

HANTS & WEST SUSSEX BORDERS BRIDLEWAYS GROUP

NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2005

After what seems a long winter at last the evenings are getting lighter and it feels as though spring is on the way. We look forward to some good riding this year. One or two people kindly offered to help with the marking of the 'missing links' in the Hampshire part of the South Downs so that they can form part of the Hants CC Countryside Access Plan for that area. Hampshire are preparing separate plans for different areas as they can then reflect the specific needs of that vicinity as a 'blanket plan' would not give the best benefit to all areas. This means that we will probably receive more maps to mark in the future and your help would be greatly appreciated. It is really only the people who ride a specific area who know what needs to be done.

We may not see too much happen in the first instance but these plans will form part of the Local Transport Plan for the future – and one thing is for sure – if we don't ask for anything we certainly won't get it!

DID YOU KNOW there are 2848 miles of Public Rights of Way in Hampshire. Only 463 miles are bridleways 16% of the network. There are 2074 miles of footpaths (73%) as well as the new Open Access Land granted to walkers by the CROW Act. However, as a result of the Sounding Board Meeting for the Horse Industry held last summer in London, there is now a draft Consultation Document – Strategy for the Horse Industry – which can be found on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/rural/horses - which sets out 6 Aims – and Aim 4 is to Increase Access to off-road riding and carriage driving. At least this is a step in the right direction for the government to acknowledge that this needs to happen. Our response to this will be discussed at our next meeting – however individuals are quite free to download the document and make individual responses of their own.

RIGHTS OF WAY & THE SINGLE PAYMENT SCHEME From the 1st Jan 2005 the SPS replaces the existing system of payments to farmers for production and they now need to keep their land in good agricultural and environmental condition. Meeting these conditions is known as Cross Compliance. (Full details www.crosscompliance.org.uk) Relating to Rights of Way to receive payment requires the farmer to:

- ❖ Keep rights of way open, unobstructed to their full width and on their legal line
 - ❖ Stiles & gates be maintained where they are their responsibility in a safe condition and to the standard of repair needed to ensure that they are reasonably easy to use
 - ❖ Cross-field paths to be reinstated where they have been disturbed by cultivation within 14 days of sowing a crop, or within 24 hours in all other circumstances
 - ❖ Field edge paths should never be cultivated
 - ❖ Adequate bridges across new or widened ditches must be provided
 - ❖ The general public must be warned of potential dangers on or near Right of Way
 - ❖ No bulls of recognised dairy breed may be kept in a field crossed by a public right of way – warning signs must be displayed
 - ❖ Rights of way must not be sprayed with pesticide where it may pose risk to public
- Cross-field Bridleways must be 2 – 3 m wide
Field-edge Bridleways must be 3 m wide
Other unsurfaced highways 3 - 5 m wide

This new scheme could be of benefit as, if farmers fail to meet the requirements for rights of way, they will put themselves at risk of losing money.

GOVERNMENT reaction following Motorised Vehicle Consultation:

1. They intend to legislate to overturn *Bakewell* ie: it will be back to the old rule of not acquiring motorised vehicular rights through 20 years use. (Only applies to *public* use)
2. District councils will have power to divert/extinguish/create Restricted Byways under the Highways Act
3. Waymarks for Restricted Byways will be purple
4. Restricted Byways can be made by Dedication Agreements and Creation Orders
5. New advice will be issued on the use of Traffic Regulation Orders
6. Claims for vehicular rights of way based on historic evidence will be limited to use by non-mechanically propelled vehicles, but it looks as though there may be a period of grace during which claims can be made
7. "Making the Best of Byways" (Practical Guide for Local Authorities) will be revised.

NOTE: This is a Statement of Intent from Government and is NOT YET LAW

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

INTRO TO EQUINE DENTISTRY - Tues 29th March Westbourne Social Club River St Westbourne 7.30 for 8pm start Admittance £2.50 on door

LIVE MUSIC & DISCO with Buffet Sat 23rd April at Westbourne Social Club. Tickets £6 Contact Rita on 01243 376274 Raffle prizes welcome

PLEASURE RIDE (10 miles approx) in aid of Brooke Hospital Sun 5th June from Stansted Park. £5 Entry form on website soon: www.wsbways.co.uk

CHILDRENS 'I-SPY' FUN RIDE in aid of Brooke Hospital Sun 5th June from Stansted Park. £5 Entry form on website soon: www.wsbways.co.uk

LYE COMMON BRIDLEWAY CLAIM

Sadly, though not unexpected, the Landowner has objected to the making of the Order upgrading this footpath to bridleway which has forced a Public Enquiry to be held on the 26th July at Compton Parish Rooms. West Sussex County Council are taking a neutral stance in the matter. There will be a need for some of those who rode the track in the past to give verbal evidence to the Inspector to enable him to establish that, in fact, the route was previously used as a public bridleway. Sadly some of our main witnesses are no longer with us, which so often happens when claims for upgrades take years to process. A rights of way system to meet the needs of the 21st century is certainly required – but unlikely to happen if the present procedures are not updated. Support on the day will be most welcome.

NEXT MEETING: TUES 22ND MARCH at Westbourne Social Club River St Westbourne. 7.45 for 8pm start. Anyone welcome to attend