



**Dear BHS member**

### **Save Hampshire Horses from Commons Exclusion**

Hampshire County Council are consulting on a variety of equestrian issues that need the attention of all local riders and horse enthusiasts to ensure fair treatment for all. The major issues are:

- Fencing and grazing of Yateley and Hawley Commons
- Wholesale diversions of the bridleway network on Yateley Common and of Welsh Drive around Busta Triangle and the Cemex plant
- A major change in the highway network around the Sims metal site in Vigo Lane

More information on these issues can be found on the BHS Hampshire website [www.bhshampshire.org.uk/access.html](http://www.bhshampshire.org.uk/access.html) and the Hampshire Wildlife Trust website [www.hwt.org.uk/pages/yateley-consultation.html](http://www.hwt.org.uk/pages/yateley-consultation.html)

**Anyone can respond and it only takes a few minutes of your time. We would ask you to make representation to Hampshire County Council against these proposals, for the following reasons:**

- Fencing of commons will impede equestrian access
- The proposed bridleways diversions do not take into account equestrians' needs, and the needs of other users.
- Existing similar work has not been maintained, resulting in obstruction for equestrians and pedestrians.
- Multiple consultations from different council departments have led to the Council's duty of care being compromised or overlooked. A more holistic approach is needed.

**Please send your responses to:**

Rights of Way: [Vicky.Bowskill@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Vicky.Bowskill@hants.gov.uk)

Fencing & gates: [Jim.White@footprint-ecology.co.uk](mailto:Jim.White@footprint-ecology.co.uk)

Sims metal: [Naoual.Margoum@pins.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Naoual.Margoum@pins.gsi.gov.uk)

If you would rather make your thoughts and objections through the BHS, Bob Milton will collate them and make representation to HCC on your behalf. Any queries and responses should be directed back to Bob at [bobmilton@kilnsidefarm.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:bobmilton@kilnsidefarm.fsnet.co.uk).

From: The BHS Hampshire Access Team

## **Your BHS County Access and Bridleways Officer for North Hampshire and Common Land advisor, Bob Milton, explains the issues.**

The policy of the BHS is to object to any fencing and gating of equestrian common land, where equestrian access is compromised by self-closing gates. Horrific injuries have resulted from self-closing gates when things go wrong.

Yateley Common is registered under s193 of the Law of Property Act 1925, which means that equestrians have the right to 'air and exercise' over all the land; bridleway diversions are being proposed on this land. They also have rights under the Highways Act 1980 for bridleways. The new highway proposals ignore the needs of equestrians to cross the A30, or access the bridleway network across Blackbushe Common to the Forestry Commission estate at Warren Heath and Bramshill.

The wholesale bridleway diversions do not in my opinion meet the criteria put forward by HCC Highways or the needs of equestrians in using this land by right. Existing rights of way are illegally obstructed and should be open for use before any consideration is given to diversions. The true needs and safety of pedestrians and equestrians on the common is ignored by the positive neglect of maintenance both of the rights of way and the crossing point sight lines. The overgrowth on the common has been allowed up to the metalled edge so removing safe off road use and good sight lines along the road edge.

Serious problems have arisen with multiple gates on bridleways across some of the heathland common land grazing schemes [Headley Heath and Pirbright for example], and with pony grazing [Snelsmore and Hindhead]. What we are seeing across the whole spectrum of users is displacement to those commons and open spaces where there is no grazing and no gates. At the moment the displacement in this area has been well spread out but with the financial pressure of Natural England brought about by the criteria they lay down for HLS, this will be more concentrated.

It is my belief that the way HLS is being implemented by NE is in breach of their duty to maintain an equal balance between public access and nature conservation. It is not proven that their nature conservation goals can only be achieved by fencing and extensive grazing. They have not provided any environmental impact assessment for extensive grazing, nor compared it to short term focused exempt grazing. Nor is there an access impact assessment or equality impact assessment for this or any of the applications that have been consented to or are in the pipeline. Although grazing can be for periods as short as four months, users will be lumbered with self-closing gates, with the attendant dangers to riders and horses, for 12 months of the year.

I would also suggest that you visit the Headley Heath riders Website and [www.horseystalk.net](http://www.horseystalk.net) to gain a greater understanding of the effect fencing for extensive grazing has on equestrians.

The proposals for new highway access over the Common for Sims metals has not taken into account the past illegal use by the site operators of the Common and neither have the proposals met with the legal requirements for exchange land. This has been seen all along the northern boundary of the Common.

Hampshire CC has a duty of care to protect public access and highway [ie bridleway] rights but this seems to have been lost in the multiple department proposals for this area.

Please make individual representation against all these proposals, and request that a holistic approach for the benefit of all lawful users especially equestrians be met. If you would rather make your thoughts and objections to me I will collate them and make representation to HCC on your behalf.

Bob Milton.

***Please pass this information to fellow riders in your area. If not already a member of BHS, why not encourage them to join at [www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk)***