

**From:** [Mark Weston](#)  
**To:** [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)  
**Subject:** Response to letter sent 5th. November, reference TR010036-001538  
**Date:** 25 November 2019 18:42:49

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Dear Secretary of State,

I am sending these representations on behalf of the British Horse Society.

The Society is 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

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#### Status of NMU routes

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 and 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 go except the new carriageways. Their 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.

However, 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 to 'Expressway' standards.

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#### 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 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. **The British Horse Society would be interested to know what risk assessment has assessed that it would be safe to leave equestrians on the carriageway in these locations when a decision has been taken that it would not be safe to leave walkers and cyclists on the carriageway.**

Fragmented network Our hope is that this project will take the opportunity to ensure there are linking and through routes so that equestrians can move from community to community, and hopefully with alternatives 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.

It is also in the Surveying Authority's power to process the DMMO applications for routes in Hazlegrove Park (SCC references 858 and 859) and across the Sparkford bypass (SCC reference 869). The routes applied for, if a diversion for the one across the Sparkford bypass into Hazlegrove Park was diverted back onto the historic line, ie reversing the early diversion of the quarter sessions, 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 and provide safe off road alternative routes for all vulnerable road users.

If you would like to discuss any of these aspects further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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The British Horse Society

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