



Helen Sparks
Planning Inspectorate
Sent to helen.sparks@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

18/12/25

Dear Ms Sparks

Letter of Support: Ref: ROW/3350303 and ROW/3350304

We are writing in support of the proposed diversion of Bridleway BW80 on land at Chantry Farm and the formalisation of the nearby permissive route that has been in regular public use for nearly two years. Our comments are provided with reference to the statutory tests that must be met for a diversion order to be confirmed.

1. Convenience to the Public

(“the new path will not be substantially less convenient to the public”)

We consider the alternative route to be significantly more convenient than the existing alignment of BW80.

The current bridleway is situated within a narrow, steep-sided goyle, where the former track bed has become a permanent watercourse. During winter and periods of heavy or intense rainfall, this channel carries high volumes of water, causing ongoing erosion and rendering the surface impassable for many years. The route is now heavily overgrown with willow and scrub, reflecting its long-term lack of use. Passing others safely in such a confined, high-sided corridor is extremely difficult.

In contrast, the proposed new route follows a drier, wider, more open corridor through woodland between two streams. It has been routinely used as permissive access by walkers, riders, and other users without any negative impact on the surface. The route comfortably accommodates horses, walkers and families, and provides a noticeably safer and more pleasant experience.

We therefore believe the proposed diversion is substantially more convenient for the public.

2. Effect on Public Enjoyment

(“expedient having regard to the effect on public enjoyment of the path as a whole”)

We are confident that public enjoyment of the route as a whole will be enhanced, not diminished, by the diversion.

The existing line of BW80 offers no views, is constantly waterlogged, and presents a poor-quality, unstable surface. It is also close to a working farmyard, raising concerns about safety, privacy, and interactions with livestock and machinery.

The alternative route, already waymarked and well-used, provides a far more attractive landscape experience. Users enjoy:

- Woodland scenery and proximity to the stream
- A wider, more accessible corridor with better footing
- Opportunities for enhanced interpretation, wildlife education, and engagement through QR codes and signage
- Insights into innovative habitat management and the “creative single grazing unit” used in the Brit Valley Project

The new route offers a richer, safer, and more enjoyable experience for the public, strongly meeting the second statutory test.

3. Likelihood of Public Use of the Old Route

(“expedient having regard to the extent to which the old route would, apart from the order, be likely to be used by the public”)

It is highly unlikely that the public would use BW80 even if the diversion were not made.

Its long-term impassability, unsafe footing, and extremely restricted, overgrown nature mean that the route is functionally unusable. Reinstatement would cause:

- Increased silting of the farm pond
- Surfaces that would rapidly wash away in storm events
- Loss of valuable thicket-type nesting habitat, which has developed due to lack of human disturbance

The dynamic interplay of greensand and clay geology in this watercourse means natural changes are inevitable, reinforcing that reinstatement would be unsustainable and potentially harmful.

By contrast, the public already demonstrates a clear preference for the permissive route, which is durable, accessible, and enjoyable.

Additional Supporting Considerations

Accessibility

The proposed route is far more accessible for people with limited mobility. Its width, dry surface, and gentle gradient make it safer and easier to use than the steep, waterlogged goyle.

Compatibility with Horses

We have no concerns about shared use with horse riders. The new route has already accommodated equestrian use, providing a safe, stable, and sufficiently wide passage for all users.

Environmental and Educational Benefits

The alternative route aligns strongly with the aims of the Brit Valley Project to balance farming, wildlife conservation, and public access. It offers opportunities for:

- Interpretation of complex habitat management
- Engagement with landscape-scale nature restoration
- Improved public understanding of responsible dog ownership in grazing areas

These opportunities are not available on the old route.

BW80 also acts as a means of slowing the flow of water down into the Brit, very much consistent with the aims of the Brit Valley Project's Natural Flood Management plans. Reopening it, and clearing the debris and overgrown surface, would actually lead to a greater flood risk downstream.

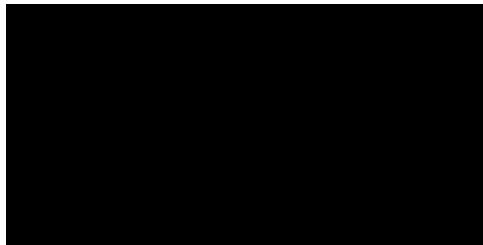
Furthermore, whilst we are not aware of a specific study, a cursory examination of BW80 at this location shows a fascinating flora and fauna that has developed over the past decades, and may well, due to its protected location, harbour important species that only live in wet and sheltered spaces, including mosses, lichen and ferns.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, we believe the proposed diversion of BW80 clearly meets all three statutory tests. The new route is more convenient, more enjoyable, safer, more sustainable, and far more likely to be used by the public. We also believe that the additional factors add weight to the proposal for diversion.

We therefore fully support the diversion order and respectfully request that it be confirmed.

Yours sincerely,

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Sam Rose

Exec Director, West Dorset Wilding

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