

From: [REDACTED]
To: [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)
Subject: South Somerset Bridleways Association submission to Deadline 4
Date: 08 March 2019 09:14:58
Attachments: [Response for Deadline 4 - 8th March 2019.docx](#)

Dear Sirs,

Attached is the South Somerset Bridleways Association's submission for deadline 4. I would be grateful for acknowledgment of this email.

Sarah Bucks
Chair, South Somerset Bridleways Association

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A303 Sparkford – Ilchester dualling project

To: Examining Inspector, PINS,

From Sarah Bucks, Chair, South Somerset Bridleways Association

7th. March 2019

Our comments for DEADLINE 4

This scheme is using public money for public good. All should benefit, not just the motorists passing through the county.

1. SSBA's comments on HE's policy effecting PROW network, especially NMU routes.

The South Somerset Bridleways Association is extremely grateful that HE have a policy to make provisions for vulnerable users and link communities, and that their consultants are following their policy:

'Our vision focuses on supporting our road users' journeys, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, those with disabilities (such as users with mobility or sensory impairments) and other vulnerable users – while delivering longer-term benefits for communities and users alike.

We want to address the barriers our roads can sometimes create, help expand people's travel choices, enhance and improve network facilities, and make everyday journeys as easy as possible.

This will be achieved by ensuring our network supports and contributes to accessible, inclusive and integrated journeys which are safe, secure, comfortable and attractive.

We are supporting all users of our network, including drivers and their passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, and other vulnerable users. Our focus is also on the communities we affect'.

We thank the Mott MacDonald and SWECO road designers for listening to us. We don't want to ride on the new carriageways, the surface is hard and slippery for hooves and the speed and weight of traffic is dangerous for all but the most reliable of mounts. By providing sensible alternatives and crossing points, equestrians will not need set hoof on the new carriageways. We also acknowledge that drivers will not expect to encounter us on the new carriageways.

However we do know that this is not a 'special road' or an 'Expressway' and therefore horse riders and carriage drivers have as much right (arguably more) to use the road as drivers of motorised vehicles. But we don't want to be on that road even more than road engineers any more than drivers want us there.

Providing safe alternative routes is the answer, and Mott Macdonald and HE have proposed several sections of NMU routes. More could be done and some specifics will follow:

Status of NMU routes:

- Restricted byways are the best value option, and give easy passage to disabled and able bodied users.
- 'footway and cycleway in verge' puts equestrians in the vehicular carriageway. If the situation suggests that pedestrians and cyclists would be safer on an NMU route, the same applies even more strongly for equestrians.
- Promotes cycling as well as walking and riding

2. Local statistics

The average of higher rights (ie bridleways and restricted byways) is 22 percent nationally. However the situation is patchy and in Somerset most routes with higher status (ie bridleways) are on the Quantocks and Exmoor. South Somerset is particularly poorly served.

| parish | No of FP | No of higher rights | Total no of routes | Length of fp (km) | Length of higher rights (km) | Total length (km) | % of higher rights by no | % of higher rights by length |
|--|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| England | | | | | | | | 22% |
| Somerset | 8139 | 1525 | 9664 | 4831 | 1352 | 6183 | 16% | 24% |
| South Somerset | 2659 | 318 | 2977 | | | | 10.7% | 12.5% |
| Queen Camel | 34 | 3 | 37 | 18.9 | 0.9 | 19.8 | 8.1% | 4.5% |
| Sparkford | 29 | 0 | 29 | 13.4 | 0 | 13.4 | Zero | Zero |
| West Camel | 23 | 3 | 26 | 11.3 | 2.8 | 14.1 | 11.5% | 19.9% |
| Totals for QC, West Camel and Sparkford | 86 | 6 | 92 | 43.6 | 3.7 | 47.3 | 6.5% | 7.8% |
| Yeovilton and ¹Podimore | 11 | 7 | 18 | 4.2 | 6.4 | 10.7 | 38.9% | 59.8% |

The addition of 8.5km of new routes as currently suggested, of which 6.8 km will be bridleways moves the percentages of bridleways for the main three parishes from 7.8% of length to 18.8%. This would be an impressive and welcome improvement, although still below the average for the county and the country.

If all the opportunities suggested below were incorporated, the result would be to create and record an addition of around 4.5 kilometers of safe off road NMU routes, connecting communities, for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The statistic would be improved to show the percentage of public rights of way carrying higher rights in West Camel, Queen Camel and Sparkford would rise to nearly 25%.

¹ The reason Yeovilton and Podimore have such very different statistics is that when the Yeovilton airfield was expanded, the opportunity was taken to improve the higher rights network. These bridleways are around the Yeovilton airfield, not in Podimore. The only higher rights in Podimore are the 1.5 km of Eastmead Lane, which will become a dead end unless the connection into Podimore using the overbridge is incorporated into the scheme.

3. Safety, Connectivity and Opportunities:



3a. Safety Safety is now a paramount concern to equestrians. The BETA (British Equestrian Trade Association) survey shows that 44% of riders and lapsed riders would ride out more if safe off road routes were available.

- Hazlegrove roundabout - create restricted byway rights in the verge alongside the motorised vehicular carriageway rather than oblige the horse riders and carriage drivers to mix with the vehicular traffic, including riding clockwise around the roundabout across the vehicular traffic coming on the 'off-ramp' from the westbound A303. If space in the verge is the constraint, would it be possible to shrink the southern side of the roundabout a little and allow more room in the petrol station verge? The NMU route should be two way, so four meters wide, from the Sparkford High Street, across the A359, and across the old A303 carriageway round to the underpass up to Hazlegrove School. This would remove the need for horse riders and carriage drivers to be on the main carriageway or crossing the off ramp from the new carriageway.
- Horse riders and carriage drivers will have to cross the A359 at the Hazlegrove roundabout, currently it is the only east – west route. Making provision for horse riders and carriage drivers in the design now is advisable. Although visibility is far from perfect, this crossing point will be used, and so some consideration should be given to it in the design. There is also a DMMO application in place for a bridleway around Ridge Copse (851 discussed later). One end of this bridleway is on the A359 across from the minor road from Weston Bampfylde, and thus, assuming the order is made and confirmed, is it likely that horse riders will be crossing the A359 a couple of hundred yards south of the junction with the Hazlegrove roundabout. Could consideration be given to a Pegasus crossing on the A359 where it meets the roundabout, or, if sufficient room can be found, for such a crossing to be further down the A359 from the roundabout, and horse riders could cross at that point, and not the point at the roundabout where the sight lines are not ideal.

- The underbridge. This appears to be worrying many people, and might it be worth considering an overbridge for NMU users instead so they would not be sharing with the vehicular traffic. The design appears to show the underbridge having a distance of approximately 70 to 80 meters and this is going to be daunting for many. The image below is of a brideway underbridge – albeit not to a good specification as it is an upgraded footpath. This is located near Newcastle under the A189 and is said to be around 25 meters long. But the point is that in length it is approximately one third of the distance of the tunnel proposed for this Sparkford DCO scheme. Is it realistic to think that a 70 to 80 meter long underbridge would be safe for horse riders and other vulnerable road users, and sharing with vehicular traffic? I suggest that better alternatives could be achieved with an over bridge, or by positioning the tunnel at a different angle so the distance underground is shorter.



Images of the brideway tunnel and A189 crossing the brideway at NZ 2730 7533

- Crossing of the old carriageway at Plowage - future proof this crossing by providing a Pegasus crossing
- An Expressway. This point has been mooted but we are told is not going to be taken forward for the foreseeable future. However, if and when such a designation was put on this stretch of road, we believe that the rights of horse riders and carriage drivers would be removed. What provision is being built into this scheme?

3b. Connectivity – HE policy is to create safe travel opportunities and connect communities – for ALL users

- **Podimore to Eastmead Lane and Cary Fitzpaine** - incorporating the overbridge at Podimore is the obvious answer for horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists, and disabled using ‘tramper’ type vehicles. Walkers and others might benefit from a pedestrian overbridge at the southern end of Eastmead Lane, but the Podimore overbridge is already in place and capable of carrying vehicles. We do understand that the Podimore bridge is outside the DCO envelope, and that HE is considering the possibility of using their ‘Dedicated Funds’ to help find a solution. If the land to the east of Podimore bridge, which is inside the red line envelope is being acquired outright, rather than on a temporary possession basis, could consideration be given to creating a restricted byway along the southern side of the hedge on the northern side of this field, which would pass the new drainage ponds and connect up to Eastmead Lane. This would remove the need to solve the conundrum of the Y20/30 bridleway.
- **Stear Hill to Camel Hill** It is important to provide a realistic route of an acceptable length from Steart Hill (the eastern end of Slate Lane) to Camel Hill. The proposed design is both too long, and involves riding around the vehicular carriageway on the Hazlegrove roundabout. This problem, and it is a major problem, could be alleviated by either:
 - creating a bridleway or restricted byway² from the eastern end of Slate Lane to Camel Hill; this will provide a 1 kilometre route away from vehicular roads, in place of a 3.6 km route all on roads and including the Hazlegrove roundabout. (and if coming from Camel Hill to Steart Lane and Slate Lane, possibly going clockwise around the roundabout across the traffic from the off-ramp).
 - Or: Creating a route, possibly an under bridge, from Camel Hill to Gason Lane or Traits Lane. This may be the more expensive option.
- **Queen Camel and Sparkford to South Barrow** Process the DMMO application or create/dedicate bridleway rights (so including cyclists) from the new access underpass to Hazlegrove School, around the eastern side of the park or alongside Sparkford Hall, to join the bend in the minor road at South Barrow. If HE intend to satisfy their own policy of keeping communities connected, it will look at this opportunity to add a safe connecting route between Queen Camel and South Barrow. DMMO applications for this have already been submitted, but SCC say they will not have time to process them in my lifetime.

² Is it possible for HE to dedicate public rights over the land acquired by temporary possession before it is returned/offered back to the land owner?

3c Opportunities: in addition to the 3 listed above under Connectivity:

- Move the bridleway (Y30/29)³ to the southern side of the hedge and upgrade it to a restricted byway. (Using Track 1). This bridleway is shown on the HE scheme plans as an existing bridleway. There is a DMMO application to upgrade the section of Eastmead Lane which is not already a restricted byway to restricted byway status. (see section 4 below). If the rights on Eastmead Lane are shown to be of restricted byway status, then HE should provide a restricted byway to join Eastmead Lane with Podimore.
- Camel Cross to Podimore along the south side of the west-bound carriageway. Create/dedicate rights along the construction tracks going to Podimore along the south side of the west bound carriageway. On the southern side of the new carriageway an access track is planned to run westwards from the Camel Cross Link firstly south of a drainage pond (track 4) and then alongside the westbound carriageway (track 9). Could consideration be given to dedicating NMU rights along these tracks after the works have been completed, and extended to join the public road at ST 5526 2498. If this was possible, safe access to this track would be needed at the Camel Hill Link end, such as a bridleway in the verge for the short section of road between the local road and the eastern end of track 4. Also, might it be possible to extend the route as a continuation from the Podimore Turning Head onto the minor road into Podimore. This would provide a safe off road route for all vulnerable road users into Podimore. Such an addition to the NMU routes would join Podimore to Camel Cross and West Camel. It has already been recognised that Podimore is a hub for cyclists and this should add to the justification for dedicating NMU rights on these tracks.

4. Surfacing

Ideally the surfaces should be unbound or rubberised surface. HE is already aware of some of the products such as KBI and Nuflex. If bound surfaces have to be used in some places, they should NOT be surfaced with SMA which is slippery for shod horses.

Ideally, the surface of the new carriageways near to and over the underbridge to the west of the Hazlegrave roundabout should be as quiet as possible to lessen the noise in the tunnel.

5. Definitive Map Modification Order Applications (DMMO applications)

- The network of routes available to cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers is very fragmented and many routes change status along their length, particularly at parish boundaries. This is a left over from the disjointed way in which parishes applied to record their rights of way when the Definitive map was made after the Second World War. These anomalies are gradually being sorted out, but this is a slow and complicated process. Somerset County Council currently has a backlog of over 330 DMMO applications awaiting processing, and they hope to process them at a rate of 10 per year; historically that rate has not been achieved. Thus the situation continues. Horse riders and carriage drivers are disadvantaged over cyclists as the latter can transport their cycles from one right of way to another more easily than horse riders. Although not necessarily desirable, cyclists can use the major roads as their bicycles do not have a brain which may go into panic mode when a large truck and trailer pass them at speed.

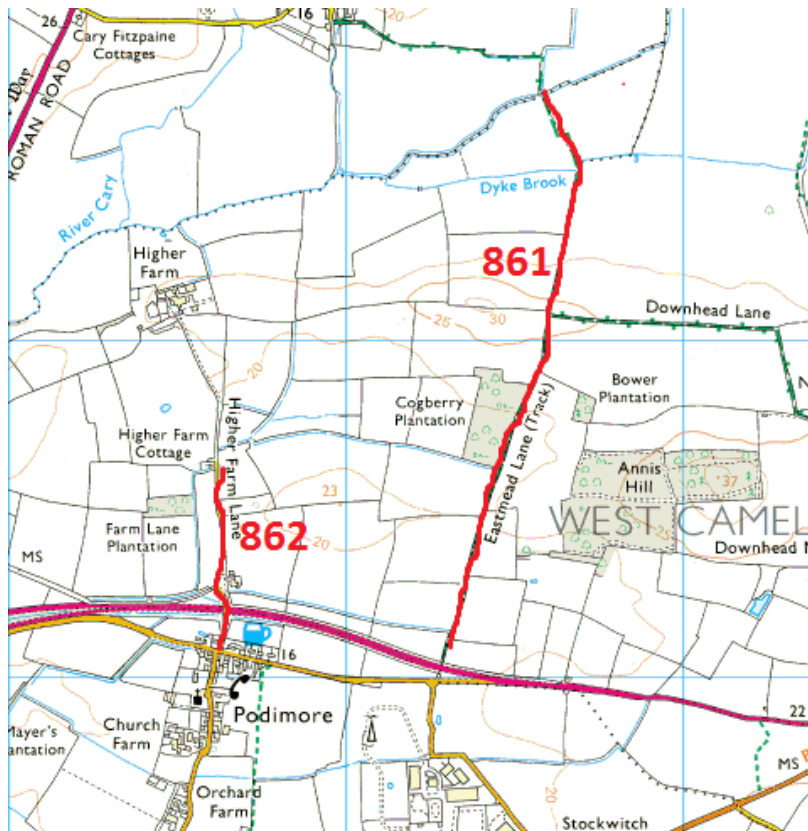
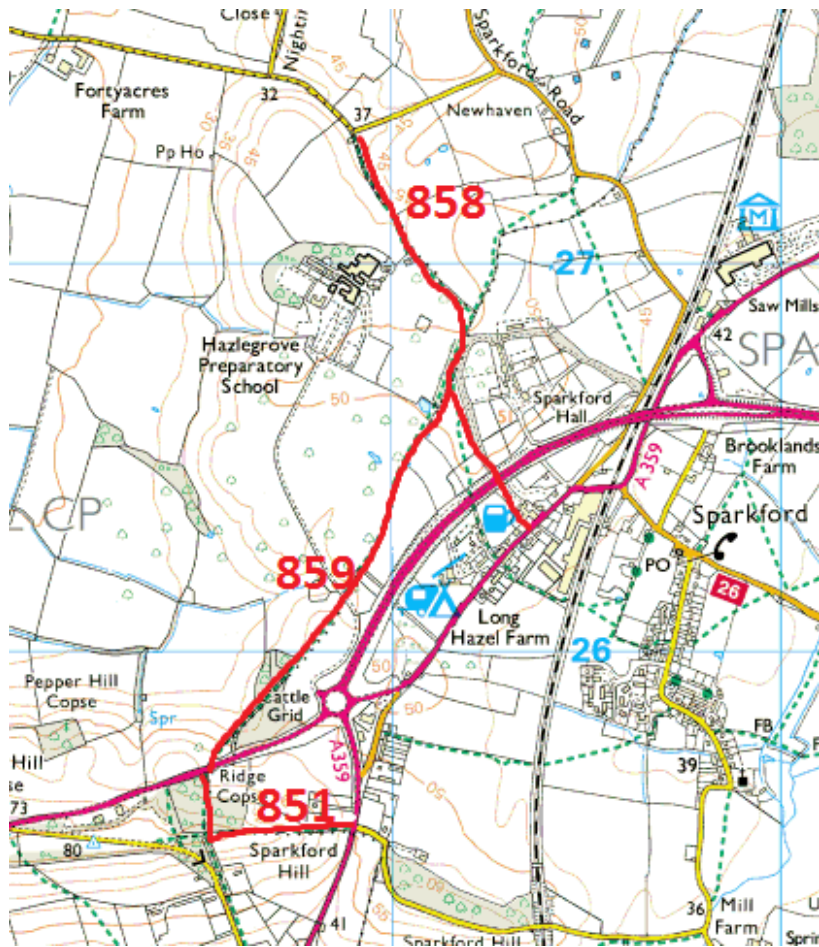
³ The legality of this bridleway is now being questioned. It was awarded in the side roads orders of 1996 but never legally processed by Somerset County Council.

- When this scheme was announced the South Somerset Bridleways Association checked historical records to find evidence of under-recorded public rights.
- As a consequence, we submitted the five applications listed below. The surveying authority, Somerset County Council, have indicated that they will not be in a position to process these applications for many decades. In order to take these applications out of turn, the DCO would have had to be granted by the Secretary of State, and only after that has happened, could they consider taking the applications out of turn. Even if that was agreed, the process would still take up to 3 years from the date the DCO was granted.
- What the evidence shows is a matter of fact and, to some extent, interpretation of the historic evidence. These will not be new rights, but will be the correct recording of historical rights. It is not in HE's power or gift to decide whether they should be recorded as bridleways, restricted byways or any other status. The applications are for the historical line of the routes. Diversions can be applied for and the SSBA would support these.
- These applications are all for through routes, not cul de sacs. HE is concerned about unauthorised use and possible illegal encampments. Unauthorised use can be discouraged by 'furniture' such as a Kent Carriage Gap. Unauthorised or illegal encampments are less likely to occur on through routes than on cul de sac routes. We note that HE's design includes several cul de sac routes, so the logic of not wanting to have through routes with restricted byway status recorded is not entirely logical.

DMMO applications made:

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 851 | Sparkford | From B3151 along Ridge Copse and northwards to the A303 carriageway |
| 858 | Sparkford Inn to South Barrow | |
| 859 | Queen Camel | Hazlegrove Lane |
| 861 ⁴ | Podimore/Yeovilton | Eastmead Lane |
| 862 | Podimore/Yeovilton | Higher Farm Lane |

⁴ The plans which HE appear to be working with show the northern extension of Eastmead Lane into Cary Fitzpaine as a bridleway, whereas it is a definitive restricted byway, L 6/26. DMMO application 861 seeks to record restricted byway rights for the whole length of Eastmead Lane, so connecting the northern section in Cary Fitzpaine with restricted byway Y 27/26, Downhead Lane in West Camel.



6. Bridleway Y 30/29 in Podimore

This bridleway is shown on the HE scheme plans as a definitive bridleway. This was awarded in the 1996 Side Roads Orders. South Somerset Bridleways Association has believed it to be a bridleway and have asked the surveying authority on very many occasions over the years to record it on the definitive maps and statement. We were never informed that it was not a legal bridleway, and have thus assumed that it was a shortage of resources that was preventing the surveying authority from adding it to the definitive map. Had we been informed that it was not going to be recorded, we would have submitted a LEMO application (Legal Event Modification Order application) citing the side roads orders as the legal event.

As the situation is now in the spotlight, we make the following suggestion, which should satisfy the landowner on the northern side of the hedge, where the line of the bridleway was created.

We understand that the land on the south side of the hedge is now in the ownership of HE and will be used as a construction track and to create drainage ponds in the eastern end of this long field alongside the existing A303 eastbound carriageway.

This bridleway was the link between Podimore and Eastmead Lane. The last few yards at the southern end of Eastmead land, between the existing 303 and the old A303 was legally stopped up when the existing bypass was constructed in 1996. We believe that the bridleway was created in order to connect Eastmead Lane with Podimore. The road over Podimore bridge was always assumed to carry public motorised vehicle rights, and has a dead end sign and a 30 mph limit sign, which indicates this to road users.

We were disappointed to hear at the hearing on Friday 1st. March 2019 that HE intend to revoke the side roads order which created this bridleway without consultation or making alternative provisions or mitigation. In doing so, this is contrary to all HE policies on connectivity and making provision for all road users including equestrians and cyclists. The connection between Eastmead Lane and Podimore depends on this bridleway.

7. A. horse riders and carriage drivers:

- Typically horse riders will hope to ride out in a loop (as opposed to a linear route and turn back along the same route) with as little distance on the roads as possible.
- We average, when hacking out, around 4 miles an hour, possibly more if the surface allows.
- The length of ride will depend on how much time, and daylight, is available. An average ride may be 2 hours, but some will be shorter and some a lot longer.
- Riders may ride out at any time of day, professional riders will often ride out early in the morning, those in full time employment may ride out before or after work, and the retired and those on holiday can be out at any time. Many horses are ridden on the weekends if not exercised much during the week.
- Those on a riding holiday will ride for longer, and possibly on a linear route taking them further through the county each day. This is of great benefit to the local economy as this brings visitors into the area and all supplies will be bought locally. Riders also occasionally use local shops and pubs for refreshments.
- All horses, including competition horses, need exercise and they use the rights of way network.

Problems for horse riders and carriage drivers



- We cannot clear a route if it is blocked by a fallen tree or locked gate or barbed wire.
- We cannot whistle up an uber and be collected and driven home
- Very few can whistle up a horse box and be collected from the nearest road
- We cannot park up, lock up and come back the next day - the horse needs to be somewhere safe overnight
- The only option when a path is blocked (and between fences or deep ditches) and we cannot get round the obstruction is to turn back; we will need to retrace our steps or find an alternative route. There may be several scenarios.
 - o Almost double the length of the ride – and tiredness may become a factor
 - o Finish the ride in the dark/dusk (options may then be on the lanes where you won't be seen, or on a major road where you will be seen –answer: 'it depends on the individual horse and the specific road and the distance on that particular stretch of road')
 - o Take a different / shorter route back to the starting point- and this may mean riding on a major road
 - o Finding a field to put the horse in and come back the next day is almost impossible and impractical.

So, this supports the argument that diversions should be designed to minimise the lengths of 'enforced retreats'.



Or if possible scuff off the top surface and have a horse that limbos!