



LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRIDLEWAYS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

No 85 January 2016

LRBA trusts that you had a merry - if possibly rather damp - Christmas and that you will have a busy, happy, exciting - and drier - New Year.

A very warm welcome to 2016 - our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary year.

Our Anniversary Reception (and AGM) will be held on Wednesday ^{4th} May at The Knoll, Leicester University Botanic Gardens
7.30pm for 7.45pm

As the Botanic Gardens are one of our hidden treasures we are being offered the opportunity to take a (pre-booked, limited numbers) guided tour of the Gardens ~~from 6.30 to 7.30pm.~~ ^{4th}

The AGM business will be conducted in advance by post and the decisions announced on ^{4th} May

There will be a charge for the Reception and also for the Garden tour.

Members are invited to bring a partner or friend.

More details in our March Newsletter - but put the date in your diary.

LITTLE FIELD OF HORRORS - AT GRETTON

OUR TEST OF YOUR NERVES AND YOUR HORSE'S WILL BE RUN AGAIN ON SAT 30 JULY WITH A 2nd DAY ON SUN ~~30~~³¹ JULY IF BOOKINGS WARRANT AN ASSEMBLAGE OF AS MANY CHALLENGES AS WE CAN FIND - FARMYARD (WITH ANIMALS), STREETS (WITH ROADWORKS), PICNICS, UMBRELLAS, ETC. PLUS THE NOTORIOUS RED CARPET (AND THE GRETTON RIDE).

Reports on our Rides

Laughton Hills on Saturday 22 August, which developed into a rare hot day, was much enjoyed judging by the riders' comments as they returned, even though some of them found the map+notes but no routemarks an occasional challenge. And the horses appreciated the water trough on their return. Organiser Kim Hall commented on how helpful the entrants had been in "doing things properly" and how much this helped her. An important point as, in the summer holiday weeks, she is often in "distracted grandmother" mode. It's essential to remember that all who organise and help are volunteers with another life (or two) to lead. We also have to thank the Cowens for the loan of the parking field with its fantastic view across south Leicestershire.

Nene Valley on 13 Sept had wonderful weather in spite of a dodgy forecast. A lorry breakdown reduced actual starters to 33, who 'endured' one of our hat and body protector inspections before starting. The pre-Ride route check had found a blocked gap, but the Milton Estate and their tenant were helpful in providing an alternative. Some stubble was still available so a tedious road section was avoided and the good going allowed various canter opportunities to be enjoyed. Despite the Gala Day on the Nene Valley Steam Railway no incidents were reported, our marshals ensuring the line was clear before riders set off to cross it. The 5 hours two people had spent signing the route proved worthwhile as returning riders said how much they'd enjoyed it. Even the picnickers were cleared up and gone by 3.15pm when our Organisers and helpers were able to sign off with relief after their early start.

Conkers on 10 Oct was our last Ride, with dry but overcast weather. Conkers keeps on showing off the new riding opportunities being negotiated (mainly by LRBA) as this part of the National Forest on the Leics/Derbyshire border continues its recovery from mining and quarrying. Two new permissive riding routes were incorporated –Shellbrook and Boothorpe Woods – which increased the canter opportunities. Unfortunately one horse was attacked by a loose staffie-type dog with no visible owner. The horse, which only suffered superficial bites, kicked the dog which ran off. The rider was going to report the incident to both the police and the BHS. Compliments were paid to the waymarking, our orange arrows being particularly important in the new woods, and also to the increasingly beautiful scenery of the Heart of the Forest.

WARNING TO RIDE ENTRANTS WHO ARE DRIVERS

From 2016 we're asking each entrant who is - or appears to be - the vehicle driver to tell us how their vehicle and mount will be got home should the worst happen and you, the rider, be incapacitated.

You need to have arranged for some person, or organisation, to be able to be summoned to the Ride Venue and to take vehicle and horse home. They **MUST** hold the necessary classes of driving licence and motor insurance – which is not as simple as it sounds, particularly the driving licence. Ideally they should be experienced in driving your (type of) vehicle as well as know what to do with the horse at the other end.

Many Riders have a "chauffeur" or ride with someone who can also drive them home but many do not. It is these who worry us. Whilst our volunteers will do their best to look after both the injured party and the horse, we can't be responsible for more than getting the horse to a place of safety (not necessarily back to the Venue).

We are currently working out what we hope will be an easy-to-use system for entrants. **In the meantime YOU are responsible for setting up your rescue arrangements.**

Welcome to New Members

We're delighted to welcome 99 new members to the Association as well as the return of 17 lapsed ones. Our total membership is now in touching distance of 500, which is a powerful base from which to seek - or even demand - consideration for horse riders both in town and country and improvements to the bridleway (BW) network.

To help us achieve our goals we need to know a bit more about you - where you keep your horse, where you ride, and some other things - particularly anything you might be willing to do to help.

So it is very important that all our NEW members - as well as the existing ones and whether or not they live in Leicestershire or Rutland - complete and return the Renewal Form, as many of you joined giving us little more than your name and address.

**A new 25th Anniversary Car Sticker is enclosed
Please display it on your car or horse box so that other riders know about us
and you can recognise fellow LRBA members.**

Membership Renewal Time – again!

A Renewal Form is enclosed with this *Newsletter*: a white one for those who've paid by cheque and a coloured one for those paying by Standing Order. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU COMPLETE AND RETURN THE FORMS – IMMEDIATELY – particularly as we're trying to get several sets of records updated before the Rides season starts. (See back page).

We need your forms back by 1 March so we can prepare for sending out the March *Newsletter* which will also have the 2016 Rides programme + Entry Forms etc with it, and you need to have renewed by 31 March so that you're "in good standing" and covered by our Public Liability insurance at LRBA events this year.

IF you are ALREADY paying by Standing Order your 2016 subscription should have been paid over by your bank on or around 10 January – probably before you get this *Newsletter*. But we still need to have your Renewal Form completed and returned.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS WILL BE SENT OUT WITH THE MARCH NEWSLETTER

Having got to the end of the first set of A-Z year-letters, we're starting again at A

Question c) on the Renewal Form

This is the one about how much you spent on your horse(s) last year. The one we ask every five years and which provides a snapshot of how big the recreational horse industry is and how much it contributes to the economy – mainly to the rural, grass-roots part of the economy.

I know, having already partly completed the exercise, how amazing the total can be. Especially when, having added up the regular stuff like feed, farriery, livery, wormers etc, it then includes tickets for Burghley and Olympia, new barrow, hat (old one *very* out of date), boots, electric fencing, books, subscriptions, and a truly horrifying vet's bill not covered by insurance.

But, however frightening the sum, this is *vital ammunition* in our ongoing struggle to get the powers-that-be (whoever and wherever they are) to realise how much horse-keeping contributes and why it should be provided for. Why aren't all those cycle tracks bridleways, for instance?

Please do the sums, fill in c) and send the Renewal Form back to us. PLEASE!

Chairman's Chat

I recently received the following email – passed on via an Access colleague:

“Healthy discussion has broken out over proposed changes to rules for access users in Wales. The Welsh Government is considering a review of current laws which could make it easier for people to walk, cycle and horse ride on all rights of way in Wales as well as swim and camp in beauty spots across the country. Supporters say the changes could transform Wales into one of the world's greatest outdoor destinations. Predictably some farmers and landowners are concerned.”

The email then goes on to quote an October 2015 statement from the Welsh Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant AM

The consultation has been really encouraging; we've had around 6,000 responses from individuals who are both pro and against. In Wales we have 850 miles of coastal path, we're the first country in the world to have such access and we've got around 22,000 miles of public rights of way. There are opportunities here for all and what we're trying to say here is that if we can enhance the opportunity of wellbeing, enhance the opportunity for access, then we should and I think we should take a balanced view of all people's views and that's what we'll do through the consultation period.

Related emails reveal that around 2000 responses were from cyclists – presumably in favour as the UK Cyclists Touring Club has cycle use of all PRoW as national policy. Guessing that probably 50% were from the farmers and landowners, I would hope that the other 1000 were from horse riders seeking an alternative to the ever-busier roads. And, knowing some of the roads in Wales, they're not ones that I would like to ride along – even the 'not busy' ones.

For many years riders have been telling me that they're giving up hacking because the roads are too dangerous. They're going to stay in the school or give up keeping a horse completely. To my mind, a tragedy. The day my husband died, my solace was to take the mare out on a ride. I do not want to be without a horse to keep me 'in balance' mentally and physically.

25 years of moderate success

Having spent the last 25 years trying to expand our local off-road network, LRBA and I can point to some significant wins. But many were achieved on the back of restoration plans for coalmines and quarries, a process that is almost complete. There are two, perhaps three, coal-related restorations in the pipeline. Many other mining permissions extend to the late 2030s – by which time most of us will have hung up our stirrups – so are not going to be 'restored' until then.

A gloomier future

It's much harder to get BWs out of other developers unless there's already a BW there – the excuse being that “*it's only a footpath*” beyond their boundary and that they have no influence on adjoining landowners to provide the next length, so “*why bother?*” Participating in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) process and getting horse riding included alongside walking and cycling could help, but if there's a NDP that doesn't mention riding, or doesn't specify “multi-user” as including riding, we have even less chance. This is something that can't be done by LRBA. It has to be done by those living in that Neighbourhood. (See Page10)

LRBA has 'wish lists' covering lumps of Leics and a fairly comprehensive 150-item Wish List for Rutland. Most of the wishes are made to keep us off the roads. Since our members put the Rutland list together in 2009 only two items have been achieved (one of which was on its way). Another failed due to one person being against it, so the rest withdrew their consent. A typical scenario. So not much hope for upgrading any long path going through several holdings.

Historic research to record “lost” rights is not, as far as I can tell in Leics and Rutland, going to transform the riding network unless we can unearth local knowledge that the hundreds of long footpaths which might provide useful village to village riding used to be roads or BWs. And even that may turn out to be a lot of hard work for not much return, although a body of historic or user evidence can be a useful lever in some circumstances.

Magic wand needed!

Which all sounds rather pessimistic. And – on balance – I think I am. Unless someone waves a magic wand *or changes the law*.

My view is that it is not “21st century thinking” to have so many categories of public rights of way – footpaths, BWs, byways (restricted or ‘open to all traffic’), not to mention the Unsealed County Roads (UCRs) shown on OS maps as Other Routes with Public Access (ORPAs). And a great waste of time and money sorting them out legally into categories and equipping them with different kinds of ‘furniture’ (stiles, gates or those truly awkward-for-all kissing gates).

Much simpler to have two categories of highway: the sealed (tarmaced) ones for motor vehicles and the unsealed for the non-motorised. Dead simple. Easy to educate users in which is which. And how to behave on both. (A LOT needs to be done on user-education.)

Equality, health, economic benefits

There are other issues, such as those raised by the Equality Act. I’m guessing, from those I meet on various committees, that the majority of ramblers are men. Certainly the majority of cyclists I meet (on or off road) are men. LRBA’s membership list shows that, if we’re typical of the recreational horse rider, over 90% of them are women (the overall horse industry figure is nearer to 75%). So there’s gender discrimination in the balance of English PRoWs in that only about 23% are the BWs or byways open to the female-dominant horse riders.

Additionally, the disabled (using buggies) can only rely on being able to use BWs and byways as stiles and kissing gates often obstruct their use of footpaths.

In the ‘good health agenda’, it’s women and the ‘mature’ who are the most difficult to reach. Horse riding not only mainly involves women but, either as a sport or a leisure activity, can be continued well beyond what’s commonly known as “middle age”. 115 of the 171 members who’ve told us their age bracket are over 50. Riding is constantly over-looked by ‘providers’ because so few of them have grasped the wide reach of our sport/activity or its physical and mental health benefits, not to mention its considerable benefits to the rural economy (to the overall profit of those ‘concerned’ farmers and landowners). Rural tourism is a potential growth point for Leicestershire in particular. Rutland is already able to make a success of it.

A sunlit future???

Once the stiles and kissing gates have been replaced by suitable gates we could all enjoy *all* the PRoW that were within our capabilities on the day. Not all tracks would be available to riders due to insuperable problems, but far more of us would be enjoying the countryside and far fewer of us would be getting in the way on the roads.

And we wouldn’t have to fight so hard to be included in all those Plans and Strategies that politicians and bureaucrats love, because including horses would become the norm – automatic.

I’m not denying that the process could be disruptive and difficult, but it would have SO many benefits that it makes sense. At least from where I’m riding.

Vicky Allen

Four out of Six Cats (catastrophes) “in the bag”

Back in April 2010 we wrote a letter to the then Team Leader of the Countryside Service at Leics County Council listing six “Very Long-standing Problems” in various parts of the county. The copy has remained in our “Not Yet Resolved” tray ever since. (Very, very full, that tray!)

Re-reading it recently, we’re happy to report that four of the six are now solved. From the east, these are:

G36a at Marriotts Bridge, Hose. The difficulties here have been resolved, through council persistence and changes to the farming regime. We still try to keep an eye on things.

G46 at Hazeltongue Farm, Long Clawson. Two arms of G46 from Clawson come out at the sharp bend by Hazeltongue Farm. The gates through/beside the farmyard have been improved and this stretch is now as usable as the limited width allows. The field gate into the other arm – much used by cows – has recently had a bridle gate put beside it. Unfortunately the gloopy mud at this gateway remains; possibly caused by a collapsed culvert.

H29, Midshires Way, at Shoby. The issues at the N end of this BW – unsafe electric fencing and eliminating the dog-leg crossing of the A6006 - have been resolved, although riders still need to be aware of the electric fencing. The companion BW, H28 Shoby to Ragdale, also seems OK, having been diverted well away from the stockyard.

The Battram to Park Farm, Overton Road track, S of Ibstock has had the herd of semi-wild ponies removed which prevented use by riders and alarm to other users. The track itself has been fenced off in preparation for the property’s sale by auction. The County Council was unable to do anything about the ponies whilst the late owner tolerated them. The 1951 Parish Return for Ibstock (when the Definitive Map was being created) says this was “*Probably used [for] several centuries. Stage coach route according to old inhabitants.*” Great that it’s back in use.

The two remaining problems are:

Opening up the UCR from the Derby Lane (S of Newton Burgoland) to Bilstone. When last inspected by LRBA this was blocked by hedge N of the Canal. The canal bridge was, at LRBA’s request, inspected and deemed safe for riding horse use by British Waterways. Since then there has been no apparent action by LCC altho’ a recent enquiry revealed that it *is* on the To Do list (of 80 items). We’ve just done an on-foot inspection showing that the only obstruction is a stile plus a messy boundary. Some ex-locals have confirmed it was always known as a road.

Bridleway R67 Bagworth to Nailstone, through Crown Farm at the Nailstone end. *This has gone from bad to worse.* After work this summer by LCC to open up this section, presumably with the farmer’s acquiescence, he fairly promptly blocked the entrances on to his land. The field gate at the Nailstone end now has a padlock, stout posts behind it to prevent it opening and razor wire looped over the top rail. The other end of the Crown Farm land has large round bales blocking entry. LCC’s Legal Dept is trying to get the farmer to re-open it, which may well mean taking him to court. We, the Ramblers and the Local Access Forum keep asking for reports.

The April 2010 letter remains on our desk until these two matters are concluded. Patience !!

App –y ??

Riding recently to the Prestwold Estate we had one of those apps on the i-phone that tells you where you are, how far you’ve come and lots more. The Estate was 3.6 miles away (my guess had been 4 miles); in total we did 9.89 miles (so only 3.69 miles on the Estate itself), which took us 2 hrs 47 minutes (less some mounting-up time). Because of ground conditions we took 16.53 minutes for each mile at a slow, for us, average speed of 3.6 mph (but our fastest was 23.7 mph

as they both fly up that hill). Adding all the hills together, we'd gone up 1026 feet, but the OS map shows our highest point was only 30-35 metres (about 115 feet) above our lowest points. By slowly retracing our route on the app we could have worked out the height/length of each hill.

The app's map also gave the names of any roads we used or crossed which would have been useful if, as used to happen to me regularly, one of us fell off on the Estate and needed help.

And we'd expended 816 calories each – in addition to the catching and grooming calories.

Members with similar apps could be of great assistance to our Ride Organisers either in route planning or reporting how it rode on the day. Our stated mileages are often 'best guess'.

Everything goes !!!!

Report from the northwest: *"but the gate which I presume was a horse gate has been nicked (all the metal drain covers nearby have gone as well) and [there] is now barbed wired across so you can't get out other than going back over the bridge. Any idea when this will be sorted? [I] prefer a wooden (non-tempting) gate"*

Report from the east: *I think a couple [of wooden H-framed gates so half buried in concrete] were installed where BW E226 crosses the A606 and the **previous wooden gates had been stolen** – and thieves tried to haul the whole thing out with a tractor, making a mangled mess of everything.*

The NW gate was, in fact, a 2-way H-framed Worcester bridle gate with hydraulically-governed closing speed. The barbed wire had been put up to prevent motor bikes getting in. 5 weeks after the email above, the gate had been replaced by a new Worcester gate – a metal one.

From the E, it is reported that they now only install the metal H-framed gates.

You pay your money – a lot of it, the catalogue price of a Worcester is £390 and a standard 2-way H-framed metal bridle gate £225 – and takes your choice.

Teams needed

Vicky writes: As you know, my intention – after 25 years of running LRBA – is to fade slowly out of the picture like the Cheshire Cat's grin (before I fall out of my tree). This means sharing out the many and various jobs that I do, possibly by setting up Teams. The teams could not only take over what I do, but expand it and do it better than I have the time or energy for.

One obvious Team that's needed is a **Publicity Team**. And it would *have* to be a *Team* working together to share out the work without treading on each other's toes. There's definitely a place for an old-fashioned "Press Officer" communicating with newspapers and other print media, although they prefer to receive stuff by email nowadays.

Someone could perhaps deal with giving local Events Diaries dates/info for our Rides etc. A Posters mini-team to deal with layout and print, plus assembling the mailing list and sending them to the many willing members who've agreed to get posters up in various places.

Looking further ahead we also need an Editor for this *Newsletter* and possibly a Team to gather and write up the news and reports.

And we need a new **Membership Secretary** - someone with computer and organisational skills (to cope with the rush of renewals in Jan/Feb) and also able to contribute to various Teams. As the 'welcomer' to new members throughout the year there are contacts with the Publicity Team and, obviously, with Finance. Liz Woolston has ably and efficiently filled this post for two stints but would now like to hand it over. *Offers of help via Renewal Form or address on back page*

B I T S

Railway funding. UK government funds for electrifying the Midland Mainline have been 'released' after a 'pause', but the end-date for the work is now 2023 instead of 2020. Expect road chaos as bridges are heightened to allow for the overhead lines.

On the other hand, the EU has refused to give £86m under the Trans-European Transport Programme towards the £300m upgrade of the Felixstowe- West Midlands freight line (known to us as the **Stamford-Oakham-Melton-Leicester-Nuneaton** line). This would remove 800,000 lorry journeys p.a. from the roads. The EU's decision contradicts their earlier assessment that the scheme offered a "highly positive economic result". Negotiations continue with the EU.

Both schemes involve **level crossing closures**, although there are now only a few BW crossings of the Midland Mainline that could affect LRBA members (**Barrow on Soar** and **Braybrooke** being the obvious ones).

If anyone uses or knows of rider use of the recently closed **Little Bowden** level crossing, please get in touch *urgently* as the Ramblers and Leics CC are fighting Network Rail over this. If it is a useful equestrian route then we need to ensure any replacement caters for us as well.

The economic value of the horse industry is £4.3bn p.a. to this country. Source – British Equestrian Trades Assn (BETA) quoted in a parliamentary debate on outdoor recreation on 28 October. And that the average spend p a on a horse is £3,600. Another interesting stat from the debate is that golf contributes £38m to the whole of Wales, little more than the £30m that the horse industry was calculated to contribute to Leicestershire alone in 2010. And Sport England has agreed a £6m investment in the BEF to attract and keep more riders. All MPs contributing to the debate voiced lots of concern about non-activity, its impact on health – present and future – and longevity. LRBA's message – *ride more, live longer*.

Parliamentary debates, such as the one above, can be read on the *theyworkforyou* website. Put a key word such as *bridleways* into the search box, click on the blue title of the debate that interests you, and it will take you straight to that part of the debate.

Ninety equestrian accidents in 2014 were attended by the Derbyshire, Leicestershire & Rutland Air Ambulance. No wonder this is one of the two main charities supported by LRBA. When you see the collecting box at a Ride please give generously. You gave £250 this year, rounded up to £400 from LRBA central funds.

Wind Turbines. Your Chair is still labelled at BHS Access Conferences as a Turbines Consultant, so she would be very interested in any reactions – good or bad – that your horse has to turbines, whether single ones or in 'farms'. Her contact details are at bottom of back page.

Extinguishment of bridle rights over the Barrow on Soar level crossing is being sought by Network Rail who say they have exhausted alternatives that would accommodate riders (and those in buggies: the disabled, infants). LRBA is opposing extinguishment without replacement.

PATH CLOSURES. West of **Ravenstone** in the Diamond Jubilee Wood area, Byways O39 and part of O38 and connecting BWs O17 and O52 have had their closures extended until June to allow for building a solar farm and for track repairs. LRBA has protested as O39 and O38 have already been closed since 2014.

BW P31 between **Hepworth Road, Ashby Wolds** and **Woodville** has been closed without permission by Taylor Wimpey whilst they build a housing estate. LRBA has forced a Temporary Closure Order (to March) but this has not been displayed and we've pointed out that the re-alignment of P31, as intended and promised, cannot be achieved given the site's current layout. Discussions continue.

BW H61, Storkit Lane, Wymeswold will be closed for 6 months at the village end whilst houses are built. Riders will have no alternative but to use a dangerous bit of A road instead. The parish council is also very cross.

Photo-shoot for National Forest

The National Forest Company wanted to update their publicity to show what they've achieved in NW Leics, and asked equestrian members of the Heart of the Forest Forum's Access & Connectivity Group to take part in a photo-shoot. They were only too happy to oblige as it's a good way of saying "thank you" to the National Forest and the Forestry Commission for giving us some lovely off-road riding.

Three LRBA members - Lynne Pass, Mary Holland and Vicky Lickorish – set off to meet the photo crew at Boothorpe one misty October morning. But the murk persisted and it wasn't possible to do long shots. So Lynne and Mary met the crew the following Sunday and spent three hours walking, trotting, cantering and standing still in brilliant sunshine. The crew had already sorted out where the best scenery shots were but the photographer thought our hi-viz waistcoats were not aesthetically pleasing and wanted us to remove them. We explained how important they are and said that if the photos were to be published then they should contribute to rider safety, so we kept them on! [Well done Lynne & Mary; it's important to set a good example. Photos that don't include best safety practice get lots of criticism when published, so would not be good for the National Forest's image. Ed]

Hundreds of photos were taken – close-ups, action shots, long shots with the lovely scenery in the background, amusing shots, through to unexpected shots – so hopefully there will be a few publishable ones. Our horses behaved like true pros. None of that: *This is my best side. Have you lit me properly? I want a luxury trailer with a box of carrots now I'm a star. Do you know who I am?* or other prima donna silliness!

LRBA has fostered good relations with the Forestry Commission and the National Forest Company via the Heart of the Forest Forum and, after our requests, both have opened up riding routes within their newly acquired parts of the National Forest. Shellbrook Woods and the Boothorpe Woodlands were included in this year's Starter and Conkers Rides. The Federation of East Midlands Bridleway Associations is represented (via LRBA's Chair) on the Forest-wide Access & Recreation Working Group.

Taking the rough with the smooth, the mown with the unmown

"As to the required standard for the maintenance of bridleways, there are no statutory guidelines. It depends on the amount of use, where the path is situated and by whom it is likely to be used. The surface must not create a hazard but, as Lord Justice Cumming-Bruce said: A highway is not to be criticised by the standards of a bowling green."

SAFETY SECTOR

After nearly mowing down a dark cyclist one dark night, it was an early Christmas present to come across TWO sets of riders on Charnwood Forest wearing ORANGE hi-viz. I *think* one of them was an LRBA member, probably having noticed how bright our Ride weskits are. Top marks! Can't emphasise enough how important wearing hi-viz is, *particularly* when it's sunny. But, at the very least, it helps to wear something light and bright (not black like the cyclist).

I do hope those of you who were caught out (like me) with truly antique riding hats or body protectors at one of our Kit Inspections found new ones on the top of your Christmas stocking – or are saving up your postal orders to buy a new one. The new hat standard you need is VG1 but see P3 of our September 2015 *Newsletter* for more info.

Dog / horse incidents continue to occur. It's important for us to *train the dog-owners* by always asking for any loose dogs to be put on a lead or thanking them for having done so. Do your utmost to keep it friendly and polite. If necessary, say something like *"we've met 3 barking dogs already today and Dobbin is a bit nervous now and might kick out."* Arguments don't help.

Our new Planning Officer for Melton writes

John Coleman points out that LRBA's Aims include: "*preserve, improve and ... extend the Counties' bridleways and byways*" and "*...ensure the needs of the horse and rider are considered in any planning approvals for ...*"

He asks how can we ensure that these are translated into positive action when developments are being planned? In many cases new developments will have no significant impact on riding but, where they do, it may be as either threats or opportunities.

John points out that we could gain new or safer/quieter ways of getting from A to B or perhaps the upgrading of a footpath to BW because it's wanted as a cycle route, or create a link between two BWs. Such opportunities can be less easy to spot than threats but are highly valuable for the development of the network.

The earlier an informed input can be made into the planning process the better. The larger, and possibly more useful (to us), developments are often announced with a fanfare in the local paper, often just before a public exhibition. Read the papers, go to the exhibitions. Talk to the developers; but nicely as we don't want to put their backs up at this stage. Point out that their extra traffic means the narrow lanes will become dangerous and ask what they're going to do in mitigation? Or have they thought of? These exhibitions are usually held before the planning application goes in as a way of gauging local opinion and also what "sweeteners" can be offered to minimise opposition. A planning application offering new BWs is likely to get support from LRBA, BHS and local horse keepers.

The 2011 Localism Act encouraged communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). When adopted, an NDP becomes part of the district's Local Plan. Developments must be in accordance with the Local Plan. If the NDP is 'horse-friendly' there's a strong basis on which to object to a proposal's *lack* of horse-friendliness at the consultation exhibition or when the planning application goes in. So an adopted NDP with the right wording can be a powerful lever.

But it's also important that horse riders are seen to be involved in the NDP process which is usually driven by a body such as a parish council but requires input from other members of the community. LRBA members should participate in the NDP process, particularly in any sub-groups dealing with transport, environment, recreational facilities etc so that the other group members are constantly reminded of *our* needs and how they can be fitted in with the needs of other groups.

An NDP may not get down to the nitty-gritty of specific minor routes but it should set the framework for the form and location of various types of development, including local access and recreation. Ideally, we riders need an NDP to cover *all* of a rural parish not just the village, as almost all development brings extra traffic.

LRBA's Executive Committee has recommended that every NDP should include something on the following lines: *Preserve and where possible extend the network of off-road Rights of Way for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and those with restricted mobility*. It should also support the idea of all these user groups sharing one – adequately wide – path. These are not unsafe as anyone who's used highly-promoted trails on often-narrow old railway lines, attracting a rich mix of users. What happens is that all groups learn how to behave considerately towards others.

It is particularly important to ensure that these Vulnerable Road Users are provided with facilities that will keep them off local roads being made ever-busier and more dangerous by development.

Urban areas such as Hinckley, Loughborough, Melton, Oakham, Leicester, Oadby & Wigston will develop NDPs on a “neighbourhood forum” basis as they do not have civil parishes. Many of these forums already exist and may cover areas of ‘countryside’ or ‘urban edge’ where there is a lot of scope to ask for “multi-user including ridden horses” to provide routes that will give us links round or through built-up areas to the countryside beyond.

On the other hand, some parishes are too sparsely populated to feel the need for an NDP.

Two parishes have already got as far as having their NDPs adopted, which empowers them to fend off unwanted development.

The list below is of parishes already in the NDP process – go and join in. If your parish isn’t listed encourage it to think seriously about developing an NDP.

Parishes already involved in Neighbourhood Development Plans by District. Number of parishes per District shown in brackets but does not include the unparished/urban areas.

Blaby (24 parishes)

Blaby parish Fosse Villages (10 parishes): Aston Flamville, Croft, Huncote, Leic Forest West, Potters Marston, Sapcote, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton, Thurlaston, Wigston Parva

Charnwood (31 parishes)

Barrow upon Soar Rearsby Thurcaston & Cropston
Rothley The Wolds (Burton, Cotes, Prestwold, Hoton)

Harborough: (88 parishes)

<i>Broughton Astley (adopted)</i>	<i>Billesdon (adopted)</i>	Scraptoft (in final stages)
Lubenham	Foxton	Great Glen
Bitteswell	East Langton	Great Easton
North Kilworth	Shearsby	The Kibworths
Houghton on the Hill	Medbourne	Tur Langton
Swinford	Hungarton	Smeeton Westerby
Burton Overy	Fleckney	Thurnby & Bushby
	Great Bowden	

Hinckley & Bosworth: (24 parishes)

Burbage	Desford	Market Bosworth
Sheepy		W Clarendon, Hinckley (neighbourhood forum)

Melton (28 parishes)

Asfordby	Bottesford	Croxtan Kerrial
Hoby with Rotherby	Broughton & Old Dalby	Clawson, Hose & Harby
Waltham & Thorpe Arnold	Somerby	Wymondham & Edmondthorpe
	Ab Kettleby	

NWLeics (32 parishes)

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council		Ellistown & Battleflats
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Rutland (58 parishes)

Barrowden	Braunston	Cottesmore
Edith Weston	Greetham	Langham
Oakham Town	Uppingham	Whissendine
	Ketton (considering having an NDP)	

A Child's Eye View - from yours

A chance for your child, or grandchild, to show their artistic prowess! In celebration of our Silver Anniversary we'd like under-18s to draw (and colour) a picture of their favourite ride.

It's non-competitive; all the entries will be displayed at our AGM and Anniversary Reception on 4th May and *The Little Field of Horrors* at the end of July.

Send entries on an A4 sheet of paper to Lynne Pass, 274 Burton Road, Overseal, Derbyshire DE12 6JN by 30 April 2016. Enclose a sheet with the artist's name, date of birth and a sentence on where the ride is and why it's their favourite. Unfortunately we won't be able to return them.

Bridleway Guardians Needed

There are well over 600 BWs in our two counties. There is no system of inspection in place that ensures that BWs are fit for riders to use. So we riders need to be our own inspection system.

Look after a BW you ride regularly by volunteering as its Guardian and making sure it is "in good nick" – and kept that way. All you have to do is to apply the *Bridleway Guidelines* we've sent to all members, and do something about it if some part of your BW isn't up to standard.

Is a gate difficult? Why? Too narrow? Bad catch? Drags on the ground? Nowhere to put horse's head whilst opening an otherwise OK gate? Or has part of the route got overgrown and riders have to duck and weave? Or is there a point where a stranger wouldn't know where to go because the waymarking needs improving?

Tip No 1: Ride the BW in both directions. Different direction – often different problem(s).

Tip No 2: Ride it concentrating on just ONE aspect. Waymarking is often ignored because we know where to go: would a stranger know? Or the gates that might not be so easy if a rider didn't know *just* what to do? It can help to take a stranger with you and let them lead.

And please fill in d) on the Renewal Form so we know that *you* are looking after it.

And, if your problem is rather difficult or doesn't get resolved reasonably soon, come to the Area Meeting and we'll discuss what can be done. (Out of Leics/Rutland members can be Guardians too. The *Guidelines* are based on national criteria; Leics and Rutland just have a better standard of waymarking. Vicky often knows who or how in neighbouring counties.)

Don't forget to return your completed Renewal Form as soon as possible.

More Stewards needed at our Rides

Our Ride Organisers have been told that there must be a 'spare' steward at the Venue throughout the event in case someone needs to be sent off to deal with an emergency.

Most Rides need a 'greeter', 1 or 2 parking stewards, and possibly a 'despatcher' plus whoever is acting as Secretary on the day. And some routes also need gate or road-crossing stewards. We could also do with mounted help on route-checking – for waymarking, ease-of-use, and safety – when the route is being planned in the winter/spring. Also route-markers who will help with pre-Ride 'arrowing'.

So we're looking to increase our list of volunteer Ride helpers. *Please spare some time for us and tick the box when filling in your Renewal Form.*

**Leics & Rutland Bridleways Assn, c/o 123 Park Rd, Loughborough LE11 2HD Tel: 01509 215619
www.bridleways.com e-mail: vicky.allen@freeuk.com**