



## Horseytalk.net BRIDLEWAYS WATCH

### NATIONAL TRUST GATES - Headley Heath

How long does it take for a horse and rider to get through a  
bridle gate?

The National Trust says 4 – 6 seconds  
Surrey County Council agrees.

Local riders in Headley Heath, Surrey say maybe 30 seconds,  
maybe One minute, maybe Five minutes. It all depends

A good horse with a good rider on a good day could take,  
maybe, 30-seconds.

A spooky horse on a bad day with a nervous not-so-confident  
rider could take Five minutes, Ten minutes or not all. And what  
about riders leading another horse?



The whole question arises because the National Trust have decided to  
enclose Headley Heath, near Epsom, Surrey, 212 hectares of open  
historic heathland, to enable them to stock the area with cattle.

Originally, they suggested to local riders that instead of fencing right up  
to the very edge of the heath, there would be a perimeter bridle path  
around the heath, leaving a wide enough track around the whole of the  
heath for riders Those who wanted to go through gates to get into the  
heath could do so. Those who didn't could stay on the outside.

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum Group disagreed. They said,  
Fence right up to the edge The National Trust went back on their  
proposal to the local riders and did as the Access Forum suggested.  
Today, as a result, a 30-minute ride across the heath involves

negotiating between six and eight gates.

Not only that but the gates automatically slam shut after just 4 – 6 seconds.  
Sometimes even quicker than that. Campaigning against the gates are local  
riders, Naomi Smith and Brenda Spencer.

Everything, they say, about the gates is wrong.  
Why should they have to shut automatically?  
Who says they have to shut between 4 and 6 seconds?  
And what about riders leading another horse?





Since the gates have been installed not only are fewer and fewer people riding on the heath, riders have been forced on to the roads and a number of local livery yards have closed because they are no longer able to lead horses on to the heath. The manufacturers of the gates say the timing is not based on any scientific research. They say they don't know where the timing comes from. There is no reason why the timing could not be altered. The gates were originally designed to be used in children's playgrounds.

Naomi and Brenda maintain the whole consultation process carried out by the National Trust could be flawed. At the same time they admit, there is little likelihood of the National Trust taking down the fencing.

Their solution: Change the timing on the gates. Give riders more time

to get through safely.

"We're lucky there haven't been any serious accidents so far," says Naomi. "There's been lots of near misses. Bridles, martingales and other bits of tack have been caught in the gates. But sooner or later something nasty is bound to happen.

Unless something is done about the gates".

**Naomi Smith**



**Brenda Spencer**



## Are your bridleways dangerous?

### Tell your local Council

#### East Sussex Council

Jo Williams

Enforcement Officer

Tel: 0345 6080193

e-mail: [jo.williams@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:jo.williams@eastsussex.gov.uk)

#### Brighton and Hove City Council

Tel: 01273 292140

e-mail: [countryside@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

#### Kent County Council

Tel: 0845 345 0210

e-mail: [westprow@kent.gov.uk](mailto:westprow@kent.gov.uk) or [eastprow@kent.gov.uk](mailto:eastprow@kent.gov.uk)

#### Medway Council

Tel: 01634 333 333

Email: [prow@medway.gov.uk](mailto:prow@medway.gov.uk)

#### Surrey County Council

Tel: 03456 009 009

On line report form: <http://surreymaps.surreycc.gov.uk/gisapps/rowdefect1.asp>

#### West Sussex County Council

Tel: 01243 777 620

e-mail - [prow@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:prow@westsussex.gov.uk)

**Online report form:** <http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/the-west-sussex-countryside/public-rights-of-way/user-feedback-form.en>

## Are your bridleways dangerous?

### Tell the British Horse Society

Mark Weston

Director of Access, Safety and Welfare

Tel: 01926 707 760

e-mail: <mailto:mark.weston@bhs.org.uk>



If you have an accident riding on a bridleway, report it

The British Horse Society is trying to keep a central national data base on riding accidents both on and off roads.

To get a copy of the form go to [http://www.bhs.org.uk/Riding/Report\\_an\\_Incident.aspx](http://www.bhs.org.uk/Riding/Report_an_Incident.aspx)

## The Access Fighting Fund

The Access Fighting Fund was set up to help safeguard the BHS's future ability to take on those who are threatening equestrian rights of way and ensure the Society is in a position to fight to save equestrian routes at public inquiries and in court.

The fund was started in 2007, after a judge allowed BMW's application to stop up a right of way which had existed for 2,000 years, without any requirement for an alternative equestrian route. In this case, fighting for the rights of riders cost the BHS around £30,000 in costs.

We urge you to donate what you are able to afford at [www.justgiving.com/accessfightingfund](http://www.justgiving.com/accessfightingfund), where you can also find more information on the Bridleway 75 case that prompted the fund's creation.

If you'd prefer not to donate online, you can send a cheque, made payable to the 'The British Horse Society', to: BHS Access and Rights of Way Department, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2XZ. Please indicate that you'd like the money to go to the Access Fighting Fund.