

STOCKPORT BRIDLEWAYS STRATEGY

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Notes

The bridleways working group have been asked to provide this strategy on a voluntary basis; it was not funded by Stockport Council.

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Introduction

Originally founded as SEABA (Stockport East Area Bridleways Association), Stockport Bridleways Association is an equestrian access group which defends, extends and promotes safe, easily accessible off-road riding and is affiliated to the British Horse Society (BHS). Debbi Hall, Chair of SEABA, is also a BHS access officer and Vice Chair for Stockport LAF

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, walking and cycling is being encouraged as an alternative to public transport and to avoid an increase in private car use. In Greater Manchester, a £5m cash injection from the mayor's cycling and walking fund will provide space for pedestrians and boost cycle-friendly routes aimed at enabling socially-distanced journeys and exercise both now and in the future. Stockport Council is already developing walking and cycling strategies and in order to allow equality of access to safe and accessible routes, Stockport Local Access Forum asked SEABA to develop a bridleways strategy for Stockport. Ultimately, this will enhance development of multi-user routes for walkers and cyclists and additionally presents an opportunity to incorporate greater access to off road routes for horse riders, by considering upgrade of current footpaths to bridleway status.

Vulnerable users and road safety

The Highway Code states “The most vulnerable road users are pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. It is particularly important to be aware of children, older and disabled people, and learner and inexperienced drivers and riders.”

The Equestrian Access Forum (EAF) comprises the British Horse Society (BHS), the Byways and Bridleways Trust, the British Driving Society, the National Federation of Bridleway Associations and the South Pennine Packhorse Trails Trust. The aim of the EAF is “The provision of a cohesive, comprehensive, integrated nation-wide network, free at the point of use, with a horse, on a bicycle or on foot”. In 2012 the EAF published a crucial report, ‘Making Ways For Horses: Off-Road Equestrian Access In England’. The 2012 report notes that there were 1.2 million horses in Britain and 2.1 million riders, these figures are increasing therefore it could be assumed numbers will be higher in 2020. The report describes how equestrian rights have been eroded over the years with riders having access to only 22% of the rights of way network compared with 100% access for walkers. With the expansion of urban/industrial areas and heavy numbers of cars on roads, riders are classed as vulnerable users and the report emphasises how rights of way and off road access are essential facilities for these riders who risk their lives and those of their horses, by riding (or driving carriages) on roads. Since the launch of the BHS Horse Accidents website in 2010, there have been more than 3,700 reports of road incidents involving horses; 315 horses have died and 43 riders have lost their lives. Launched in 2016, the BHS ‘Dead? Or Dead

Slow?' campaign aims to encourage drivers to pass horses safely but there is still a desperate national need for safe off-road routes for horses and riders.

Although safety is the main driver for increased access to off-road riding, there is also recognition of the importance of horse industry impact on local economy. The EAF report notes that the horse industry contributes £7.5 billion a year to the British economy and that the lack of a comprehensive rights of way network is inhibiting the horse industry's growth.

Horses and riders in Stockport

The equestrian community in Stockport reflects that of Britain as a whole. From our involvement in equestrian activities, we estimate that there are approximately 4-6 thousand riders in the whole of the Stockport area. Stockport covers both urban and rural settings and we know that horses are stabled throughout all areas including those close to the town centre. All riders and horses are at risk from riding on the roads as they become more and more busy. Figures provided for us initially at the start of the project (2018) from the definitive map for Stockport illustrated that there were only 8 recorded bridleways in Stockport compared with 65 footpaths (12.3% PROW available for horses to ride). It is not sure if this figure was truly representative as our understanding is that many were awaiting legal verification. Current up to date figures (2020) indicate 288 total PROW routes, 216 of which are footpaths and 60 that are bridleways (20.8% available for horses to ride). These bridleways are most concentrated in the rural areas such as Mellor with very few in more urbanized areas where they are probably most needed.

Stockport Bridleways Strategy

Aim and Objectives

Stockport Bridleways Strategy aims to develop a network of bridleways connecting across Stockport to reduce the need for horses and riders to use the main roads.

The objectives are as follows:

- Identification of public footpaths that could be upgraded to bridleway status, thus allowing linkage of off-road routes
- Identification of other routes, for example national trails and canal towpaths, that are suitable for access by horses and riders
- Identification of crossing points at busy roads that would benefit from the installation of Pegasus crossings or other means of safe crossing by horses and riders
- Determination of implementation issues including feasibility of access, need for suitable surfaces and removal of any obstructions to allow safe access by horses and riders

Although the bridleways strategy concentrates on safe routes for horses and riders, the bridleways strategy together with the walking and cycling strategies will contribute to creating a network of multiuser routes and will benefit all vulnerable users in the Stockport area. We hope that an output of this project will development a cohesive working relationship between cyclists, walkers and horse riders for Stockport.

Methods

Participation and coordination

This was a major project and included participation of more than 1000 riders across Stockport. Contact was achieved via social media and linking with local equestrian organisations and businesses. In particular, further discussion was held with members of local bridleway groups; including SPEED (Safe Pedestrians, Equines, the Environment and Drivers), Tameside Riders, Peak Horsepower and Dark Peak Bridleways. The project was coordinated through the SEABA's regular monthly planning meetings.

Initial map marking

The Public Rights of Way Officer for Stockport provided copies of the definitive map and the definitive map statement for Stockport. SEABA identified and marked existing bridleways and any bridleways known to be awaiting legal completion. It was also noted if any other routes were accessible by horses and riders i.e. restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.

'All Stockport' area meeting

The meeting was attended by approximately 40 riders from most areas of Stockport and opened with presentations by SEABA, outlining the aim of the BHS access and bridleways strategy. This was followed by an introduction to the aims of Stockport Local Access Forum and an outline of their request for a Stockport Bridleways Strategy. Including proposals re possible upgrading of footpaths to bridleway status. Attendees were then asked to mark on the definitive map, any footpaths that had been ridden by them in the present day or in the past and to highlight those that were deemed suitable for horses.

Local area groups and meetings

Subsequently small local groups were formed, comprising both attendees at the 'all Stockport meeting' and also other riders who had not been able to attend but wanted to be involved. These small groups used their local knowledge to continue the map marking process, concentrating on their specific riding areas. Some were visited at their Equestrian Centres and Riding Schools so that everyone had opportunity to be involved and in order to help achieve this goal.

Feasibility Studies

To complement the map marking exercise, some participants undertook an active investigation through riding some routes of interest to confirm feasibility where it had been proposed that a footpath could be upgraded to a bridleway.

- To ensure the width of a footpath was adequate to allow access for horses and riders; NB in some cases, cutting back of overgrown hedges and branches may be sufficient to allow access.
- To ensure the surface was suitable for horses; sealed surfaces such as tarmac are problematic for horses with metal shoes.
- To examine if any obstructions blocked access that could be removed or adapted e.g. stiles and gates NB routes with steps will be unsuitable for horses.

Due to time constraints, lack of funding and personnel this exploration could not be undertaken for all the proposed footpath upgrades and still requires further investigation.

Results

Proposed footpaths that can be upgraded to bridleways (and multiuser routes)

From the Stockport definitive map statement, footpaths identified as being possible for upgrade to bridleways are summarised in **Appendix 1**. The routes have been listed according to area and in chronological order for ease of identification.

All suggestions reduce the need for horse riders to cross or travel along busy roads and link together routes for safer off-road riding. Many footpaths are currently accessible for riding and used without causing problems to other users. Some routes have been ridden in the past but are currently blocked; obstructions could be easily removed. Where local riders have provided specific information, further detail has been added to the appendix.

Additional proposed routes not on definitive map

Local riders also made additional suggestions for routes that are not footpaths on definitive map but will allow safe off road riding and could be bridleways

Bredbury and Romiley:

- An unmade section of Vernon Road allows safe riding from Bredbury Hall to Lower Bents Lane

Hazel Grove and Bramhall:

- Munsmere Walks and Havergate Walks are grass and wooded tracks that allow riders off Bean leach Road and back onto Shearwater Road

Marple:

- Nab Lane, loop from Dale Road round Nab Top Farm back to Dale Road
- Torkington Lane access link to Middlewood Way at Oak Cottage which links to Middlewood way and avoids Marple town centre and Stockport Road
- New track created by Garden House from Lakes Road to Brabyn's Brow exit via Midland car park and allows access to Brabyn's park
- The footpath at Chadkirk could be upgraded to a multi-user route (previously proposed but not implemented).

Longer local routes that are available to other users but could be made accessible by horse riders include the following:

- LadyBrook Valley Special Interest Trail
- Midshires Way
- Goyt Valley Way
- Goyt Way
- North Cheshire Way

These were also identified by some of the participants.

Additional issues noted during the feasibility studies

Safe crossings are needed to allow horse riders to cross busy roads at the following locations:

- Otterspool Road near the Garden Centre, a Pegasus crossing would allow safer access to bridleways to Bredbury Hall (Alan Newton Way) and other bridleways
- Junction of Dale Road and Stockport Road, a Pegasus crossing would allow safer access to Middlewood Way
- B6104, Compstall Bridge is currently avoided by horse riders because of oncoming traffic including double decker buses. An alternative bridge or other passage is needed. This would enable safe access between Romiley/Werneth Low area and Marple Bridge (and enables link from Middlewood Way to Trans Pennine Trail).

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest there are many footpaths which could be upgraded to meet the needs of a multi user community in Stockport. It must be acknowledged that Stockport Council have significantly increased bridleways numbers in most recent years. An increase from 2018 where only 12.3% of PROW were bridleways compared to today's figures of 20.8%. This figure, however, still falls below the national average of 22% outlined by EAF

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(2012). Walkers can access 100% of PROW with cyclists and horse riders disproportionately only able to access 20.8 %. It is hoped that these results will provide evidence and demonstrate the need to provide funding to ensure the future safety of all vulnerable road users in Stockport both during the current Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

Acknowledgements:

SEABA Committee members

Local riders throughout Stockport

Public Rights of Way Officers for Stockport

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Appendix 1: Summary of footpaths on definitive map of Stockport that could be upgraded to bridleways

Path No	Route summary	Additional information
STOCKPORT		
108S	From Mill Lane to footpath 43BR	
109S	From footpath 108S to footpath 110S	
110S	From footpath 108S to Blackberry Lane	
111S	From 110S to Blackberry Lane	
112S	From Blackberry Lane to footpath 108S	
114S	From Brinnington Road to footpath 54SBR	
115S	From Tiviot Way along Portwood Cut to Brinnington Road	
148S	From Marple Road along Holiday Lane to existing footpath south of river Goyt	Holiday Lane. Could give safe access to Woodbank/Vernon Park if posts were removed from the bridge. Access to the parks would also allow additional safe riding.
BREDBURY AND ROMILEY		
8BR	From Werneth Low Road to bridleway 11	Link between Pinfold Lane, Romiley to Hillside Road, via Back o'the Hill farm (FP133 Tameside) via BW 76 OR FP8 via Lowtop Farm. Avoids Pennine Road
9BR	From bridleway 11 to Cowlshaw Road at cowlshaw Cottage	Links Romiley to Werneth Low, avoiding road
12BR	From Hermitage Avenue to the junction of footpaths 14 and 89	
14BR	From the Cherry Tree Estate to Compstall Road	
15BR	From footpath 16 to west bank of river Goyt then to Andrew Street	
18BR	From junction of footpaths 19 and 20 to the Cherry Tree Estate (Gotheridge Lane)	FP 18 connects Oakwood Ave to Cherry Tree estate Hyde Bank to Gotherage Lane. Links with BW18 Hyde Ban. Avoids Compstall Road
20BR	From Hyde Bank to north of Roseleigh	
26aBR	From junction with bridleway 39BR to junction with High lane and Gilbert Bank	
31BR	From Guywood Lane to footpath 32BR	Healdwood Road from Guywood Lane to Werneth Road Oxford Drive to Werneth Road. Currently obstructed..
35BR	From Werneth Road along Clough Meadow to	

	Pennine Road	
37BR	From Healdwood road footpath 31 to footpath 26 near High Lane	
38BR	From footpath 77 to footpath 31 at Longsight cottage	
44BR	From Ashton Road along Cromwell Road to junction with footpath 43BR	
45BR	From Cromwell Road to footpath 43BR	
46BR	From Ashton Road to footpath 49BR	
43BR	From Ashton Road (Castle Hill) to footpath 108 Stockport	To the Arden Road. This route allows safe traffic free riding from Woodley to Castle Hill opposite Linden pub. 51BR also gives access to Arden Bridge and Tame Valley tracks around Haughton Green and Haughton Dale
49BR	From Ashton Road A6017 to Turner Lane	
50BR	From footpath Bredbury and Romiley to Mill Lane by Miner Farm	
51BR	From footpath 50 Bredbury and Romiley at Miner farm to footpath 52 Bredbury and Romiley	
52BR	From Ashton Road to Stockport Road East near St Mark's Church	FP52 (Bredbury) connects Stockport Road East to Ashton Road Avoids main roads
54BR	From footpath 54a Bredbury and Romiley by Welkin Mill to footpath 114 Stockport	Welkin Road and up "Red Hill" to Brinnington, safe access to Reddish Vale avoiding Stockport Road West and is only way to get under M60 and Crookley Way from Bredbury
59BR	From bridleway 56 Bredbury and Romiley opposite Goyt Hall farm to the junction of Clapgate and Catherine Road	Clapgate, allows access to Bredbury off existing bridleway from Otterspool to Bredbury Hall
62BR	From Poleacre Lane across and along railway embankment to footpath 66BR	
64BR	From footpath 66 at the swing bridge over the peak forest canal to Turner lane	
66BR	From junction of footpath 64BR to Tameside boundary, along towpath of Peak Forest canal	
68BR	From Castle Hill to Ashton Road	
70BR	From Werneth Road to the Tameside boundary along Hillside Road	
75BR	From Cowlshaw Lane at Near Benfield to footpath 6 at Far Benfield	

6BR (part)	From Compstall row B6104 to Hyde Municipal Boundary near Edmund's Farm , junction with bridleway 6a and 84b	
81BR	From Osborne street to Vernon Road	
85(a)BR	From junction with footpath 20BR to Gilbertbank	
85(b)BR	From Redhouse Lane to junction with footpaths 64BR and 66BR	
87BR	From footpaths 64 and 66BR to Hall Lane	
88BR	From Woodlands Drive to footpath 69BR	
89BR	From junction of footpaths 12 and 14BR to footpath 15BR	
108BR	From junction with bridleway 56BR to Bunkers Hill	
109BR	From Annable Road to Daisyfield Recreation Ground, Osbourne Street	Through field to join B6104 Stockport Road West at pelican crossing OR cross at Welkin Road into Pear Mill Industrial Estate by river to re-join Bredbury Hall. To avoid Welkin Road
CHEADLE AND GATLEY		
16CG	From Hall Moss lane to Highfield Parkway and 13HGB and 10CG	Related to bypass. See also 133CG and 27HGB
133CG	From Hall Moss Lane opposite Hall Moss to Dairyhouse Lane	
30CG	From bridleway 32 to Tarvin Road	Direct link to Old Wool Lane bridleway avoiding a long detour and many roads around housing estate
HAZEL GROVE AND BRAMHALL		
13HGB	From Woodford Road (A5102) to Highfield Parkway	Church Lane/Hall Moss. Can link onto these routes from HGB14a. Allows safe crossing of A550 to reach Dean Valley Equestrian Centre
14HGB	From Woodford Road (A5102) to Albany Road	
And 16CG	From Hall Moss Lane to Highfield Parkway and footpaths 13HG and 10CG	
14aHGB	From Albany Road to the junction of footpaths 15 and 16	Bramhall Golf club. Avoids busy roads in centre of Bramhall. Allows access to Fred Perry Way. Also a safer route to Dean Valley Equestrian Centre
15HGB	From Chester Road (A5149) to footpaths 14a and 16	
16HGB	From footpath 14a to footpaths 17 and 18	
17HGB	From Adelaide Road to footpaths 16 and 18	
18HGB	From junction footpaths 16 and 17 to Bramhall Club	

	House drive	
19HGB	From footpath 16 to Woodford Road	
20HGB	From footpath 18 to Bramley Road	
26HGB	From Bramhall Lane A5102 to Ack Lane B5095	Benja Fold. Connects a loop with Robins Lane, Hillbrook Road and back down Benja Fold and missing out Bramhall village
27HGB	From Woodford Road to Lytham Drive linking to Camberley Close	Leads to Woodford Road from Pennington stables Related to bypass
30HGB	From Robin's Lane to Ramsdale Road	Robins Lane. Access to footpath is blocked by locked gate. Access through here would allow access to other off-road hacking paths. Would also allow access to Bramhall Park
31HGB	From footpath 30 to Ramsdale Road	
32HGB	From Robin's Lane to Carr Wood Road	
33HGB	From footpath 32 to Carr Wood Avenue	
34HGB	From Carr Wood Road to footpath 93	
42HGB	From footpath 41 to junction of Bridge Lane and Valley Road	Bridge lane. Access to happy Valley is restricted and currently have to ride down very busy Jacksons Lane A5143 to Headlands Road to enter through the bridleway
46HGB	From Wallbank Road to footpath 41	Headlands Road.
79HGB	From Offerton Road B6103 to Berkeley Road	Possible site for a Pegasus crossing. Safe access to and from Hazel Grove and Torkington Road avoiding bad bends and HGV rollover zone Accident at this spot April 2017 involving a car and a horse
80HGB	From Offerton Road B6103 to Torkington Road near Manor Cottages	
91HGB	From Peter Street to Mill Street	Peter Street footpath, Can avoid riding on A6
92HGB	From footpath 102 Hazel Grove and Bramhall to junction with Peter Street and continuing	Makes up "Cow Lane", safe to ride onto quiet housing estate
95HGB	From Bramhall lane south to footpath 28	Would allow access to many bridleways
102HGB	From footpath 92 Hazel Grove and Bramhall to footpath 121 ('Cow Lane')	
97HGB	From Buxton Road A6 to footpaths 199 and 200 Marple	And 199M. Safe access off A6 Buxton Road past cricket club down to fields off Middlewood way and Middlewood Station or continue onto tow path of Macclesfield canal.
MARPLE		
2M	From Glossop Road near Werneth Low to Footpath 46M	Etherow Country Park to BW 1BR
11M	Sandhill Lane to Gun Road	previously used from Derbyshire border at Robin Hood Picking Rods on Gun Road/Shiloh Road via FP11/211. Avoids Shiloh
211M	From Gun Road to Sandhill Lane	

		Road which is excessive speed rat run, links to Derbyshire BW routes and Pennine Bridleway interim / main route
32M	From Gird lane to footpath 31	
39M	From Ley Lane to Mill Brow	
52M	Cote Green Road to Cote Green Lane	Avoids roads
58M	Brabyns Brow to Grosvenor Road	Allows access to Brabyns Park avoiding main road
59M	Manor Road/Oakdene Road to Bowden Lane	Provides a traffic free route to Brabyns Park
62M	From footpath 64M along River Goyt to Nab Lane	Plus 20BR. Access between Bredbury/Chadkirk and Marple Dale, can then go onto Middlewood Way at Rose Hill. Links Middlewood Way, safe circular route also to BW68 HGB. Busy crossing at Dale Road, Pegasus crossing advised
64M	Kingsbridge Close to Dooley Lane	Circular route to BW68HGB
65M	Dooley Lane to footpath 64M	Link to BW56BR. Very busy road, recommend Pegasus crossing. Path could be taken round edge of field and fenced (belongs to Dan Bank Farm)
68M	Hill Top Drive to footpath 64M	Needs stile removing. Very slippery and dangerous, needs non slip surface for very short distance (approx. 3m)
73M	From 71M on the east side of the railway to rejoin 71M on the west side of the railway	Woodville Drive, direct link to Middlewood way in between houses 103 and 105
75M	Shepley Lane to Hazel Grove	From Hawk Green, via Barnsfold Road over the canal, past club house and through golf course. Links Middlewood way to canal
182M	From Shepley Lane to Barnsfold Road	
77M	Ecclesbridge Road to Macclesfield canal	Links Middlewood way to canal
97M	From Church Road near Lower Hall to bridleway 102	
103M	From footpath 107 at Knowle Farm to Longhurst lane	Link from Townscliffe Lane to Longhurst Lane FP103 and 111 (via Knowle Road). Enables circular link around residential roads
111M	From Townscliffe Lane to footpath 103M	
105M	From Moor End Road to the junction of footpath 93 and bridleway 102 at the vicarage	
106M	From Longhurst Lane to footpath 105	
107M	From junction of footpaths 109 and 110 at Knowle Farm to Church Road at the vicarage	
113M	From Longhurst lane to footpath 103	
120M	From bridleway 118M to BOAT 119M	From Lakes area alternative route using Cown Edge Way to

220M	From footpath 120M to footpath 125M	Mellor Golf course
125M	From BOAT 119M to footpath 126M	
126M	From bridleway 159M to footpath 126M	
132M	From footpath 134M at Snape Hey to BOAT 119M	Link through Mellor Golf Course to Black Lane. Alternative to two existing BW routes which are steep/erode often.
133M	From footpath 149M to Cobden Edge Road	
143M	From footpath 144 to BOAT 149 at Cobden Edge Road	
144M	From footpath 148 to footpath 141	Paradise Farm to Higher Cliffe Farm Previously used route, currently obstructed
146M	From Derbyshire county boundary to junction footpaths 147M and 148M	
147M	From bridleway 150M to footpath 146M	
167M	From Turf Lee Road to Strines Road	Peeres Cottage from Strines Road past Peeres Cottage under canal to Turf Lee Road. Avoid Strines Road, busy and bad bends
170M	From footpath 169 to footpath 171	
171M	From Turf Lee Road to Disley boundary	
174M	From Turf Lee Road to peak forest canal	
175M	From a carriage road adjacent to the Peak Forest canal to Ridge Road	
177M	From Ridge Road Hawk Green Road	
178M	From footpath 177 to Hawk Green Road crossroads	
179M	From crossroads Hawk Green to Windlehurst Road	
183M	From Barnsfield Road to Windlehurst Road	
184M	From footpath 187 at Victoria Farm to footpath 186	
185M	From footpath 186 to Wybersley Road	
186M	From junction footpaths 193 and 194 at Lomer He House to Wybersley Road	
198M	From Poynton boundary to footpath 196, Middlewood Road	
199M	From footpath 200 Marple to the Lyme Handley Parish boundary at the Macclesfield canal	And 97HGB Safe access off A6 Buxton Road past cricket club down to fields off Middlewood way and Middlewood Station or continue onto tow path of Macclesfield canal.
201M	From footpath 200 to footpath 74	
202M	From Windlehurst Road to footpath 72 Hazel Grove	

	and Bramhall	
204M	From Windlehurst Lane to footpath 71	
205M	From Windlehurst Lane to the Hazel Grove & Bramhall District boundary	
207M	From Dooley lane to the Stockport boundary	Continuation of Bongs Road. Allows safe access onto Dooley Lane to get to Bredbury bridleways, avoiding major junction of A626 and A627
211M	From Gun Road to Sandhill Lane	
214M	From footpath 174 Marple across swing bridge along towing path of Peak Forest Canal to junction with footpath 165 Marple	
215aM	From footpath 165 Marple to footpath 85 Bredbury and Romiley	
215M	Towing path Peak Forest Canal	
218M	From Brickbridge Road opposite the school to a road leading to Chapel House Farm	Links Middlewood Way to canal 75/77
219M	From Andrew Lane to Footpath 194M	
227M	From footpath 196M to car park	