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**Countryside
Access Forum
for
West Sussex**

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Our reference: JN/2009.01

Chris Bacon
Major Projects Leader
Highways Agency
2a Federated House
London Road
Dorking RH4 1SZ

2nd February 2009

Dear Mr Bacon

A23 Handcross to Warninglid Widening Scheme

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS). CAFWS is an **independent statutory advisory body** established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to give advice on countryside access matters. It has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape).

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex. Highways Agency is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

At a recent meeting on 29th January 2009 CAFWS became aware of the proposed important improvements to the A23 Trunk Road between Handcross and Warninglid. CAFWS has a particular interest as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for West Sussex, as recently adopted by WSCC, highlighted the fact that major roads in the county, including trunk roads can be a serious barrier to access to the countryside. Unfortunately, in the past insufficient thought was given to these issues at an early stage. CAFWS is anxious to work with the Highway Agency and WSCC to ensure that countryside access is considered as early as possible in future.

In the case of the A23, it does create a barrier for walkers, cyclists and horseriders and, within the context of the proposed works, there do seem to be opportunities to improve connections from east to west as well as to improve the safety of users. CAFWS would like to support the detailed comments made to you by The British Horse Society in their letter of 21st January 2008 (attached; Appendix 1) and ask that you do your best to incorporate these ideas at the next stage of planning. We understand that the WSCC Rights of Way section is supportive of the suggestions.

CAFWS understands that much can be achieved by making better use of the existing land take and the cost of the suggested modifications should not be significant. CAFWS has no wish to enter an objection to this scheme, but does ask that the Highway Agency looks again at the detailed plans and uses its best endeavours to address:

- the possibility of all vulnerable users benefiting from a safe route along the service road west of the A23 in Warninglid/Slaugham
- improved management of the verge at Handcross to provide safer links
- widen the range of users to benefit from the proposed new underpass

CAFWS has also requested that you might be able to attend a future meeting of the Forum to discuss the wider issues of the crossing of Trunk Roads by prows in West Sussex.

The Forum hopes these comments are helpful and looks forward to being involved at all stages of this and future consultations.

Yours faithfully



Jane Noble

Forum Officer, Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws>

Copy for information to:

Peter Brown – Chairman, CAFWS

Glynn Jones – Vice-Chairman, CAFWS

All members of CAFWS

Craig Bowdery – Secretary to the Forum

Christine Luff – WSCC Right of Way Team

Leader

Lisa Creaye-Griffin – WSCC Rural Operations Group
Manager

Deborah Urquhart – WSCC Cabinet Member for
Environment & Economy

Jon Perks – WSCC Principal Rights of Way Officer

Appendix 1

West Sussex

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Chris Bacon
Major Projects Leader
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2a
Federated House
London Road
Dorking RH4 1SZ

21st January 2009

Dear Mr Bacon

Re: A23 Handcross to Warninglid Widening Scheme

Thank you for your letter of 22nd October 2008 regarding the above scheme. This is an area with a large number of equestrians, but a lack of a cohesive network of rights of way and quiet roads available for their use, especially on the eastern side of the A23. Many use the underpass at Slaugham, and/or the bridge at Warninglid to access rights of way to the west, and would welcome any improvements that could be made to enhance the access network. This scheme does offer opportunities for improvement, but it is felt these have not been fully explored for all vulnerable users. There are three issues which are of concern to us and these are set out below:

1. Warninglid to Slaugham – West of A23.

Equestrians in the area would certainly use the service road on the western side from Warninglid, along with walkers and cyclists. However, the northernmost section, approx 800 metres, is shown as only being available to cyclists and pedestrians. This facility should be made available to all vulnerable users for all of its length to the Staplefield Road, which was requested in July 2003 in an email to David Pocknall. The 2m wide path for cyclists and pedestrians should be widened to nearer 3m, with appropriate screening and protection from A23 traffic. This would be of enormous benefit to the local equestrian community, creating new safe access and circular routes.

2. Handcross – Westside Sliproad.

Bridleway Slaugham 7 runs from the Staplefield Road in a northerly direction, and finishes at an exit point approximately halfway up the westside slip road at Handcross. This bridleway, also known as Park Road, is part of the High Weald Landscape Trail. In order to reach the B2110, Handcross, and the network of public rights of way beyond, walkers, cyclists and equestrians have to use the slip road, or the edge of the verge, even more of a problem if you are travelling south against the traffic flow. This is a very wide verge and, if the vegetation and brambles were cleared right back, there is room for a properly constructed path 2m path, to enable all users to avoid using

the sliproad and reach the B2110 in safety all year round. It is not felt that barriers would be required here, if there was sufficient verge between the path and the sliproad.

3. Proposed Subway Link for Footpaths Slaugham 14 & 15.

The proposed subway to link Footpaths Slaugham 14 and 15 presents an opportunity to provide a safe traffic free route under the A23 for all vulnerable users. Although, this is designed to link two footpaths, the scheme itself will change this scenario. On the western side, the proposed service road and path will provide a route available to cyclists and (in part) to equestrians (our request in 1. above will make this complete). On the eastern side, a link for cyclists and equestrians to Staplefield Lane (from Staplefield to the Warninglid junction), which is a quiet lane already well used by them, and signed as a cycle route, is being investigated through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, under the umbrella of the Local Transport Plan. Although the timescale for this response has not allowed this work to be completed, it is very likely this will happen in the next few months. The opportunity to provide a safe crossing point of the A23 for all vulnerable users, will not occur again, and there are many examples in the County, where the lack of a vision for the future, has resulted in deeply regretted missed opportunities. The changing situation should be taken into account in consideration of plans for the subway.

Due to the lack of inclusion of any improvements for equestrians in the scheme at present, The Society wishes to register an objection, especially as regards Points 1 and 2 above. However, we would be very happy to meet and discuss suggestions to deal with these concerns, and look forward to hearing further from you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tricia Butcher
County Access & Bridleways Officer