

# HODGEMOOR RIDING ASSOCIATION



## Hodgemoor "Riding By Permit Only" - Consultation 2007

The Hodgemoor Riding Association is proposing to enforce, subject to consultation with members and a vote at the AGM, a "riding by permit only" regime on the permissive trails in Hodgemoor Wood.

Some background information. Hodgemoor Wood is owned by Buckinghamshire County Council but is leased to the Forestry Commission for management. Both parties have recently cooperated with us in contracting a concession in our favour, agreed in principle when we started works in the woods in the late 90s, which gives us the right to regulate the use of the wood by riders. This is in exchange for and recognition of our stewardship of the trails, our respect for the rights of all users of the woods as a public amenity and the £60,000 we have raised or the repair and maintenance of the trails. Bear in mind that the Forestry Commission in 1998 was close to banning horses from Hodgemoor Wood altogether because of the damage being done to the woods by riders wandering everywhere, the extensive muddy areas and complaints from walkers. Since our work on the trails and cooperation with Forestry Commission on new trails and trails which have been closed, they have been as pleased with the result - as have the walkers and cyclists. The work has been acknowledged by English Nature, Groundwork, Sustrans, Bucks CC and the British Horse Society and is generally considered as an example of the ideal cooperation between users and owners of such a site.

There are several reasons which trigger the need for a permit system:

1. If we do not fund the continuing repairs then Forestry Commission will withdraw the permission for riding on the permissive trails in the wood.
2. Membership fees are an essential component of the funding of the maintenance of the trails in the wood, and a healthy membership in numbers gives the association a stronger voice in raising other funding for repairs.
3. Newcomers to the area who are tempted to ride in the wood are not aware of the history and of how lucky they (we) are to be able to ride in the wood at all. A newcomer sees an open wood, and fantastic trails, and is justified in assuming that it is a publicly funded facility at their disposal. Wrong. It's us that raises the money, i.e. you.
4. With this in mind, it seems fair that all riders in the wood contribute to its upkeep by joining the association and by paying the extremely modest membership fee. It is fair to those that contribute, by effort or by membership of the Hodgemoor Riding Association that the facilities are not available to those who do not contribute.
5. There is much to be gained from a communal sense of ownership, which leads to the notion of "care". We would like to foster the feeling that "I am a member of the association which has made this facility, I enjoy being part of its maintenance, and I feel good about being here and being part of this success story". A sense of belonging. "Care" comes as a result, and this is manifested by participation in fund raising events, occasionally coming into the wood with a working party to cut back encroaching trees and helping in other ways.
6. If all riders in the wood are registered members then it is easier for the association to communicate to all members issues which concern riders and the woods (such as requesting riders not to cut the corners, what to do about illegal motorcyclist in the wood etc)

Our agreement with the Forestry Commission gives us the right to enforce a permit scheme on the permissive trails. This right does not extend to the 2 bridle paths which are public rights of ways to horses and pedal cycles. We have discussed the project with Forestry Commission and Bucks County Council and have their support for a regime based on the following principles:

- a. The permit-only regime would not be enforced in a draconian manner but would be intended to prey on people's sense of guilt, or, better, their sense of communal responsibility.
- b. The entrance to paths which are subject to permit will be marked with a Forestry Commission sign saying "Riding by permit only" similar to the one at the old entrance to the wood from Bottrells Lane. The web address and the phone number for applying for a permit would be displayed.
- c. Paid up members would be provided with a means of identification when on horseback in the wood. Present opinion at committee level is focussed on a fluorescent hat band or bridle tag with a metallic Hodgemoor Riding Association pin with the year of validity. The yearly update would be by a sticker. For those who do not want to wear a hat band, the pin can be worn on a bridle tag.
- d. All association members on horseback could choose to ask riders who do not display their badge whether they are members. Information could be given.
- e. Committee members will from time to time spend some time at a key entrance (such as the Rawlings Lane entrance next to Waylands) to point out to miscreants the obligation to have a permit to use the permissive trails in the woods.

There are several riders we know and love who have never been members, and, as part of the consultation, we would like to ask them about their reasons for not being a member. Their answers might help us perfect the system. Please pass on this paper to anyone you know who might fall in to this category. We are circulating this paper to all members and some other stakeholders including villagers to give them time to consider it in advance of the AGM of the association on Monday 22nd October. If the feedback is positive we would put it to the vote at the AGM for validity from Jan 1 2008. Thanks for your continuing support.

Marcus Bicknell  
Chairman

Susie Bicknell  
Secretary  
19 September 2007

Hodgemoor Riding Association

Homefarm Orchard, Threehouseholds, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks HP8 4LP

Phone 01494 872447

Email [susie@hodgemoor.org.uk](mailto:susie@hodgemoor.org.uk)