

CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

STATUS OF BRIDLE PATH

Bridle Path is owned by the Parish Council. It was purchased from Oxfordshire County Council in 2001 as part of the deal to purchase Charney Field. However, the Parish Council does not have responsibility for its condition because it is a bridle path and as such has to be maintained by OCC. OCC are required to keep it in a condition commensurate with its status as a bridle path, not as a vehicular access. In its present condition, although an unsatisfactory vehicular access, I believe that OCC consider it adequate for bridle path users, i.e. walkers and horses. My opinion is based on discussions with OCC when the Parish Council was negotiating the purchase of Charney Field.

As to who would be responsible for improving the condition of the path to accommodate vehicles satisfactorily, the answer appears to be the owners of the last three properties along the path, namely New House (Adamsons), Senchev (Johns) and De-Bar (Metcalf). There is no such obligation on the owners of the first two properties, namely Mrs. Harrison and Joe Ody, although they do have right of way along those parts of the bridle way fronting their properties. The reason for this is that in 1957, before county boundary changes, Berkshire County Council sold land for development at the end of the bridle path. At that time, the Harrison/Ody property was in situ. As a condition of the sale, BCC required the developer to maintain the bridle path "to a standard suitable for residential development ... to the entire satisfaction of the County Surveyor". The three properties referred to above have subsequently been built. It is presumed that the obligation to maintain the bridle path placed on the developer by BCC was passed on to the owners of these properties but I have no documentary evidence of this.

It would seem that if the bridle path is to be repaired, the cost should fall on the owners of the last three properties, although they might wish to seek a contribution from Mrs. Harrison and Joe Ody for their limited right of way along it. The owners of Bridle Cottage also appear to have a right of way along part of Bridle Path. It is clear that at present, neither the Parish Council as owners, nor OCC who maintain the bridle path, would wish to be involved in such a repair.

During the purchase by the Parish Council of Bridle Path, it was found that OCC did not own the watercourse alongside Bridle Path. Accordingly, two properties in Barnfield (No 5 Harper and No 4 Stiles) are frontagers of Bridle Path and may have rights of way over it, although this would seem to be academic. I do not have any documentary evidence associated with Bridle Cottage which is also a frontager and which has a bridge connected to Bridle Path, except a letter from OCC disclaiming any responsibility for the bridge.

This opinion is necessarily vague in certain respects as I do not have all the documentary evidence needed to be definitive. However, it might be useful as a starting point if the responsibilities for Bridle Path are to be defined.

Peter G Davies
Clerk to the Parish Council

28 January 2004