just the conditions that many adventurous motorists enjoy – keeping the local cafes in business in the process.

If you want to keep using the West Road, and want to stop the start of a slippery slope towards barring the private motor tourist from our countryside, then write today to object to the total closure to motors, advocating instead a 'Quiet Lane' designation, or a time-limited prohibition of driving order. Ask that the matter be considered by an independent inspector at a public inquiry.

Read the publicity material from Cumbria County Council (which is on the LARA website) and then write to:

Mr Ben Murray  
Cumbria Highways  
Highways Depot  
Joseph Noble Road  
Lillyhall Industrial Estate  
Workington  
Cumbria  
CA14 4JH

Head your letter 'Proposed Cycleway Around Thirlmere Reservoir' and ensure that it arrives by 2 July 2010.

If this proposal goes through unchallenged then expect to see many more like it coming at you over the horizon soon.

LARA is at [www.laragb.org](http://www.laragb.org)