

ePetition - Bridlepaths - Staffordshire County Council
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This ePetition ran from 16/10/2013 to 16/04/2014 and has now finished.

Council response

The lack of bridlepaths in certain areas of Staffordshire is historical and it is necessary to provide an overview of the reasons why in this response.

In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 required County Councils to undertake surveys of the land in their area to enable the preparation of a draft map of public rights of way. Under s28 of the 1949 Act the county councils were to consult the parishes and districts within their area

and it was the duty of these bodies, where arrangements had been made, to provide information regarding rights of way. The parish councils were issued guidance to assist in their surveys and this was contained in a pamphlet compiled by the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society and entitled "Survey of Rights of Way".

This document provided guidance for parish surveyors on how to classify the routes they surveyed. Included in this advice were the acronyms CRB and CRF. The

definitions given by the Society in the accompanying text was "highways which the public are entitled to use with vehicles but which, in practice, are mainly used by them as footpaths or bridleways" or as stated elsewhere in the pamphlet "a public carriage or cart road or green unmetalled lane mainly used as footpath

or bridleway". The use of these acronyms led to entries on survey cards which could not be used on the Definitive Map and Statement. In Staffordshire this resulted in the majority of these routes being included in the map and statement

as RUPPs as the latter was the type of way best suited to that description. Many

of the survey cards contain the annotation "RP" which was shorthand for the expression "road used as a public path" ("RUPP"), a descriptive term contained in section 27 of the 1949 Act. This stated that a RUPP was "a highway, other than a public path, used by the public mainly for the purposes for which footpaths or bridleways are so used". It was intended to include a public carriage or cart road or green, unmetalled lane mainly used as a footpath or bridleway.

Under the Countryside Act 1968 each Road Used as a Public Path (RUPP) had to be reclassified as either a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), Public Bridleway or Public Footpath. In 1969 the County Council prepared its First (General) and Special Review of the Definitive Map. The review had a relevant date of 30 September 1969 and was duly advertised in the London Gazette and local newspapers and placed on public deposit between August and December 1971. There were a number of objections about the reclassification of the RUPP's amongst other issues following the review and, after all of these had been determined, the 1st and Special Review of the Definitive Map was published in 1988.

The review led to all of the RUPP's being reclassified and since 1989 the County

Council has received a number of applications made under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 alleging that certain routes were incorrectly recorded or are not shown on the Definitive Map. Officers are working to try and resolve these cases. The County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) acknowledges the percentage of the rights of way network that is available to horse riders and cyclists is below the national average and is committed to working with landowners to see if there are opportunities for upgrading public footpaths or creating public bridleways on their land. In cases outside of the section 53 process the co-operation of landowners is required and this makes the creation of equestrian rights on land difficult to achieve.

The Rights of Way team would be keen to know of any locations where bridlepaths have been blocked by landowners so that these can be investigated by the County Ranger Service. Access for horse riders on County Council owned land is promoted

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in certain areas where the risk of conflict with other users is low and we would be happy to provide further details about this if required.