

Geufron,
Mynydd Llandegai
Bangor,
Gwynedd
LL 57 4AX

28th January 2011

Derec Morgan
Principal Engineer
Gwynedd Consultancy
Gwynedd Council
Swyddfeydd y Sir
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Ref: Proposal to Improve Bridleway at Penmorfa, Tremadog

Thanks you for your email dated 12th January 2011 requesting the views of the British horse Society on proposals to carry out works on the bridleway between Penmorfa and Tremadog as follows:

- surfacing the whole route with tar macadam
- surfacing from Ysgol y Gorlan to Ysbyty Alltwen with tar macadam
- rebuilding field boundaries adjacent to route
- relocating gates
- improving drainage at specific locations

I make the following comments:

1) It is the British Horse Society's recommendation that the surfaces of all bridleways should not be tarmac. Hard surfaces can have a damaging effect on the structure of a horse's legs because of shock and the inability of the hoof to have a limited slip. The optimum material and surface is a finely crushed slate which is both soft on the surface but compacted beneath. This is both a sustainable and locally sourced material which does not detract from the rural environment of this route. It has been used successfully for a number of years on Lonydd Las multi-user routes in Gwynedd with great success.

As British Horse Society Access Officer I have raised the matter of proposed the works with local riders who use this route. The route is considered a significant network link in avoiding the frequently restricted A487 through Penmorfa and linking through to the relatively quiet roads to Garndolbenmanen and Cwm Pennant. This route was identified in the British Horse Society's Snowdonia Bridleway Survey conducted in 2002 as being an important route.

2) Any field boundaries that are in close proximity to the route should be designed to recognize the potential for snagging rider's feet and knees at heights of between ground and 1.5 metres. In particular barbed wire should not be used on fences lining the route and sheep wire should be sufficiently set back so as not to create a hazard in catching rider's stirrups.

The width of the available route between boundaries should be appropriate and include passing places where necessary. Please advise proposals in terms of widths and passing places.

3) Any improvements to the entry/exit points to the bridleway must take into account the needs of equestrians. Bridleway gates should be 5 foot wide and able to open in both directions without dismounting. The size and nature of these gates fits well with DDA requirements. In considering the design of these gates there are many factors, for example headroom and adjacent walls and structures, that can come into play and affect safe operation by the equestrian. I would be very pleased to be able to provide advice on layout and safe design from the equestrian perspective. This can save considerable time and cost in avoiding reworking of gates that have been designed or constructed without the horse and rider in mind.

4) Drainage, both longitudinal and transverse, does not usually present a problem provided that gullies and covers are out of the ridden path and the design and materials used do not present potentially hazardous sharp edges or major changes in profiles.

As discussed in an earlier telephone conversation I am unclear as which Statutory Powers that the County considers give authority to carry out this work.

Can you please advise the Section(s) and Act(s) that Gwynedd Council considers empowers it to carry out the proposed works on the bridleway?

You should be aware that it is my view that having studied relevant case law that any proposal to tarmac the bridleway will make a significant change to its character and require formal Planning Permission. In addition the Environment Agency should be consulted on any proposal to harden surfaces. Please advise if consultations and Planning Applications have already been made.

Please confirm whether this project will be the subject of a Safety Audit and whether the Auditor will be experienced in recognizing the safety issues that affect equestrians.

I would be pleased to receive your response to the request for information made above and also to offer my assistance in being able to offer further advice on the final designs of furniture and surfacing as the project progresses.

Yours Sincerely

Michael Vitkovitch MICE AMIPROW

BHS Access Officer