



Dr Helen Phillips
Chief Executive
Natural England
1 East Parade
Sheffield
S1 2ET

13 November 2007

Dear Dr Phillips,

**Natural England Executive Board Meeting 14th November 2007
Discovering Lost Ways.**

I understand that at the above meeting you will be deliberating on the future of the Discovering Lost Ways Project.

The Equestrian Access Forum (which was formed as a result of the joint Defra/Horse Industry long term economic and social strategy) is disappointed at the failure to get a single lost route onto the Definitive Map and Statement. If the purpose of the relevant provision of the CROW Act 2000 was to achieve a real outcome, rather than simply make politically attractive noises, then the policy must so far be considered a failure.

This is particularly disturbing as the cut-off date of 1st January 2026 is getting ever closer: the complexity of the process of getting all lost ways recorded onto the Definitive Map and Statement now makes this date unachievable. The Forum therefore advocates that the cut-off date of 1st January should not now be implemented. If this recommendation were accepted the researching and recording of Lost Ways could continue, and routes that would be of considerable benefit to horse riders and carriage drivers would still be able to be put onto the Definitive Map. (Many of these routes are not truly "lost" since they are already being used or are currently recorded as footpaths.)

The Discovering Lost Ways Project, if implemented as it was originally intended, would deliver great benefits to the equestrian and cycling communities. In particular, it would join up much of the existing, fragmented public rights of way network, especially for horse riders and cyclists; it would resolve many current anomalies on the Definitive Map where routes change status at parish boundaries; and it would preserve many landscape features which form part of our cultural heritage, such as hedged/banked lanes/drove roads, for future generations

EAF MEMBERS: The British Horse Society, The Byways and Bridleways Trust, British Driving Society, Endurance Great Britain, Mendip Cross Trails Trust, The National Federation of Bridleway Associations, The South Pennine Packhorse Trails Trust

But it does need sufficient funding and the necessary political will to see it implemented.

As you are doubtless aware, horse riders currently have access only to c22% of the public rights of way network, with carriage drivers having access only to 5%. At present bridleways and byways rarely link up with each other to provide rides which equestrians can access without having to use the road network, which is getting ever busier.

It is therefore essential that this opportunity to improve our rights of way network is not lost by any watering down of the original proposed outcomes of the project. Whilst I do not underestimate the costs of amending legislation even in this *de minimis* way, extending the cut off date well beyond 1st January 2026 would be a cost effective way of achieving what the Government originally intended.

I should add that it would be beneficial to the project if the present adversarial, expensive system of getting rights of way put onto the Definitive Map were to be reviewed. The DLW Project is an evidence based process and as such it should be possible to determine a process for getting such routes onto the definitive map without the need for a time consuming and adversarial public inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Cory', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Graham M Cory
Chairman, Equestrian Access Forum

cc Board Members