



MID COTSWOLD TRACKS & TRAILS GROUP

Helping to improve our tracks and trails ... from this generation to the next ...

Newsletter update - February 4th 2011

Glad Tidings of Great Joy !

This greeting may seem a little out of season - but it certainly feels like Christmas again to us ! Our "Happy New Year" has kicked off with two pieces of good news.

First: NEW PERMISSIVE BRIDLEWAY

At the request of local riders, MCTTG approached the National Trust to request consideration of a route from Robbers Road (Ruscombe) to Cripplegate (Haresfield Beacon). Bridleways exist at both ends of the route, and a permissive bridleway runs along the bottom of the wood, but at these points, riders have been required to go out through the lanes and onto the very busy road which goes from Whiteshill to Edge, to complete a circuit. Tim Jenkins of The National Trust immediately responded with an offer of a permissive bridleway through this top part of the wood to solve this problem.

Tim will be marking the route later in the year, as he wants to use posts made from larch felled in Standish wood to do this, and the clearing will take place in the spring.

Will local riders please take note that Tim requests consideration of the surface during the worst of the wet weather, and also that riders do not go off of the main route - this route goes through one of the most spectacular displays of bluebells on National Trust properties, and is very highly valued, and any damage to this or to other tracks would not be fair to them as managers of the wood. He also asks riders to take care exiting onto the lane at Cripplegate, as the gate is next to the car park.

The work schedule for the change to Permissive Bridleway only requires the waymarking (which Tim has kindly offered to do) and the purchase of a new rider latch for the Cripplegate exit/entry. By way of showing appreciation for the new route, local riders and MCTTG have offered to purchase the new rider latch, and the money for this has now been pledged and will be handed over shortly. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to The National Trust for their quick and kindly response in this - we have already received "hurras" from many local riders.

Second: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S NEW INITIATIVE ON SLIPPERY TARMAc

At the suggestion of MCTTG member Caroline Barnes, I joined her for a meeting with a representative of Gloucestershire Highways to explain the problems of slippery tarmac with regard to the safety of riders. We took him to see an area at Amberley that was now totally impassable because of new, edge to edge, "slippery" tarmac. He was very sympathetic, and readily agreed that Highways should consider the safety of horses when re-surfacing in future.

MCTTG then contacted Stan Waddington, Chair of Gloucester County Council's Cabinet for Highways and Waste, to ask the Cabinet to give it's support to the proposal, as the

Cabinet makes the policy the Highways work to. Caroline then took Mr Waddington to see two problem areas, and explained the difficulties of slippery roads for riders.

We also supplied both Highways and the Cabinet with:

- * Maps showing the high number of equine paddocks in 3 different areas,
- * 3 maps marked up and annotated with the particular problems of slippery roads in those areas
- * A list of 158 equine businesses, spread right across the Gloucestershire post code districts, which are reliant on good roads and tracks to support their businesses.

When discussing the problems of targeting high-equine use areas, it was agreed that, as riders frequently ride circuits from 2 miles to 16 or 20 miles, all rural roads are potentially used by riders, and therefore all rural roads should be included. Trunk (A) roads, and urban roads are excluded from automatic consideration, although we have highlighted the need for stretches that link lanes and stables etc to be horse friendly also. This aspect will need attention in the future.

Retrospective improvements to all existing slippery tarmac is not possible financially at the moment, but we will be looking at this problem with them soon. Please don't swamp Highways with notification of every bit of slippery road in the county or they will disappear under paperwork ! (see below*)

Mark Weston, BHS Director for Access, has prepared a statement congratulating GCC for their initiative, and he has sent round to BHS officers in other areas of the country to see if other Counties can be encouraged to follow Gloucestershire's example, and declare that horse-friendly surfaces will be used on all rural roads in the future.

There are some technical aspects of surface choice that feature in a leaflet prepared by BHS and the Chartered Surveyors Society, which Highways and Cabinet are considering.

MCTTG MEETINGS

As the new committee members come from as far apart as Dursley and Elkstone, we are meeting at The Ragged Cot, Minch, rather than The Britannia at Nailsworth. We are only able to book a table here (unlike the room booked previously), so space is at a premium. If you would like to come to a meeting to find out more, you will need to check with Lois (01242 870375) to see if room might be possible. Alternatively, you can contact Pat for a chat anytime to see what is going on or to discuss any issue you want to talk about. (01453 823841 info@midcotswoldtrails.org.uk).

In order to be accessible we are also planning an **OPEN DAY with POLICE TACK MARKING**, and are trying to sort out a date. We will have maps there to mark up the worst of the *slippery roads on..... I will let you know more soon.

SIGN UP FREE AND SUPPORT US

We are keen to get members signed up to show the strength of rider support for improved tracks and trails. If you are pleased with these results, contact Sue Ellis and sign up with MCTTG (free membership is running until the October AGM, when all members can discuss whether we can continue without direct fees or not). Sue is at - sueatwillowbank@btinternet.com

Ongoing we are working on several track projects with various landowners and other interested parties which we hope to tell you about very soon, and Lois is liaising with BHS on the final stages of producing Cotswolds on Horseback, this has been a mammoth task that leaves us awestruck !!!

Bye for now Keeeeeeeeeeep Riding !

Pat