

**ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
UTTLESFORD BYWAY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2008/9 – CONSULTATION
WEST AREA HIGHWAYS OFFICE, WARWICK HOUSE, HARLOW
10.00 AM, 21 JANUARY 2008**

Attendees:

<p>User Groups David Anderson (Trail Riders Fellowship) Garron Baines (North Essex and Saffron Walden Bridle Group) James Balaam (farming contractor) Mick Brash (British Driving Society) Bob Drane (ACU/Eastern Centre Motorcycle Union) Alan Goffee (The Ramblers Association) Kim McDermott-Brown (Country Land & Business Association)</p>	<p>ECC Nicola Foster (PROW District Manager) Robin Wallbank (PROW Engineer) Nigel Eley (PROW Officer) Lorraine Bones (Clerical Officer Uttlesford) Paula Cheesman (PROW Team Leader, Community Action Team) Tim Gardiner (PROW Officer)</p>
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Apologies for absence:

Mrs J Perry, Essex Bridleways

1.	Achievements in 2007-08 – How we improve byways (Nigel Eley)
	Examples were presented of improvements carried out to byways in 2007-08.
	Drainage – Issue of drainage was discussed. MB noted that ECC has chosen to upgrade the surface of byways rather than carrying out drainage work. ECC informed that this was to provide a more immediate solution to the problem, enabling users to enjoy access to previously inaccessible byways in a shorter timescale. It was agreed that maintenance of ditches was sometimes the responsibility of the landowner and sometimes that of ECC Highways, and that regularly cleared ditches would retain the excess water that is causing byways to be waterlogged. It was agreed that problem areas need to be identified and addressed to avoid repeated resurfacing.
2.	How we prioritise schemes (Nicola Foster)
	The main criteria used to prioritise schemes were outlined as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – existing condition of surface (prioritising routes where public safety could be improved) – level of use by different road user types (including volume and nature of complaints) – where the County Council's actions could result in a significant positive impact on the network – additional funding available (section 106 or P3) – additional help available from volunteer groups or landowner (clearance/drainage/laying surface) – longer term benefits (avoiding more expensive works later on) – proximity to source of road planings – cost
	Road planings – MB questioned whether these are stocked by ECC or disposed of. ECC informed that due to high transportation costs it can be more economical to buy new ones rather than recycle. There is a current shortage of planings, and schemes are prioritised according to proximity to planing storage areas. ECC retains as much as possible.
	Safety of byway users – It was agreed that the safety of byway users should be a high priority. KMB put forward proposal to introduce grid reference system on byways to enable rescue services/vet to locate more easily users/ animals in need of assistance. A similar system has been introduced for shoots. It was suggested the Country Land & Business Association could add grid references to existing fingerposts and signs on a relevant byway as a voluntary pilot scheme. ECC would be happy to work with the CLA to facilitate this.
3.	West Area priority list 2008-09 (Robin Wallbank)
	Priority list for 2008-09 was distributed to the meeting (list includes schemes that did not go ahead in 2007-08). User group representatives were asked to comment on the list.
	Clavering 50 – Surface of the byway is being damaged by 4 x 4 users and motorbikes. ECC would wish to use planings to improve the surface. Landowner and bio-diversity group are against using metallised materials and alternatively suggest applying a seasonal closure to limit use during wet weather. It was agreed the landowner would make good the entire length of the byway and ECC would apply for a two-year seasonal closure using physical measures (gates possibly) with a review in the third year to evaluate its effectiveness and the need to resurface. MB requested the byway be closed only to motorised parallel-wheeled vehicles thereby excluding carriage drivers from the restriction. Flora along the byway needs to be managed.
	Protection of flora/fauna – Past neglect has prevented bio-diversity. Ways to protect and encourage growth of flora and fauna along byways were discussed. Complete closure of byways is not encouraged as this may result in lack of management. It was agreed that damage to verges must be avoided when carrying out improvements to byways.

4. Group feedback on priorities (Nicola Foster/Robin Wallbank)	
	User group representatives put forward their priorities (below) for byway improvements (representatives kept a photocopy of their suggestions).
4. Alan Goffee – The Ramblers Association	
1.	Debden 75, Clavering 50, Great Canfield 11.
4. Garron Baines – North Essex and Saffron Walden Bridleway Group	
2.	Seward's End/Radwinter 13, Ashden 75, Debden 75 (Lovecotes), Debden 69 (The Wash), Debden 65, Thaxted 11, Broxted 66, Widdington 38, Henham 33, Radwinter 33, Hempstead 52, Hempstead 53, Great Sampford 2, Great Sampford 52, Saffron 34, Berden 55, West Wood (bridleway between Great Sampford and Thaxted).
4. Bob Drane – ACU/Eastern Centre Motorcycle Union	
3.	Thaxted 11, Broxted 66, Debden 65, Thaxted 88, Debden 69, Debden 75, Radwinter 33.
4. David Anderson – Trail Riders Fellowship	
4.	Thaxted 11, Broxted 66, Debden 65, Thaxted 88, Debden 69, Leaden Roding 17, Aythorpe Roding 21.
4. Kim McDermott-Brown – Country Land & Business Association	
5.	Nothing to add to list of priorities.
4. Mick Brash – British Driving Society	
6.	Nothing to add to list of priorities.
4. James Balaam – farming contractor	
7.	Clavering 4 (Beard's Lane), Langley 31 (Larkin's Lane), Strethall 8 (Icknield Way), Clavering 50, Berden 53 (Hop Ground bridleway).
4. Nicola Foster on behalf of non-attendees	
8.	Clavering 50 (Highfield Lane).
5. Closures for works and seasonally to protect surfaces (Nicola Foster)	
	Advantages of seasonal TROs were discussed (regrowth of flora, limited damage to byway surface, prevention of hare coursing, etc.) It was agreed that ECC would examine the need for seasonal closures using lockable bollards on byways which have recently been improved or where there is an existing drainage problem. ECC acknowledged that web was not responsive enough to be useful to users. NF will take up this matter and also keep user groups informed via email.
	Disease restrictions 2008-09 – ECC informed that landowners cannot impose restrictions. These can only be implemented by DEFRA.
6. Help from user groups (Robin Wallbank)	
	It was suggested that user groups be involved in the upkeep of byways (ditching, cutting back, etc.) to enable more byways to be improved and to encourage user groups to work together and understand each other's priorities. It was agreed that this would be organised and led by ECC (P3) and that user groups would be given sufficient notice to arrange for a maximum number of helpers to be present.
7. Process to be followed after meeting (Nicola Foster)	
	Priority list for 2008-09 must be finalised and forwarded to Cabinet Member by end of January 2008. It was agreed ECC would forward draft version of the list to representatives of user groups and would send approval list in programme order when available (likely April 2008).
	User group representatives thanked ECC for organising the meeting and agreed it had been useful and well structured. To enable progress to be made, it was requested ECC keep user groups informed of important information on a regular basis.