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Mr Colin Piper  
Countryside Service  
Recreation and Heritage Department  
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WINCHESTER  
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Your Ref: CEP/CR665

Our Ref: SU83.3

7 February 2005

Dear Mr Piper

**BROXHEAD AND KINGSLEY COMMONS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST  
WEALDEN HEATHS PHASE II SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA**

**APPLICATION TO RECORD PUBLIC BRIDLEWAYS ON BROXHEAD COMMON,  
HEADLEY, SECTION 53 WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981**

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2005 relating to the above application to record public bridleways on Broxhead Common as shown in your attached map. I visited the Common on 3 February to look at the proposals.

The proposals relate to land within Broxhead and Kingsley Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA).

Broxhead Common is notified as an SSSI for its important and rare lowland heathland and acid grassland habitats.

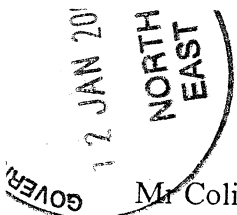
I understand from our recent conversation that Hampshire County Council has a duty to keep bridleways open and accessible. I understand that the instatement of public bridleways at Broxhead Common would require the cutting back/removal of vegetation along proposed routes to create paths of approximately 3m wide.

Although it is difficult to tell from the map where exactly on the ground the proposed public bridleways will be sited, it appears that heathland and acid grassland vegetation would need to be cutback and/or removed along most of the proposed routes. Vegetation affected includes ling and bell heather (*Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica cinerea*), gorse (*Ulex spp*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and associated heathland and acid grassland forbs, grasses, bryophytes and lichens.

It is likely that use of the bridleways, if instated, would result in areas of heathland and grassland along the new routes becoming trodden and poached, resulting in the vegetation dying back across the 3m wide paths and producing expanses of bare ground. This situation can be seen on Bridleway 46, which runs across Broxhead Common.

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Any reduction in the extent and quality of the SSSI features (heathland, grassland and associated species) is not compatible with the objectives for this site.

It is English Nature's opinion that the proposed instatement of these bridleways **is likely to cause significant harm to Broxhead and Kingsley Commons SSSI.**

**In the circumstances, if Hampshire County Council sought assent for the instatement of these public bridleways, English Nature would not be in a position to assent to the proposals.**

I would be grateful if you could keep me informed on the progress of this application.

Thank you for consulting us on this application.

Yours sincerely

*Rachel Urwin*

Rachel Urwin  
Assistant Conservation Officer

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