

Verderers Court: **Wednesday 15th October 2024**

Presentment: **New Forest Commoners Defence Association**

Cycle Routes- time extension

Good morning Official Verderer, Verderers, and members of the Court.

Andrew Parry-Norton CDA Chairman.

Last month we heard the Deputy surveyor make a presentment announcing the start of a consultation period for a proposed cycle network.

I am sure the initial reaction from the Cycling groups is to immediately support the FE’s proposal and I am sure we will hear presentments to that effect, at a glance it all seems a reasonable proposition.

The use of existing gravel tracks would be a sensible option, most routes are used anyway so hopefully this would be way of encouraging responsible cycling practices. What isn’t clear is some of these tracks do not exist as graveled roads; the proposal is to create new tracks with the subsequent loss of habitat.

The use of underpasses need addressing, ponies shade in them during the summer months, this could potentially put cyclists at physical risk and the Commoner to financial litigation. Under passes are used during drifts and as a barrier in the event of a disease outbreak, they will need to be locked and access denied to cyclists.

The network needs adequate policing; electric bikes could become a nuisance to other forest users, could large cycle events be held with no restrictions?

The amount of questions that need resolving are complex and difficult, the Forest’s unique character and ecology must not be compromised and every decision evaluated thoroughly before being implemented.

To consider this proposal in four weeks is unrealistic, to give a reasoned response requires Commoners that live and work in the Forest time to share their views.

We, the CDA strongly advise the Verderers to delay their response to allow a proper unpressurised consultation to take place, open to everyone.

We also recommend to the cyclists groups and individuals to visit the proposed new graveled tracks and then make an informed decision, we have a large network of existing tracks, is it really worth losing more of this special Forest.

Thank you.