

Newsletter Spring 2024

Report of AGM and Talk on Thursday 25 January by Alan Hiscox, BHS Director of Safety at the BHS



Safer Riders, Safer Horses, Safer Drivers

Alan Hiscox, BHS Director of Safety gave a very informative talk about equestrian safety and showed some video clips. Alan has worked for the BHS for 10 years and still rides. He talked about his work much of which involves lobbying and working with the Police, RAF re low flying aircraft and motoring organisations.

Other incidents apart from road accidents and near misses include fireworks, dog issues and slippery roads and should all be reported via the Horse i app and What 3 words used if possible to accurately identify the location. Worryingly only 1 in 5 riders report incidents which means that the statistics are underestimated. In 2022 there were 103 incidents reported in Cheshire, 80% of which were drivers passing too close. The 2023 figures were not available at the time of the talk but there is an increase every year.

Alan pointed out that although it is 2 years since the changes to the Highway Code were introduced, many motorists were still unaware including that vehicles should now pass horses at no more than 10mph and must allow at least 2 metres of space when passing.

Alan stressed that there are three brains working on the roads – the rider, the motorist and the horse and this has been included in the Highway Code. Many of us didn't realise that the horse has huge peripheral vision as a flight animal and can see 143 degrees either side! Alan pointed out as riders we also have a duty to ride safely which means having control of the horse, being aware of the Highway Code, having adequate insurance, using high viz clothing and not using

mobile phones. Hand signals should be used clearly and the rider should be aware and constantly re-assess the situation on the road and be courteous to other road users. Alan also stressed that horses are safer if responsive, have the rider's attention and are desensitised.

Much of Alan's work has been with the Dead Slow campaign liaising with motoring organisation, driving instructors, ROSPA, HGV companies and organisers of speed awareness courses. Close Pass operations have also been organised and talks and films presented to young drivers and driving instructors.

This is the link to the BHS Dead Slow campaign site which now has the 2023 statistics:
<https://orlo.uk/HJt71>

PC Sarah Marson of Cheshire Police Rural Crime team also gave a short talk about her work which includes regular alerts about equestrian issues such as horse and tack theft and accidents. You can follow Cheshire Police Rural Crime Team on Facebook. They post many interesting and sometimes shocking articles about their daily work. If you haven't yet signed up, you can register for alerts on: <https://www.cheshirepolicealert.co.uk>

Sarah recommended that two colours of high viz help and high viz on horse's legs attract attention due to movement and some insurance companies now want two forms of high viz.

At this time of year riders should be particularly aware of the low sun which can affect visibility. Reports to the BHS I app are fed to the Police and again the use of What 3 words was recommended for reporting and was essential in more remote locations where an air ambulance may be required. Sarah was aware that reporting incidents to the Police was not easy but asked riders to keep trying via the website. Any dash cam footage helps but needs to be submitted within 7 days and needs the vehicle registration number to be visible to be processed. Sarah stated that it was often easier to use the anti-social behavior tab to report incidents. Finally on a positive note, Sarah points out that any examples of very good driving by companies can be notified as encouragement and that she often finds a thank you letter helpful.

For information, the latest alert from Sarah includes a link to Operation Gallop which deals with equine crime and has some useful advice notes. The link to this and their Facebook page is: [Operation Gallop](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552158061902) <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552158061902>

Membership

A reminder if you haven't already renewed your membership at the AGM, subs are now due. A form is enclosed with the email or you can click on the following link to an online form which most people find easier and pay by Paypal or BACS: <https://zfrmz.eu/jy2sLq6m72C2x9x11zkP>
The cost is still £10 for individuals or £15 for family membership and this supports our access work and helps towards the BHS affiliation fee which has increased again this year.

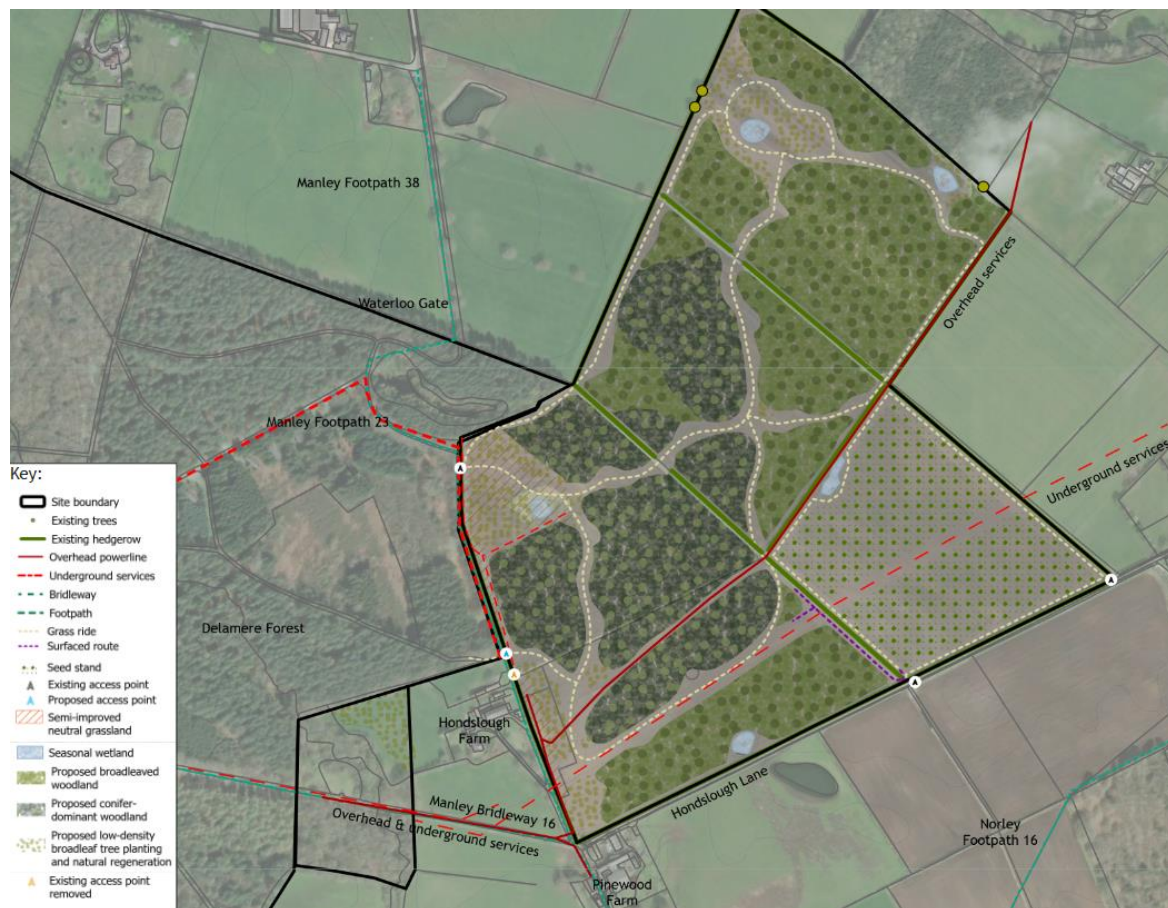
Delamere Forest News

At our last liaison meeting in December, Forestry England confirmed that the proposed Whitefield Fitness and Wellbeing Trail is due to go in this year. It will involve natural play and fitness equipment with signage but unfortunately is sited in one of the quieter areas of the Forest enjoyed by riders. We are awaiting further details so we can comment on the locations and make any comments. This is a planning condition for the Forest lodges application and therefore cannot be re-sited.

We discussed the problems encountered by some riders with loose dogs and pointed out that a horse had recently bolted due to a loose dog causing the rider to fall. We have asked for some

help from the BHS and have dropped off some leaflets with Forestry England. Apparently a company called Holistic Dog Services are running some dog workshops on some Saturdays at the Forest helping owners with recalling dogs. We also provided this link which has good advice for both riders and dog owners: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding/riding-out-hacking/common-incidents/dogs/>

The Hondslough extension to the Forest reported previously should be accessible from Spring as Open Access with grass rides through the planting which is ongoing. Access will only be available from the Forest as shown on the plan below and we will continue to lobby for better access for equestrians.



Incorporation

As a BHS affiliated group, MCBA has insurance to undertake activities in support of its aims. However, in the course of initial planning for an organised ride in 2023 it came to the attention of the committee that as an unincorporated organisation individual committee members could be held personally liable in the event of any legal challenges. As a result, the committee decided not to proceed with a planned ride in 2023 in favour of initiating activity to establish MCBA as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As a CIO, MCBA would become a legal entity in its own right, thereby minimising the liability of its volunteer committee members. This status will bring with it changes to the format of our constitution but not our aims and will require us to report on an annual basis to the Charity Commission. We will be in touch with members shortly to circulate details of our revised constitution. If you have any questions, please contact Helen Farmer.

Bridleway News

Bridleway Cuddington 16, part of the Delamere Loop has recently been cleared by Cheshire West and Chester Council thanks to action by the new Rights of Way team! A big improvement with room for users to pass safely now.

Bridleway Norley 6 has had the low tree branch removed over the gate at the Cow Lane end which makes it easier and safer for riders to negotiate.



Bridleway Cuddington 16

Winter Wonderland Challenge Ride

At the end of 2023 a Winter Wonderland Challenge Ride was organised with 17 riders completing 31 miles during December despite the short days and challenging weather including snow, frost, gales and rain! One rider even managed 51 miles! There were some excellent photos posted on our Facebook page and the prize for the best winter photo went to Wendy Chilton and the best festive photo to Chloe Walton. Well done to everyone as it certainly was a motivator! Quote from Sarah Capes *'Thanks again for making things like this happen and giving us all some motivation to have fun through the darkest days of owning horses'*.



Wendy Chilton braving the snow



Chloe Walton's festive mount

New Committee

Liz Holmes kindly took on this role or treasurer during 2023 as we didn't get any volunteers. Sadly Susie Adam stood down as Joint chair at the AGM due to her busy career and Helen Farmer and Kath Wurcbacher are now Joint Chairs. We are fortunate to have an active committee who ride out and help monitor routes but do really need one or two more committee members if anyone is willing to consider joining us and we now hold most of our meetings virtually. Please get in touch if you would like a chat about what this entails.

Kath Wurcbacher – Joint Chair

Helen Farmer - Membership Secretary / Joint Chair

Liz Holmes - Treasurer

Sue Griffiths – Secretary and Newsletters

Kathryn Steer - Website and Facebook Admin

Janene Hamilton - Delamere Forest Liaison

Harry Ziman / Anna Revitt – Committee members