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British Horse Society

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The Old Cottage
Frith End
BORDON
Hants
GU35 0QS
2nd May 2003

Dear Mr Batcheldor,

A325 Major Maintenance

We spoke on the telephone regarding the above in early April. My main concern is for improved crossing facilities for NMU's (non motorised users) along the section of the A325 to be addressed by the highways department during the major refurbishment scheduled to start this summer, namely Sleaford to Holt Pound. I understand that this work will be carried out in three phases; Sleaford to Old Lane, Old Lane to Bucks Horn Oak, Bucks Horn Oak to Holt Pound.

Over the years I have asked that various crossing points should be improved and I will provide you with references or copies of letters so that you can see this was the case. At the time of asking however it seems that the policy was not in place to encourage these improvements and very little help was achieved.

Current transport policy, as set out in Hampshire County Councils Local Transport Plan 2001 – 2006, is, in part directed towards improving travel choices, especially towards sustainable transport modes that offer an alternative to the motor car, such as public transport, cycling and walking. The improvement plans for Rights of Way are also under way recognising the value of a safe and quiet environment away from traffic for those of us who wish to leave the car in the garage. It is with this in mind that I submit the following proposals for the safer crossing of the A325. It should be borne in mind that for some years now local NMU's have crossed the A325 as a last resort rather than at will owing to the impossibility of actually getting safely across because of the constant stream of traffic and the speed at which it travels. Horses in particular have a special problem in that one is unable to explain to them why they are required to stand still for so long while they wait.

I have five proposals:

1. Sleaford Traffic Lights.

When these traffic lights were installed in 2000, my request for a Pegasus crossing or a push button facility to hold the lights at red so that safe crossing could be accomplished was refused. Reference to this can be found in a letter to myself from Geoff Topps dated 10th August 1999. The crossing point for NMU's is in a satisfactory location but without the ability to stop the traffic it is not safe enough and one doesn't wish to be hanging around with a horse waiting to cross.

May I therefore suggest a push button facility at this point or if that is too expensive the same facility at the cross roads itself which would allow enough time for a horse and rider to cross safely.

I enclose copies of correspondence to Adrian Gray with regard to this which will give some idea of existing rights of way and local livery yards. By the way the broken fencing referred to in my letter has still not been addressed.

2. Old Lane – Frith End

I enclose copies of correspondence with Harvey Davies, the HCC Rights of Way Manager, dated 1995. The piece of land referred to was subsequently sold by the HCC to the adjoining householder and is therefore no longer available, however at the same time Mrs Jane Head, the owner of Nyewood, which is further along the C98 towards Bentley, agreed to dedicate a small length of footpath for bridleway. Harvey Davies told me that he had actioned this so maybe it is still languishing somewhere in your legal department or maybe it has been processed, whatever, it is important because Binsted 72b through Nyewood joins two FP,s Binsted 72 & 51 through the Forestry Commission which link BW 62 Binsted to permitted horsetracks in the forest and through these to other tracks and public bridleways which adjoin to the north, south, east and west. (see point 3). In the main these footpaths are wide tracks rather than the standard footpath width.

Horses are and have been privately kept at Frith End House and Frith End Lodge both to the east of the A325 and west of BW62 Binsted i.e. at the crossroads. I myself live on the Dockenfield side of the crossroads. I mention this only to show that although I have highlighted the livery yards on the enclosed maps there are many more privately owned horses within the vicinity. BW62 which joins the C98 very near to Frith End Cross Roads is scheduled for inclusion in the South Downs National Park. Crossing or even exiting in the car at the Frith End junction is time consuming and hazardous and I would suggest that a safe crossing point here is addressed.

3. Forest Lodge

Situated between Frith End and Bucks Horn Oak. (see enclosed map) The road here is crossed by FP51 Binsted. At present this is not a permitted riding track

but it would make a more than adequate link through the forest to BW62 to the south and Hardings Ride through Alice Holt Forest to the north. The crossing of the road here provides good vision from both sides and there is adequate space to retreat from the road if necessary. Were this track available it would create a very good circular ride either to the north or south for local people. The Forest Manager, Mr David Williamson is of the opinion that the road is too dangerous to cross in any case and gives this as his excuse for not permitting the use of horses on this footpath.

I have had protracted correspondence with my MP and various Government Ministers regarding the need for improved horseriding facilities in Alice Holt Forest and so that you can get the gist I have included a couple of copy letters that I have written plus two from Lord Sewell. As you will see there seems to be confusion and contradiction on the provision of bridlepaths either permitted or upgraded which would be the natural continuation of those which end at the Forestry Commission boundary or sometimes continue as footpath. At the date of these letters there was no legislation for the improvement of the ROW network unlike the mandatory rights of way improvement plans which are now in place.

4. Bridleway 41 Binsted

This bridleway exits on to the A325 just north of Bucks Horn Oak at a point where the visibility to north and south is very limited owing to the gradient of the road.

The only possible crossing of the A325 between Sleaford and Holt Pound is some three hundred yards north of this point where the A325 passes over FP44 Binsted. This is also a permitted horse/cycle path from east to west of the Forestry Commission holdings. However the present use is much suppressed because the gaps in the fencing on either side are much too narrow (the requirement is 5' minimum) and do not allow for a hasty retreat from the road by a frightened horse or rider. Because of the good visibility from either direction north or south of the A325 and the level road surface, this is in my opinion a much safer crossing point than that of BW41 Binsted. (See map)

5. Holt Pound FP49 Binsted

I enclose a letter dated 19th June 1997 from myself to HCC Highways. I think it is self explanatory. The enclosed maps and plan are I believe also fairly clear. You will be able to appreciate I hope that all these crossing points would allow the full use of the permitted riding tracks in Alice Holt Forest. At present they are inaccessible because of the inability to cross the road quickly and safely at the only places currently available namely Sleaford or the above.

It is difficult to express how reduced the quality of life has become in these parts because of the density of traffic on the main road and the encouragement by Forest Enterprise to the use of our narrow country lanes by motor vehicles.

I do feel that with a little planning this piece of countryside could be made available to everyone for quiet enjoyment and recreation, more important now than ever owing to the proximity of the South Downs National Park.

I appreciate that rights of way improvement schemes are not your remit but we should remember that they carry the same rights and obligations in law as a motorway. It is therefore essential that the Rights of Way Dept. and Highways work closely together in this regard.

Funding will I am sure be a major issue but I believe there are Local Transport Plan initiatives, Developer Contributions and perhaps most important of all Landfill and Mineral Extraction Aggregate tax. There are several registered operators in the vicinity, Grondon, Onyx and Tarmac, to name but some, which would entitle the neighbourhood to access funds for projects such as the improvement and maintenance of rights of way. The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme is run by ENTRUST.

Of course any improvement to the rights of way network would be of no use without the ability to cross the A325 safely and quickly by all NMU's so I hope that my proposals will be given serious consideration.

I should be very happy to meet you on site to discuss these issues if you wish.

Yours sincerely,

Maureen Comber

cc Mr Alec Fry CBO BHS Hants
Mr Andrew Smith HCC ROW Manager
Cllr. John Filer

encs. Letter dated 10.8.99 G. Topps to MC
Letter dated 19.7.02 A. Gray to MC
Letter dated 21.8.02 MC to A. Gray
Map showing livery yard locations
Letter dated 27.6.95 MC to Harvey Davies
Plan of Frith End Cross Roads
Letter 11.7.95 from Harvey Davies to MC
Letter dated 28.10.96 from David Williamson to MC
Letter dated 20.11.96 from R. Leslie to MC
Letter dated 5.6.97 MC to JA.MP
Letter dated 21 7.97 John Sewel to JA.MP