

From: [REDACTED]
To: [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)
Subject: Response to letter sent 5th. November, reference TR010036-001538
Date: 23 November 2019 10:53:04

To: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme
National Infrastructure Planning

From: Sarah Bucks, for and on behalf of the South Somerset Bridleways Association
(reference 20015184)

Re: response to the letter sent 5th. November to Highways England and all interested parties, reference TR010036-001538.

Date: 23rd. November 2019

I chair the South Somerset Bridleways Association and represent the local equestrian community. We are concerned about the provision of routes for equestrians in mitigating the severance of routes caused by the dualling of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester. As well as the detail of the opportunities with this project which we have submitted in earlier deadlines, our main concerns are:

- the total lack of provision for carriage drivers, dedicating bridleways not restricted byways
- dedicating foot and cycleways which move equestrians off verges and into carriageways.
- the missing links so the network will be fragmented
- relevant DMMO applications not being processed

Status of NMU routes

The overbridge at Higher Farm Lane into Podimore has, on the southern side addressing traffic going northwards, a dead end sign and a 30 mph sign. We believe that this indicates that it is a public road and the public vehicular rights still exist, or there is a historic TRO restricting the public use to footpath status only. The other possibility is that the signs were erected in error or without proper authority.

Throughout the consultation stage earlier in 2019, discussions and plans included the provision of NMU routes to provide off road alternatives to the dual carriageways, mitigate the severance of routes, and enhance the existing rights of way network, which includes restricted byways and bridleways. On the day of the final consultation it was indicated that NMU routes would only have bridleway status, and no provision would be made for carriage drivers. Carriage drivers, arguably the most vulnerable road users, will have nowhere to drive except the new carriageways. Their very limited network of restricted byways will be fragmented. Very few will dare to use the new carriageways, and if they do there could be some horrific accidents. If the scheme is making provision for non-motorised users, it should be for all such groups, and not give a legal status which omits some equestrians. These NMU routes are new build, and we can see no reason why they should not be to restricted byway standard and status. If considered necessary, furniture such as height restrictors or bollards could be specified to deter illegal use by motorised vehicles. Where are the carriage drivers, rate payers like everyone else, expected to go?

One route, Eastmead Lane, varies in status between bridleway and restricted byway. There is no difference in the physical state of the lane as the status changes; it is an old lane kept clear by the surveying authority. A DMMO application was submitted to upgrade the bridleway section to restricted byway status. Any route connecting to Eastmead Lane as part of the network should, if being newly dedicated as part of this project, be to restricted

byway status.

As the scheme is currently designed, the only route for horses kept at Camel Hill to be ridden out is through the tunnel and then around the Hazlegrove roundabout with the traffic and across the A303 off ramps.

If these new NMU routes were to be designated as restricted byways, then all vulnerable non-motorised road users could avail themselves of them. Surely as newly constructed tracks, they should carry the appropriate status of restricted byway. Excluding carriage drivers from the NMU routes is not good for equestrians, nor for motorists who will not expect to see them on carriageways designed and built to 'Expressway' standards.

Refusing to make any provision for carriage drivers makes the early American settlers, who drove the Native Americans off their lands, look benevolent and generous; they did give them some scrub land as reservations in lieu of their lands. Those who returned were risking death, I see an uncomfortable analogy.

Designating footways and cycleways

Another concern is that by designating footways and cycleways, equestrians are going to be excluded on routes which they can currently use. A particular example is the verge around the southern section of the Hazlegrove roundabout. Currently equestrians can use this wide section of grass in both directions. By making it a footway and cycleway, equestrians will be forced onto the vehicular carriageway, and have to ride or drive around the roundabout and across the new A303 off ramps. If the verge was dedicated as a restricted byway, and it is certainly wide enough, equestrians could travel in both directions, off the carriageways carrying motorised traffic.

Fragmented network Our hope is that this project will take the opportunity to ensure there are linking and through routes so that equestrians can travel from community to community, and hopefully create a network to make circular routes. Thus the connection between Eastmead Lane and Podimore, the link between Slate Lane and the public road at Camel Hill, and the link between the northern end of Gason Lane and Traits Lane are all vital to create a network.

DMMO applications

It is in the Surveying Authority's power to process relevant DMMO applications. These can be identified on the authority's website showing modification applications. Particularly relevant are:

Podimore (SCC references 861 and 863)

Hazlegrove Park (SCC references 858 and 859)

Sparkford (SCC reference 869). This route concerns a road which crosses the A303 at grade to the east of the proposed scheme. If diverted away from the dual carriageway and into Hazlegrove Park, (ie the route was diverted back onto the historic line, reversing the early diversion in the quarter sessions), it would provide the link from South Barrow, through Hazlegrove Park, into Sparkford and on to the rest of the villages along the route of the proposed scheme.

We would hope that this is the time to take the opportunity to reinstate the old network of unsurfaced lanes and provide safe off road alternative routes for all vulnerable road users.

We would be pleased to clarify any of the above comments.

Sarah Bucks

23rd November 2019