

## **HUDDLE HOT TOPICS** **April/May 2014**

### **National LAF Conference**

The papers and presentations from the National LAF Conference are now on Huddle. These include:

- Presentations
  - Deregulation Bill – Defra
  - Paths in Crisis – the Ramblers
  - Access and Land Managers – CLA
  - Rail Crossings – Network Rail
  - Unrecorded Rights of Way and Farmland – NFU
  - Lottery Funding – Big Lottery Fund
  
- Workshops
  - Access for All – New Forest and South Lincs and Rutland LAFs
  - Dogs – Natural England, Dorset Dogs and Durham County Council
  - Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships – Natural England
  - LAF Effectiveness – Leicestershire County Council
  
- General Information
  - Plenary Report
  - Feedback and Statistics

Please ask your Huddle representatives for information or let me know if you would like any reports e-mailed.

### **Current consultation**

#### **Traffic Signs and General Directions**

[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2015)

The Department of Transport has issued a consultation on Traffic Signs and General Directions, closing date 12 June. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) was drafted in 2000 and is now out of date. This consultation follows an earlier stakeholder review. The outcome of this was that “the existing TSRGD provides a nationally consistent traffic sign system but it was inflexible - resulting in regulatory barriers to design, and administrative burdens when applying for sign authorisations that are already good practice amongst traffic authorities. The revision is deregulatory, reduces the requirement to place signs, cuts costs for local authorities and removes the need for authorisations. It also provides new measures to promote safer cycling.”

### **Discussions on Huddle**

The main discussion has been on cycling on footpaths following information from the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) which stated:

- Rights of Way laws should be amended to permit cycling on footpaths with few limited exceptions only where there are clear location-specific reasons not to do so (e.g. where the increased use of the path would create significant environmental or safety hazards).

- CTC believes that it is acceptable for cyclists to use footpaths, provided they do so in a manner which respects the safety of other road users and their peaceful enjoyment of the outdoors, and with regard for the environment and its ecology. These are the circumstances in which CTC believes it is acceptable for cyclists to ride on footpaths:
  - Where the surface and width of the path make it eminently suitable for safe cycling without causing disturbance or risk to pedestrians; or
  - Where the path is lightly used, such that the likelihood of disturbance or risk to pedestrians is minimal; or
  - Where a path is unlikely to attract such high levels of cycling that it will cause environmental damage (notably erosion); or
  - Where there is a reasonable belief that the footpath in question might already carry higher rights – for example:
    - where there is historic evidence (e.g. through enclosure award maps) demonstrating past use either by horses or by vehicles
    - where the path is shown on OS maps as an ‘Other Road with Public Access’ (ORPA), indicating an assumption that higher rights may exist;
    - where there is regular use by equestrians, motor vehicles and/or by other cyclists.
  - Where the relevant landowner is a public body or a charity and/or accepts or appears to accept use of the path by cyclists.
  - Except where the landowner has expressly permitted cycle use, CTC does not generally support the use of footpaths by larger groups of cyclists – particularly as part of an organised event – as this is more likely to generate complaints.

This has stimulated 49 posts. Much of the argument has focussed on whether this is a correct view and the legality, or otherwise, of riding or wheeling cycles along footpaths. Huddle users have come in with diverse statements. Some discussion has also focussed on whether use constitutes trespass and potential horse use of footpaths has also been introduced to the debate.