

Foot path / Cycle path on Narcot Lane from Chalfont St Giles (Threehouseholds) to Chalfont St Peter (Gold Hill)

Guidance from Bucks County Council - Horses are not permitted on the tarmac path but are permitted on grass verges

The South Bucks local press carried complaints from residents and pedestrians of horse riders on the footpath/cycle path along Narcot Lane. Representatives of the Hodgemoor Riding Association, with 220 riding members in the local area, took this issue seriously and informed our members in no uncertain terms of their obligation in law to stay off this path; but some riders are not members.

The main problem was signage. Although there is a blue sign with a walker and a cyclist showing, there is no sign explicitly prohibiting a horse and rider. The HRA therefore raised this issue with the Bucks CC Planning Advisory and Compliance who are responsible for highways and these issues.

The HRA letter (August 22 2013) read as follows:

QUOTE

"The cycle and footpath along Narcot Lane, Chalfont St Giles is sometimes used by horse riders. This causes justifiable concern to walkers, cyclists and residents for three reasons; horse droppings, physical presence of a big beast in front of old or very young pedestrians and the accompanying verbal abuse in both directions. As representatives of the Hodgemoor Riding Association, we inform members in clearest terms that they have no right to use the path (and that in no circumstances should they insult other members of the public). Our efforts have two shortcomings however; a) the recalcitrant riders might not be members of the association and b) not all members read the mail and emails from us.

There are two potential remedies which you could advise us on.

1) The Narcot Lane cycle and footpath has a couple of small circular blue signs each with a pedestrian and a cyclist logo which authorises the use of the path by those two groups. However, a blue sign is generally for information only (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/223943/traffic-signs-manual-chapter-03.pdf) and some horse-riders might not accept that horses are forbidden. The same signs manual states that the signs used on Narcot Lane "prohibit use by other vehicles"; no-one would consider that a horse is a vehicle in the context of the Highway Code. Our point is that there should be signs which explicitly forbid horses. Furthermore they should be in plain English "Horses prohibited" or similar, and not a picture of a horse on white in a red circle which is not intuitively a prohibition sign. Such signs could be on the same posts as the blue cycle and footpath signs. We considered putting up signs to this effect ourselves but have been advised against. Over to Bucks CC.

2) Enforcement starts with identification of the miscreants, not verbal argy-bargy. So we ask whether we can inform the public of the need to ask the rider their name and to take a photograph. So many people have smart phones now that a quick snap is easy. We would be willing to look at such photos to see if we can identify the horse and rider for them. The complainant could also forward the photo to the local police for action. Can you advise us on the legality of taking photos and whether there are successful precedents?

In the meantime, the Hodgemoor Riding Association is in fine form with continued investment (from membership fees and fundraising events) in the trails in the woods to

encourage horse-riders to get off the roads and we are mindful of our debt to Bucks CC for the help over the years."

END OF QUOTE

I was pleased that the Bucks CC response of 28th August started "Good to hear from you and thank you for your balanced and supportive letter." They agreed to speak to Highways colleagues and see if the signage could be arranged. They were also going to raise the topic at the next Local Area Forum (LAF) meeting in October, which has attendance from Parish, District and County Councillors, and the Police and which may be able to suggest the best way forward in terms of enforcement. However, as of February 2014 no feedback has been received about LAF's input.

We received on 4th February 2014 a definitive email from Bucks CC, in the person of Corinne Waldron, BSc (Hons), Area Rights Of Way Officer, South Buckinghamshire.

QUOTE

It is permitted that members of the public may utilise a section of Highway verge for the purpose of safety. I am happy that horse riders use the verge for this reason as I am aware that traffic can be fast moving along Narcot Lane.

The surfaced Footway/cycleway has been specifically designated for this purpose, therefore horse riders should not be using the surfaced route.

However, there is no reason why they cannot walk along the grassed verge beside the path. Riders do so at their own risk and I ask them to adopt appropriate care and attention when doing so, so as not to cause concern to other path users in the area.

END OF QUOTE

The Hodgemoor Riding Association therefore advises its members only to use the grass verge when there is traffic, and to adopt appropriate care and attention when doing so, so as not to cause concern to other path users in the area. The signage will make this clear to riders who are not members.

Bucks CC also agreed to put up waterproof signs clarifying this issue, and the sign is reproduced below. There will also be, when stock can be found, circular signs showing that horse riders are not permitted on the tarmac path.

We are pleased to have played a role in getting the law understood and in helping all users to feel their interests have been upheld.

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4th Feb 2014

Communities &
Built Environment

Buckinghamshire County Council
Place Services
Transport for Buckinghamshire
Rights of Way Operations
New County Offices, Walton Street
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
HP20 1UY

Telephone 0845 2302882
www.buckscc.gov.uk
Date: 4th February 2014

Footway/Cycle Path Beside **Narcot Lane**

This path has been created on a piece of Highway verge. The path itself is a designated walking and cycling route **only**.

Horse riders – You are permitted to use the grassed sections of Highway verge for safety purposes. Please refrain from using the surfaced path as it causes damage.