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Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Network Delivery and Development
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c/o Andrew Saint
Environment & Infrastructure
Surrey County Council
Room 365, County Hall
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT1 2DY

18 June 2010

Dear Sir

CONSULTATION ON CLOSURE OF THE GAPS IN THE CENTRAL RESERVATION AT THE JUNCTION OF THE A3 PORTSMOUTH ROAD WITH LEA COACH ROAD AND WARREN MERE

I write to you on behalf of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum which was established as an independent organisation¹ under the terms of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its purpose is to advise relevant bodies on the improvement of public access to land in Surrey for the purpose of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. All Section 94(4) bodies, including the Highways Agency, have a statutory duty to have regard to the advice of the Forum.

The Forum objects to the closure of the gaps in the central reservation at the junction of the A3 Portsmouth Road with Lea Coach Road and Warren Mere. A minute of the meeting with the Highways Agency on 23 October 2002 records the British Horse Society advising the Highways Agency that this crossing 'is vital for horses'. The minute also records an action on the Highways Agency to evaluate the crossing. The Forum is not aware of any change in BHS position in relation to this crossing.

It is understood that the Highways Agency's current design advice is that 'informal at-grade equestrian crossings are not recommended on roads with 120 kph design speed'. However it does not rule out such crossings altogether, suggesting that they will be sufficient where it is not possible to provide something better.

The purpose given for the gap closure is to improve safety on the A3. The statistics provided indicate that only one personal injury accident (PIA) involving a non-motorised user (NMU) occurred during the five-year period from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2007. Our information is that this accident was some distance away on the main highway and not as a result of the bridleway crossing.

The crossing provides a link between Bridleway No.68 Thursley and Bridleway no. 115 Witley and also Bridleway 101b Thursley and Bridleway No. 117 Thursley. If the gap is closed, as proposed,

¹ Please note that the advice contained within this letter is that of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum which, although administered by Surrey County Council, is entirely independent.

the bridleways will become cul-de-sac paths ending either side of the A3. Bridleway 101 Thursley also meets the A3 at a point within the proposed scheme. If traffic were to be re-directed over the bridge at the Thursley Junction, alternative paths would have to be provided if the rights of way affected are to remain connected. These alternative paths would add a minimum of some 2.4 km to the journey, which is a significant distance for certain users and may not be considered reasonable.

Unlike similar situations on the A1, A22, A41 and many other trunk roads, the sight lines on the A3 are good and NMUs and traffic can see each other at the point of the crossing.

If safety is the Highways Agency's main consideration in this matter the Forum would encourage it to consider building a bridge over the A3 to maintain the links in the rights of way network.

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum would welcome any comment or feedback which you might have on our response to your consultation and is of course more than willing to expand on, or clarify, any of the above points if necessary.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saint
Secretary to Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Please note that in the interests of open government, responses to this letter may be disclosed to the public and may be summarised for inclusion in committee reports.