

## **Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Meeting held on 16.02.17 with parishioners about Bridleways in the parish**

Present: Councillor S. Nash, Councillor J. Angear, parishioners - Ms Debbie Edgley, Ms Christine Ellis, Ms Linda Westcombe, Ms Cheryl Shaw, Ms Sarah Noble, Ms Cindy Parrott, Ms Alison Mills, Ms Tina Newton-Smith, Ms Carolyn Sawyer, Ms. Caroline Richardson, Mrs C. Harrison, (Clerk to Herstmonceux Parish Council), Mrs J. McInnes, (Clerk to Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group).

The parishioners are all horse owners who regularly ride the bridleways in the parish.

### **Background to meeting**

Herstmonceux Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has been consulting local groups, clubs and parishioners as part of the evidence base for informing the policies in the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The following policy about Rights of Way is proposed and was discussed at the meeting:

### **Policy 8: Rights of Way in Herstmonceux Parish**

***Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan promotes and supports the network of public footpaths, byways and bridleways in the parish.***

***Any developments should, where practicable, ensure that there is access to the Rights of Way Network.***

### **Supporting Statement**

- 1. Rights of Way, including public footpaths, byways and bridleways, in the Parish are popular and used by individuals, families, dog walkers, horse riders and informal and organised walking groups.*
- 2. Green Open Spaces for Health (GOSH) Walks have been organised by Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre. The GOSH scheme builds on health guidance that regular physical activity significantly reduces the risk of many major health conditions.*
- 3. This policy will extend and improve the Rights of Way in the parish which can provide access to the countryside, High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Spaces with views across the countryside to the South Downs.*
- 4. A comprehensive review of all the footpaths, stiles, gates is being carried out of the Public Rights of Way in the parish. Herstmonceux Parish Council will consider any action required when the review is completed.*

### **The following issues relating to bridleways were raised:**

1. Access to the bridleways – access to bridleways is via the Rights of Way footpaths or from local roads.
2. The creation of shared footpath/bridleways in some areas would improve the accessibility of routes for horse riders.
3. Signage to bridleways – signage is poor or non-existent.
4. Maintenance of bridleways – many bridleways become very dangerously pitted with holes or impassable in winter months. Overgrown vegetation means the

width of the bridleways is reduced, Network Power has cut down trees adjacent to some bridleways and the trees are not cleared away. This creates an obstacle and is dangerous to horse riders. Electric fencing wires are frequently left lying on the ground near to the bridleways.

5. Gates on bridleways – specific bridleways e.g. the one on the grounds of Herstmonceux Castle has an excessive number of gates. Some gates across the Rights of Way network are too close to electric fences which means they are difficult to open and this has led to accidents, the gates are installed at a poor angle to allow a horse and rider to walk up to it and open it, the gates close too quickly and scare the horses.
6. Number of horse riders - there are a significant number of horse riders in the area, and so a good bridleway network is essential to allow owners to exercise their horses safely.
7. How to report problems – for several years, there has been an on-going problem with many of the points detailed above. Individual riders have contacted ESCC Rights of Way Team or landowners but little or no action has been taken to improve the situation.

### **Suggested actions**

1. A Bridleway Group of interested horse riders should be set up. The Group could then work with ESCC Rights of Way, Herstmonceux and Wartling Parish Council and local landowners to address the issues raised above.
2. Meetings should be arranged with representatives from all organisations and landowners to address issues on specific bridleways.
3. There are schemes in other areas where a payment scheme for a specific route can be set up. These routes are usually only available from March to October. One of the attendees, Caroline Richardson has already started to make enquiries about setting up a route from her land on to Pevensey Levels.
4. Another scheme, TROT toll rides is already in place in the Punnetts Town area – the group may wish to investigate whether it is possible to set up TROT rides in this area.
5. The Group should contact the British Horse Society for help and advice.
6. The Group may be able to make an active contribution to overgrown areas of bridleways by arranging working parties to clear vegetation. This will need to be down in conjunction with Rights of Way, the relevant Parish Council and the landowner.
7. Sites for horse box parking should identified and the information circulated.
8. Policy 8: Rights of Way in Herstmonceux Parish – will have an additional point added:

***Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan promotes and supports the network of public footpaths, byways and bridleways in the parish.***

***The Council supports the formation of a Bridleway Group.***

***Any developments should, where practicable, ensure that there is access to the Rights of Way Network.***

9. Information from the points raised will be added to the Supporting Statements.

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