

ADVICE ON
Diverting a Right of Way

The
British
Horse
Society



The British Horse Society accepts that for a variety of reasons it may be necessary or advisable to divert a right of way from its original line. Where it is proposed to divert a bridleway the policy of the Society is as follows:

The reasons for proposing a diversion should be made clear.

- 1 Where a bridleway is of historical value and/or lies against or between defined boundaries (walls, hedges or trees), very careful consideration should be applied to the need to divert. Every effort should be made to avoid diverting such well established and usually firm surfaced ways.
- 2 The proposed new line of the path should be as safe and as commodious and convenient as the original. The new route should be carefully chosen in respect of its foundation and surface. The proposed width of the new path should be stated in the order, and should preferably be four or five metres. More than three metres is preferred wherever a bridleway is not over open ground because structures such as fences, walls, hedges, banks, ditches and vegetation prevent all users from using the full width of the path and to pass each other safely ideally requires three metres clear usable width between structures or vegetation, including space for shoulders or rider's legs. Even two pedestrians passing shoulder to shoulder need closer to two metres than one.
- 3 The Society strongly disapproves of attempts to divert public rights of way along vehicular routes, such as estate roads for instance. In addition to being hazardous, this means the extinguishment of the right of way which is subsumed in the carriageway.
- 4 The Society is strongly against proposals that would be substantially less safe or less convenient. The Society does not however, object in principle to diversions that are longer than the original way. Situations should be dealt with on their merits in the interests of local riders.
- 5 The Society does not, in principle, oppose the diversion of a bridleway on to the headland of a field, except where such a diversion would be inconsistent with point three above and if the width dedicated along the boundary provides a clear useable width of at least three metres (two above).
- 6 The Rights of Way Review Committee, a non-statutory grouping of all interests concerned with rights of way, has recommended to all Order Making Authorities the adoption of a Code of Practice (RWRC PGN 1) on the consultation of user bodies before making orders to alter the route or status of rights of way. The Society hopes that all councils will adopt this Code of Practice. Discussions between interested parties should centre upon the best way of ensuring that the right of the public to the use and enjoyment of the way will be maintained over the new line.

If this advice note is a printed copy, please check for the latest version on www.bhs.org.uk/access-and-bridleways

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