

From: Steve Gardner - highways
Sent: 28 September 2017 11:44
To: Hilary Winter
Cc: Ros Mills; Helen Clayton
Subject: Pegasus Trail: West Bowerland stone surface

Dear Hilary,

Thank you for your letter of 19th September 2017 passing on the advice of the Devon Countryside Access Forum in response to recent surfacing work on the Pegasus Trail, West Bowerland, Thorndon Cross. Please feel free to share my comments below with the Forum.

I have given this much consideration. As the DCAF is now aware, the surface of the route was improved in April 2017 by scraping off the surface mud, improving the drainage and laying and compacting a 40mm to dust stone surface. At that time, we took the decision to hold off on the planned application of 6mm to dust stone to the surface. This is because the surface appeared to be good without it. However, fairly soon afterwards, it was apparent that the surface was becoming loose (I think because of dry weather after surfacing) and stones coming to the surface. This is now an unsatisfactory surface for equestrian use and dog walking but appears to be good for walkers and cyclists.

Contrary to the DCAF suggestion that the route is primarily used by riders, data collected when the first phase of the Pegasus Trail opened would suggest that riders accounted, then, for between 10 and 20 percent of the total number of users (most use being on foot). As more of the Trail becomes available, I would expect a greater percentage of riders on the route.

The DCAF suggestion of putting woodchip on a central strip along the route is a good one. However, it must be remembered that this public bridleway is across privately-owned land and so we have to consider private land use too. The route is used by farm and forestry traffic but, of more significance, passes through a forestry plantation and along a tree-bound corridor. I am not a tree disease or biosecurity expert but do believe that tree disease could be spread by importing unscreened material of timber origin into a plantation. If even available, I should imagine that screened woodchip would be prohibitively expensive. Also, the County Council does not currently have sufficient time resource to run and manage trials on the network. I would still be very interested in a trial but, ideally, this would be run and managed by e.g. Natural England or the British Horse Society in the first instance and its guidance rolled out to highway authorities. South West Riders made a similar suggestion a few years ago, which was to use the contents of road sweepers on public bridleways. That idea was given consideration but we determined that, as such material could be contaminated with e.g. fuel, oil and glass, we could not condone spreading it on public ways across private land.

In light of the above, and in consideration of the advice in the former Countryside Agency's publication 'On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes', I can confirm that we still intend to dust the recently resurfaced section of Trail to

provide a good, low maintenance surface. This is accepting that, in years to come, the dust will need to be topped up and re-compacted –fairly standard trail maintenance work.

I would appreciate it if you could pass on my thanks to the DCAF for its time and advice on this subject and it certainly raises good questions and thought-provoking ideas about Trail maintenance in Devon.

Regards,

Steve

Steve Gardner

Public Rights of Way Senior Officer
Asset Management and Enforcement
Devon County Council