

From: [REDACTED]
To: [TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE](#)
Subject: Re: Bridleway - Tackley, Oxfordshire
Date: 25 January 2024 12:46:20

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Dear Shenaz

Thanks very much. Here it is:

[REDACTED]

Best wishes.

Bernadette

On Thursday, 25 January 2024 at 12:09:13 GMT, TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE <transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your email citing your objection to the above Order. In order to register your objection, we require a postal address?

Kind regards

Shenaz Choudhary

Ms Shenaz Choudhary | Planning Casework Officer, Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit, Department for Transport

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 6:12 PM
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE <TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE@dft.gov.uk>
Subject: Bridleway - Tackley, Oxfordshire

Re: Bridleway proposal to run alongside the train track at Tackley. Below is a longer email which was sent to Network Rail.

1. I have organised rides on behalf of the Pony Club for children on the old route which used to cross the railway. I am required to carry out a risk assessment for this in advance. The proposed new bridleway route which would run alongside the trains would not pass a risk assessment and we would no longer be able to use it for Pony Club rides.
2. Network Rail used an equine consultant to inform them of their decision, but this consultant did not visit the site (nor has ever been to the site) to see the particular issues there are. Experienced local opinion was ignored.

Best wishes.

Bernadette Evans

Former Branch Secretary

Bicester and Warden Hill Branch of the Pony Club

BELOW IS MY ORIGINAL EMAIL

I am writing to you as a former longstanding Branch Secretary of the Bicester and Warden Hill Branch of the Pony Club (with worldwide membership of 110,000 it makes it the largest association of young riders in the world). See the main website [here](#).

As Branch Secretary I organised our Branch one day event (eventing) for several years (80 volunteers, 150 competitors plus supporters at each event), long distance rides over three days (LDRs), fun rides, show jumping rallies, cross country rallies Road Rider tests and team training rallies. All of these have required a risk assessment to be carried out in advance. Some young riders are competent at riding in an arena but don't have the knowledge to be able to ride safely on a road or on their own across fields and bridleways. As a Branch we have always encouraged members to 'get out of the arena' and improve their skills by taking part in the LDRs and fun rides which we organised.

In terms of the proposed bridleway rerouting at Tackley I shall be referring to my experience of risk assessing for the LDRs, fun rides and Road Rider tests particularly.

Fun rides would normally comprise three age groups / ability levels.

The youngest age groups (age 4 - 8 approx) would typically be:

- i) on the lead rein (with their parent or helper leading)
- ii) or just off the lead rein (with their parent or helper next to them but not being lead).
- iii) some would only be capable of walking on their pony, while others would be capable of trotting, with a few being confident at canter.

The middle and older age groups (age 9 - 12 and over 12) would typically be:

- i) off the lead rein and capable of walking and trotting, or
- ii) off the lead rein and capable of walking, trotting and cantering
- iii) they would not be accompanied by a parent/helper.

There would be a wide range of rider abilities and levels of competence/awareness of hazards (this also applies to the parents/helpers). Horses and ponies have an innate flight trigger which they would have used to escape from predators in the wild (it's stronger in some horses than others) and therefore we try to identify and eliminate sources of danger on our rides. These can include checking the route for badger and rabbit holes (which horses can put a leg in resulting in anything from tripping to breaking a leg), movement of tractors and farm machinery (particularly at harvest time), low branches (meaning children have to duck if it's not too low or us having to arrange to remove it), fallen trees etc. If we were crossing a main road, we would arrange for there to be an appropriately trained marshal to ensure we

could cross safely. Suitably qualified instructors and adult riders accompany the rides (one of them would be trained in first aid).

We have run both LDRs and fun rides through Tackley (from Northbrook Farm) - both of which have involved crossing the railway.

I have been to visit the proposed route of the bridleway (running alongside the railway) and would not be able to sign it off in a risk assessment.

1. It's been suggested that horses could 'use the middle of the adjacent field' to move into when a train comes but with or without a fence (although we understand the landowner wants to put in a fence) the route is unsafe.
2. The narrow area proposed would be shared with bike riders and pedestrians. Some horses spook (the flight response) at pedestrians with rucksacks (as they're unused to seeing a human with a large 'hump' on their backs and likely think that it's a predator attacking the human). They may also spook at pushchairs.
3. If a horse spooks and spins/bolts at a train while in such a narrow space near a pedestrian or cyclist there is the potential for them to get 'tangled' up with other non equestrian users of the route. Horses panic and bolt and as it's innate, many times there's nothing that can be done to stop them until they decide they're far enough away from the 'predator' (or train in this instance). The route is on the edge of the village of Tackley and as such is very well used by dog walkers, cyclists etc.
4. Riders should be able to feel safe on a bridleway.
5. The proposed reroute is around a mile and even if riders waited for one train to pass before venturing onto the route, at walk they would not be able to reach the other end before another train came.
6. The trains would be at head height meaning horses would be even more likely to react. Some horses may not respond at all to the train but trains can be a strong trigger to the flight response/bolting in horses. Indeed, at a LDR organised by me in recent years just the sound of a train (in a cutting between Stonesfield and North Leigh on the GWR line) made a sensitive, well bred horse bolt. The rider was unable to stop the horse.
7. New advice in the Highway Code says that drivers should pass 'wide and slow'. Trains can do neither yet they are as likely to cause a horse to react as a car/lorry. In addition the nature of the train being on tracks means the driver is unable to take action to slow or move away from a frightened horse in the way that a car/lorry driver could.
8. We've been told that the BHS guidelines are that bridleways can sometimes run alongside trains - even high speed ones. We would strongly dispute this. Some horses become used to riding alongside high speed trains, but some will struggle. In particular those horses who are not local may never have encountered a train - particularly one 'coming from nowhere' and at head height.

The main issues with this proposed route is that the trains are at head height, that it is so close to the railway, that it is so narrow and that it's shared with others who will not be able to 'get out of the way' of a bolting horse.

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