

Response from Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Community Manager for Operational Services to Petition Submitted in Relation to Horse Riders in Staffordshire

Over the last month a full survey has been carried out of the existing permissive and definitive bridleways within the Borough, this was required to ascertain accuracy with the reply.

The authority has 3 dedicated bridle routes within the Borough these are at :

Birchenwood P.O.S
Bathpool Park Nature reserve
Bateswood Nature Reserve

Bateswood Bridle way

This was inspected, no essential or remedial repair works are required, and over the last 3 years minor repairs have taken place to the gates as and when required.

Bathpool Park Nature Reserve

The survey revealed some small works which are in need of completion and these are marked on the plan, consisting of the following:

1. Low Branches (in need of removal)
2. Fallen Branches / trees (could cause the horse to stumble)
3. Encroaching vegetation not a major problem, although some of the way markers are lost in the vegetation
4. Very muddy, extremely wet and muddy areas which could be dangerous, difficult for guides to walk through.

The tree work will be added to the list of tree maintenance works carried out by the Streetscene section (arboriculture unit) hopefully it will be carried out before April 2015 or be added onto the list for October 2015.

Work required to improve the very wet areas could be carried out after tree work has occurred using the wood chips to improve the bridle path surface.

Recently completed works carried out over the last 3 years has been the removal of a self-closing gate near the Kidsgrove end car park and the repair of the mounting blocks.

Birchenwood Countryside Park

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1. Low Branches (in need of removal)
2. Fallen Branches / trees (could cause the horse to stumble)
3. Encroaching vegetation not a major problem, although some of the way markers are lost in the vegetation.
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The tree work will be added to the list of tree maintenance works carried out by the Streetscene section (arboriculture unit) hopefully it will be carried out before April 2015 or be added onto the list for October 2015.

Work required to improve the very wet areas could be carried out after tree work has occurred using the wood chips to improve the bridle path surface.

Recently completed works carried out over the last 3 years has been the removal of a self-closing gate at Tern Avenue which was changed to a "step over" barrier and the repair of barriers and gates along the main footpath to keep motor bikes / vehicles off.

Should the group wish to meet to discuss these problems, this can be arranged, by contacting the Councils Community Management team within Operational Services.

Response from the County Council, Principal Rights of Way Officer:

'We have a number of country parks across the County and, where possible, we try to improve access for horse riders within the suitability of the site. Larger parks such as Cannock Chase have a considerable network of public bridleways and we have worked closely with the horse riding community to improve access on these routes. Recently we have established a horse riding route at Apedale and are working with landowners to see if this can be extended and a new bridleway created for equestrian use. Some of our smaller sites make provision for horse riding difficult and there are not always the car parking facilities to accommodate horse boxes and trailers.

In relation to the public rights of way network we have close working relationships with user groups such as the British Horse Society, North Staffs Bridleway Group, Churnet Valley Riders and South Staffordshire Bridleways Group to name a few and have worked together, alongside landowners, to maintain and improve access across the network. We encourage these groups to appraise us of any issues which they encounter and we always try to resolve these matters within the resource limitations of the Rural Access team.'