

Opinion & Community

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The Westmorland Gazette
COMMENT

Have your say on changes

PLANS to change the electoral boundaries could mean big changes for Cumbria.

If the Boundary Commission proposals go ahead, the biggest changes would see Broughton and Kirkby — currently in the Barrow and Furness voting area — moved into a newly created Copeland and the Western Lakes constituency.

Windermere and Ambleside, currently in Westmorland and Lonsdale, would become part of this same constituency.

Barrow and Furness MP Simon Fell has some concerns, especially losing part of High Furness, but said it seems logical to grow the constituency to comprise all of what was once called Furness.

But Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron MP said 'only someone who has never been to Cumbria would draw up boundaries that put Windermere in with Whitehaven and Kirkby Lonsdale in with Alston!'

While pairings such as these might not seem obvious, it is vital that what emerges works for the good of Cumbria and everyone must have their say during the consultation.

Our MPs will be making their own representations to the Boundary Commission, but they need to know the views of the people as well, so it is vital that everyone has their say.

Our top web stories

- 'I thought it was going to maul me to death' - Walker recounts terror at meeting 'big cat'
- Zoo closed as security staff turn away visitors
- First look at siblings jailed after force feeding man a kebab
- Man jailed for rape, kidnap, and assault by penetration
- Death of woman is 'unexplained', say police
- Siblings jailed after man choked to death on kebab on a train
- Kendal man gave cigarettes and beer to teen girls before abducting one
- 'This was a protracted incident' - Fire crews battle barn blaze for ten hours
- Woman sent to prison for assault on police officers and her mother

Damage caused by off-roaders

AS chairman of The Kendal and District Cycle Scene (KDCS), a local cycling club of 30 years' standing, I wish to highlight to your readers the increasing and excessive impact following the growth of four-wheel-drive off-road vehicles and motorised trail bikes across the Lake District National Park.

I recognise the historical and responsible use of such vehicles on the 'green lanes' over a number of decades when there were far fewer in number using them and the impact was much less. Indeed farmers use such vehicles, quad bikes etc. to go about their legitimate business. However the numbers using these tracks — particularly around the Little Langdale, High Nibthwaite and Oxen Fell areas — is out of all proportion and commercial companies are encouraging and promoting this as a leisure activity with, it seems, the blessing of the National Park.

There are around 75 off-road tracks affected including ancient farm and quarry roads and byways open to all traffic (BOATS). The legal status of these is unclear but there is an assumption of vehicular rights. Eighteen of these are very vulnerable including those previously highlighted, with Little Langdale caught in a network of lanes being used by off-road vehicles.

In a survey conducted in the three months following the 2020 lockdown there were 3,400 such vehicles using just the three areas I mention, and I believe this is unsustainable both environmentally and socially. These are high-polluting vehicles on track surfaces built for horses and carts and they are ruining the landscape character. They impact on other residents including farmers, locals, walkers, cyclists etc.

The Lake District National Park has the special power to make Traffic Regulation Orders but has so far refused to do so, preferring through its rights of way committee to have a partnership management group to 'monitor' the position. This committee has six representatives of the various motoring organisations on it plus those opposing the continued use of these lanes such as Friends of the Lake District, Wainwright Society, Ramblers Cumbria, Bridleways Society. The National Trust and CCC also have a place at the table. Interestingly the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Peak District National Park have introduced TROs to protect their environments.

Richard Leafe appears regularly in the mediato promote the National Park for all, despite the increasing pressures put upon it



CASTLE: A picture taken in the gardens of Muncaster Castle taken by Westmorland Gazette Camera Club member Stephen Warner

through increased visitor numbers, poor public transport links, an inadequate road infrastructure and limited parking opportunities. Only this week he was on TV asking visitors to leave their vehicles at home, yet he heads an organisation that is continuing to allow the most polluting vehicles to use inappropriate lanes that sit in the midst of the natural beauty of the Park.

The statutory purpose of the National Park is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the park; and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public.

This is also a World Heritage Site and if you look at the reasons this status was given you will see that they did not envisage the wide-scale use of motorised off-road vehicles in the heart of some of those most outstanding areas in the park where many visitors come to enjoy the tranquility and beauty.

What can your readers do about it? Well they could write to the National Park and its Rights of Way Committee and get them to impose a Traffic Regulation Order to limit the use of these vehicles as some of their counterparts have already done. 380,000 people have already signed a petition asking for this. Readers can find out more about this by visiting the Save the Lake District and Lake District Green Lanes Alliance sites who are fighting strongly to maintain a fantastic area in the face of unacceptable use.

As a chairman of a local cycling club whose members regularly cycle in the area, many of our

members are opposed to the increased numbers of polluting vehicles using these lanes and following a survey I was given a mandate to raise this on our club's behalf.

I would add that I am not a member of any of the major environmental groups but a 67-year-old cyclist and fell walker who has seen the direct impact of these vehicles. The National Park seems to hold two opposing values when it comes to this matter. I hope your readers can help to preserve the Lake District for future generations by opposing the excessive numbers of these vehicles now using these unsuitable lanes.

STEPHEN WARNER
Oxenholme

Deniers lessen survival chances

RAYMOND Hall claims that "CO2 plays a minuscule part in warming the Earth". This is not true. Carbon dioxide is a major greenhouse gas. Along with atmospheric water vapour, methane, and nitrous oxide it maintains global temperature at about 30 degrees centigrade above the value that would pertain in their absence.

The concentration of atmospheric CO2 has varied with glacial cycles, from about 100 parts per million (ppm) during glaciations, to about 300 ppm during inter-glacial periods. In the current inter-glacial, human activities have raised the atmospheric CO2 level to over 400 ppm (and continuing to rise), and temperature has accordingly

increased. CO2 is the key driver of increased temperatures because its emissions result in long-term (decades) increases in atmospheric levels. Water vapour, actually the most active greenhouse gas, responds to the CO2. Its atmospheric levels have increased because warmer air is able to hold more moisture. This positive feedback exacerbates the effect of increased CO2 alone.

Whether humanity will be able to save itself from the effects of climate change is an open question, but I would suggest that one thing is certain. If climate change deniers like Mr Hall continue to question sound scientific knowledge, our chances of survival will be less.

ED TIPPING
Staveley, Kendal

England 'dirtiest nation in Europe'

IT'S depressing to see public-spirited children giving up their time to clear away other people's rubbish on a "litter pick". ("On a mission", *The Westmorland Gazette*, June 3). The litter should not be there in the first place.

England is the dirtiest country I know in Europe, and I've been to most places apart from Albania and Kosovo. My mates in NATO said Kosovo was in a state when they were there, but then there was a war on.

People in this country turn very patriotic if you play *Land of Hope and Glory*, the England football team win a match or someone promises £350 million a week for the NHS if we leave the EU, but most of the time most people don't really seem to care.

ADRIAN TAYLER
Milnthorpe

■ Bad as it is when litter is left in a children's play area, isn't it about time that SLDC looked closer to home?

This morning (Thursday June 3) we walked through the Ferry Nab car park at Bowness and noticed three very large refuse containers full to overflowing and consequently a considerable amount of litter around these. This rubbish had been in this location ever since the end of the Bank Holiday weekend and should have been cleared, at the very latest, on the Tuesday morning. It is a recurring theme that SLDC does not clear litter during busy periods. How can we expect the general public to clear litter in a responsible manner when SLDC fails in its duty? So much for the councils' 'clean up South Lakeland' campaign. It should practise what it preaches.

SUE & DAVID THOMAS
Bowness on Windermere

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