

Cabinet – 7 September 2023

Questions from the Public

1 Edmund Wilson to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

On 5 June 2023 Natural England emailed Harlow Council stating that should Harlow Council wish to consider horse riding within Harlow Woods it would “require adequate resource management from the Council”. Please can the council detail the additional resources and resulting costs that would be required to permit this activity?

Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

The Council has arranged a meeting between Council Officers and Natural England staff for later in September. At this meeting it is expected that advice will be given regarding what mitigating measures would be required to allow horse riding in the SSSI whilst protecting the site from further damage caused by the activity. If any affordable mitigating measures are identified, the Council will then submit a ‘Notice of proposal to cause, carry out or permit operations requiring Natural England’s consent on a site of special scientific interest (SSSI)’ to Natural England seeking consent to allow horse riding in the Harlow Woods SSSI. Natural England has 4 months to consider the proposal and respond once it has been received.

Supplementary question from Edmund Wilson:

What date will the meeting be and will we be invited?

Supplementary answer from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability):

The date for a meeting in late September is being finalised and you will be invited when a date has been confirmed.

2 Edmund Wilson to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

A recent freedom of information request revealed that Harlow Council asserts to have 10.75 miles of bridleway (please note that the request was for bridleways and not PROW). The OS maps do not detail such a network and at least two stretches listed on OS have been repurposed as cycle paths and no longer conform to the surface requirements for shared use routes that include horses.

Can the council please explain what consultation took place when these bridleways were converted to cycle tracks and provide details of where bridleways that remain suitable for equine activity are located?

Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

Details on the consultations that took place to convert bridleways to cycle tracks, and details of where bridleways that remain suitable for equine activity are located, are not held by Harlow Council. This information should be held by Essex Highways.