

Green Roads for All

Exploring the Green Road Network
and benefits of Trail Riding

EDITION THREE | APRIL 2025



**TRAIL RIDERS
FELLOWSHIP**



Green Roads for All

There are an estimated 350,000 miles of highway in England and Wales. Roughly 38% is public path or restricted byway and off-limits to public motor traffic, the remaining highways are nearly all tarmac – black roads.

Between the public paths, restricted byways and black roads are around 6,000 miles (1.7%) of Green Roads that are available for the public to enjoy by any responsible means of travel, including motorcycling.

The Green Road Network provides unique public access to the countryside unlike any other, and yet it is not celebrated or recognised for the special asset that it is. Instead it has been depleted over decades instead of improved for the benefit of the public access.

By contrast, the number of traffic-free routes are expanding significantly with over 130,000 miles now available.



The network is paramount to my mental health and wellbeing. To be able to get out into the countryside with a group of like-minded people means everything

Fern, Cambridgeshire

What are Green Roads?

There is a wide variety of terms used to describe an unsealed road which leads to confusion in the minds of the public. Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), Unclassified County Road (UCR), Other Route with Public Access (ORPA), White Road, Unsealed Unclassified Road (UUR), Unmetalled Road and Green Lane.

The Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) preferred term is Green Road to unify this confusing array of terms and provide clarity to the public as to the status of the route.

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**Freedom to explore and to escape.
To be able to travel to places that the
general public don't normally venture to.**

Jon, Devon

Britain's road network is a vital part of its heritage, with motoring playing an equally important role, pre-dating the invention of tarmac. Roads and paths have immense social value, supporting work, utility, and leisure. While most roads, and an increasing number of paths, are now sealed, a small but important minority remain unsealed Green Roads, which deserve greater recognition and protection. Public access to roads and many paths has been undermined. Fortunately, organisations like the TRF, The Ramblers, Open Spaces Society and the British Horse Society continue to champion responsible and sustainable access in the public interest.

Trail Riding is the historical rural pastime of motorcycling on unsealed roads. The motorcycles used are required to be road legal, taxed and insured as with all other road-going motorcycles. Riders are required to have passed the relevant tests and must comply with helmet laws.

The wider motorcycling community is made up of around 1.5 million people who ride regularly, with Trail Riders being an important segment of a sector worth £2.4 billion¹ of the wider sector valued at just over £7 billion² to the UK economy.

Trail Riding delivers major benefits to communities, sustainable tourism, public access, personal health and wellbeing, and to society as a whole.





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There is no evidence of widespread damage to the byway network from motor vehicles, whether they were recreational vehicles or using byways for land management or access to dwellings.

Independent Motor Vehicles on Byways research on behalf of DEFRA

Countryside access

The Government’s Environmental Improvement Plan published in 2023 confirmed its commitment to “Access for All” which followed on from the Landscapes Review call for “Landscapes for Everyone” that identified the access inequalities that exist within the countryside.

The Government went on to undertake a survey from the findings of the Landscapes Review which revealed that 64%⁶ of the public, businesses and professional bodies opposed further restricting the use of motor vehicles on unsealed roads for recreational use, with personal liberty and inclusivity being primary drivers. There has been extensive debate, consultation, resource, and money committed to this matter, with the outcome the same on each occasion. The Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act, House of Lords review and the latest Landscapes Review survey, along with countless stakeholder working groups all recognise the many benefits Trail Riding offers as a valued part of the nation’s cultural heritage.

The Government response to the Landscapes Review went on to say “We believe that the current Traffic Regulation

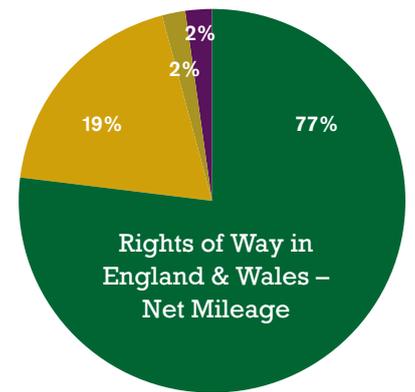
Order (TRO) process is legally robust enough to protect Green Lanes with carefully targeted local action to protect sensitive areas while allowing vehicle users to responsibly enjoy the countryside.”

The findings of independent research commissioned by DEFRA found there was no evidence of widespread damage to the byway network from motor vehicles, whether they were recreational vehicles or using byways for land management or access to dwellings.

Access inequality – addressing diversity and inclusion

The health and wellbeing benefits of access to nature and the countryside are well documented. However, if society is to truly benefit from our “Natural Health Service” diverse and inclusive access is paramount in getting more people, more active, more of the time. As in all walks of life freedom of choice is key.

Access equality is far from where it needs to be, with those that already have the greatest level of access getting more, while little provision is being made for those who chose to responsibly and sustainably enjoy the countryside in other ways. 77%² of public rights of way are



● Footpaths ● Bridleways
● Restricted Byways ● BOATS

only accessible by foot meaning cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and motorcyclists are all excluded

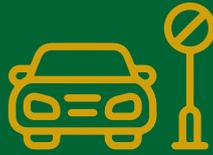
Responsible and sustainable access to the countryside starts with provision; ensuring there is a comprehensive, cohesive, and well maintained and managed access network for all no matter how they chose to enjoy it.

There are wider benefits - greater access leads to greater appreciation and understanding which in turn leads to a greater desire to conserve and protect.



92%

...of encounters with the public by Trail Riders is reported as neutral or positive⁷



38%

...of the Public Highways are traffic free³



88.1%

...of land use in England is green or blue, used for agriculture, forestry, open land and water and residential gardens⁴



93%

...of Trail Riders do not believe the public understand access levels within the Public Rights of Way Network⁷

**Inclusive
Countryside
access**



<1

...the average flow of motorcycles on Green Roads is less than one a day per road⁵



62%

...of motorised traffic on byways is agricultural, forestry, landowner or private dwelling access. This traffic is nearly all 4 wheel and includes heavy plant with greater surface impact and would remain, should recreational motoring be restricted⁵



64%

...of the public, businesses and professional bodies opposed further restricting the use of motor vehicles on unsealed roads for recreational use⁶



Social value

The value of Trail Riding cannot be measured in economic value alone. There is a wider social value that goes beyond plain economics. Trail Riders are socially responsible, contributing to the betterment of rural communities and the environment.

Better for access: the Green Roads Network is a special national asset that enables us all to better access the countryside. These shared routes need to be maintained. Each year Trail Riders donate thousands of volunteer hours and substantial funding to maintain the network. Even before the call by the Government for the digital way-marking of Public Rights of Way, the TRF led the way with its Green Road Map – an online dynamic digital map of the Green Roads of England and Wales.

Better for communities: Trail Riders have a tradition of fundraising, having raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for good causes, typically donating to local charities and community funds. The TRF supports and works with police forces in matters such as rural crime and anti-social behaviour, even joining the police on rural patrols helping to eradicate unlawful use of Green Roads. A recent TRF survey revealed that 89% of Trail Riders' spend is within rural communities, keeping small businesses alive through spending on food, accommodation and leisure activities.

Better for the planet: When it comes to greenhouse gas, The Department for Transport recognises that motorcycling's impact is practically zero – just 0.4%⁸ of all transport emissions of CO₂ Britain's most popular trail bike, emits just 75g CO₂ /km¹⁰ – less

than half of the average car's 165-170g CO₂ /km² – less than half of the average car's 165-170g CO₂ /km⁹. If those travelling to enjoy the countryside did so by motorcycle and not by car CO₂ emissions would be more than halved, and just a 10%¹¹ shift would reduce congestion by 40% and – they would be helping protect the very thing they are travelling to visit!





A lift for Somerset Air Ambulance

For many years Somerset TRF has held events to raise funds for charities and in 2023 Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance benefitted to the tune of £5,000, all raised by Trail Riders.



Funding Rights of Way maintenance in National Parks

For the past decade Teesside & North Yorkshire TRF has been supporting and funding maintenance projects within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The group raise funds in a variety of ways including events which had the added benefit of supporting the local community and economy.



Enhancing access and the environment in the Lake District National Park

The Cumbria & Craven TRF has built an excellent long-term relationship with the Lake District National Park Authority, which recently saw Breasthigh Road, a popular multi-user route, benefit from the work of local volunteers, including TRF members, following flooding impacting the route.

Benefitting communities and all users

Ham Lane known locally as "Zig Zags" in Devon is shared and enjoyed by both the local community and visitors to the area. Working in partnership with Devon County Council and the local parish council, TRF volunteers have undertaken extensive maintenance over the past two years so everyone can enjoy the lane for decades to come.





Health and wellbeing

According to government data physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK¹⁷ and estimated to cost the country £7.4bn per year. The NHS recommends 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise or a combination of both per week to remain healthy. In a single average Trail Ride of 300 minutes a rider achieves over twice the Government's recommendation for weekly exercise.

When it comes to mental health and wellbeing the data is even more startling with a report by the Mental Health Foundation and the London School of Economics and Political Science¹⁸ putting the cost to the UK economy at £117.9bn annually. The NHS Green Social Prescribing Program reflects the growing evidence that nature-based social prescribing plays an important role in improving mental and physical health. The recent TRF Trail and Adventure Bike Survey supports this, with over 98%⁷ of riders reporting that

Trail Riding had a positive impact on both their physical and mental health with "engaging with the countryside" the number one reason they ride.

Independent research by both Mental Health Motorcycle and the TRF shows that the NHS 'Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing' are all achieved through Trail Riding. It is important to note that 88% of Trail Riders are over the age of 40 and considered by the NHS as one of the most vulnerable groups in society for suffering from poor physical and mental health.

Sport England's¹⁴ extensive research on the social value of sport and physical activity estimates an annual wellbeing impact of £97 billion in 2023. Additionally, the annual health benefits are valued at £10.5 billion. Using the data from this research the annual wellbeing and health value of trail riding has been calculated to be is £59.9M.

NHS five steps to mental wellbeing.

Connect with other people

Be physically active

Learn new skills

Give to others

Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)



£59.9M

the annual wellbeing and health value of Trail Riding ^{12/13}





98%

...of Trail Riders gain physical health benefits greater than the Government's recommendations for exercise from this active recreation⁷



£58bn

...a year is the estimated cost of obesity to the UK economy¹⁵



99%

...of riders state that Trail Riding improves their mental health with the motivations behind why they ride closely aligning with the NHS five steps to mental wellbeing⁷

Engagement with nature

Improving trail riders physical and mental health



235%

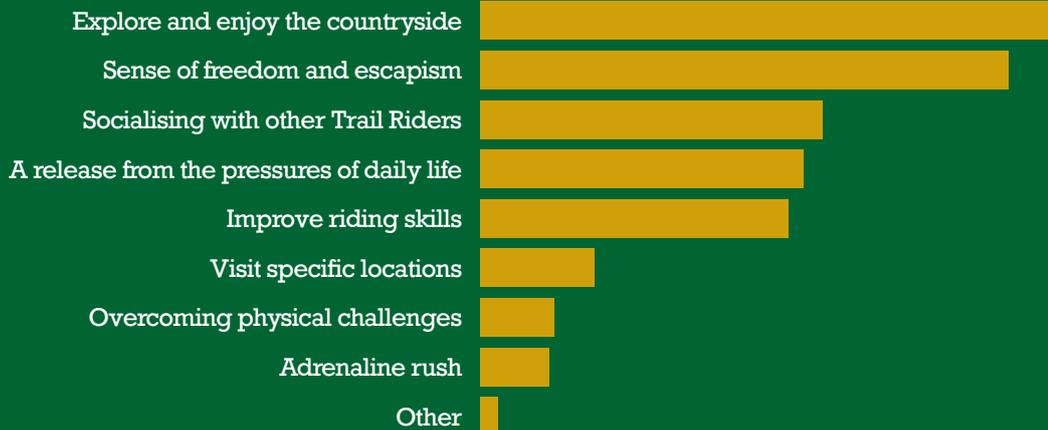
...a single average Trail Ride of 5 hours sees riders benefit from over twice the Government recommendation for weekly exercise¹⁶



2400

2400 the number of calories burnt during an average trail ride of 5 hours¹⁶

Top reasons people ride⁷





Economic value

The UK motorcycle industry is a robust driver of economic growth, with the trail and adventure motorcycling segment alone conservatively valued at £2.4 billion¹, according to *The Social and Economic Value of Trail and Adventure Motorcycling report* by the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF).

This figure represents over a third of the wider motorcycling sector, itself estimated to be worth more than £7 billion²¹ annually. In total, the trail and adventure segment supports over 50,000 jobs across 5,000 businesses, reflecting its substantial contribution to the national economy. This £2.4 billion¹ valuation is drawn from several key components:

- Insured value of trail and adventure bikes: £1.5 billion
- Insurance premium value: £44.7 million
- Maintenance and servicing: £108.7 million
- Accessories: £145.1 million

- UK rider expenditure on sustainable tourism abroad: £183.5 million
- Events and exhibitions: £15 million
- Training and rider development: £3.1 million
- Tax revenue: £218.3 million
- Sustainable UK tourism: £131.9 million

Notably, 89%⁷ of trail riding spend occurs in rural economies, benefiting local communities through patronage of campsites, B&Bs, pubs, cafés, hotels, shops, and filling stations. Many specialised businesses depend entirely on this revenue stream. According to the Country Land and Business Association (CLA)²⁰, rural tourism accounts for 70-80% of all domestic UK tourism and contributes £14.6 billion to the Gross

Value Added (GVA) of England and Wales. Some 549,000 businesses employing 3.6 million people rely on rural tourism, with 39% of CLA member businesses focused on tourism.

It should be noted that the £2.4 billion valuation does not include a monetary value for the significant social contributions, which would further enhance the sector's worth.



I enjoy the freedom to be able to cover and enjoy large areas of the countryside, having the advantage to see a variety of views and wildlife in a relatively short time period.

David, South Wales





67.2%

..of Businesses opposed restricting the use of motor vehicles on unsealed, unclassified roads for recreational use⁶



89%

..of spending by Trail Riders is within rural communities providing a vital source of income to these vulnerable areas⁷



£218.3m

...tax revenue value to UK Treasury¹



£131.9m

...per annum sustainable tourism expenditure from Trail Riding¹



395K

...the value per mile of motorcycling on the Green Road Network¹



25.6%

...of new motorcycle sales were in the adventure and trail bike segment in 2023, the largest in the sector and generated £272M in new bike sales alone^{19/7}



£2.4b

...the annual value of trail and adventure motorcycling¹

¹ TRF Social and Economic Value of Trail and Adventure Motorcycling

² Ordnance Survey

³ Department of Transport/Ordnance Survey

⁴ Land Use Statistics England DLUHC

⁵ Independent Motor Vehicles on Byways research on behalf of DEFRA

⁶ Landscapes Review Survey Response Summary

⁷ TRF Trail and Adventure Bike Survey

⁸ Department of Transport Ending the sale of new non zero emission L category Vehicles

⁹ Statista – Carbon footprint of Travel per Kilometre by transport mode

¹⁰ Bikez – Honda CRF 250L Emissions

¹¹ Transport & Mobility Leuven – Commuting by Motorcycle Impact Analysis

¹² Sport England – The Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity in England Primary Value (TRF extrapolation)

¹³ Sport England – The Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity in England Secondary Value (TRF extrapolation)

¹⁴ Sport England – The Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity

¹⁵ Cost of Obesity Report Frontier Economics

¹⁶ TRF Health And Wellbeing Benefits of Trail Riding

¹⁷ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Physical Activity Guidance

¹⁸ Economic Case for Investing in the Prevention of Mental Health Conditions report

¹⁹ Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) – 2023 Motorcycle Press Statistics

²⁰ Country Land and Business Association Rural Tourism Strategy

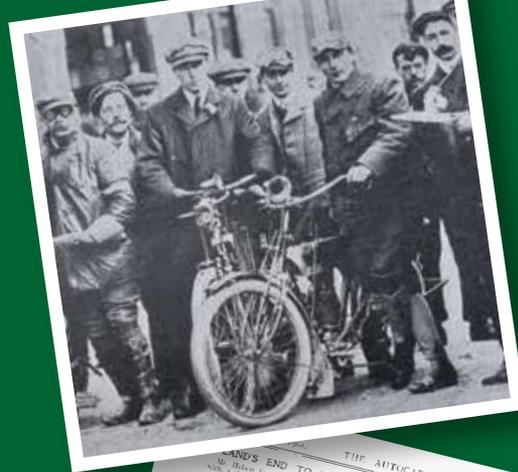
²¹ Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) /ICF International Economic Benefits of UK Motorcycling 2014 Report. Figures adjusted to 2024 using Bank of England Inflation Calculator

Part of our cultural heritage

Trail Riding has been an integral part of Britain's cultural heritage since motorcycles first became commercially available in 1896. Today, motorcycling sets the public free to explore and enjoy the countryside in a way not possible by other means.

The first Lands' End to John O'Groats journey by motorcycle was 1901, before tarmac had been invented, let alone used to cover most roads. In 1904 the first Edinburgh Trail was run starting in London making its way over a 400-mile route. The sporting and manufacturing heritage of motorcycling is indelibly entwined in Britain's history through famous events and brands.

Whilst electric motorcycles are not new, with the first patent appearing in 1868, electrical motorcycles and cycles are now available representing a fresh opportunity to improve public access whilst better projecting the environment.



TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

In 1970 the Trail Riders Fellowship was established to conserve Green Roads for all users to enjoy, including motorcyclists, and to promote responsible and sustainable Trail Riding.

With over 10,000 members in 41 groups in England and Wales the organisation works with Central and Local Government, authorities and other user groups and landowners to conserve and maintain Green Roads and to enhance the awareness and understanding of Trail Riding.

trf.org.uk – engage@trf.org.uk

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