

Details of emails received in response to the Chatter article that mentioned the maintenance of the bridlepath to Stanford

Received 02 June, signed by one resident:

Dear Charney Chatter

I would love for all of the stinging nettles to be trimmed back as soon and as often as possible so myself & my children can enjoy walking and cycling without worrying about getting stung.

Kind regards

Received 06 June, signed by one resident:

Just been out for my morning dog walk along the Stanford Bridleway and got very wet having to push through all the over grown grass, stinging nettles and thistles. This has now gone from what was a pleasurable walk a few weeks ago, to what could for some people be a dangerous assault course.

This needs to be addressed ASAP as a safety issue. It is impossible to get through with a pushchair or a wheel chair, very difficult on a bicycle or if you are a small child. I think a horse and rider would even find it difficult since some of the overhanging bushes on both sides join together at about 6-7 feet above the ground.

This is a bridleway NOT a footpath and as such should be at least 6 feet wide throughout.

This bridleway needs clearing NOW!

I'm willing to help if required.

Regards

Received 07 June, signed by two residents:

Dear Council

With regard to the maintenance of the bridle path, there is a legal requirement to maintain a footpath to a minimum width as stated in default widths of the Highways Act 1980. The path is used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders on a regular basis and it is becoming very dangerous due to its narrowness and over grown vegetation. We have witnessed people tripping over and rolling ankles etc.

Ultimately OCC must continue to clear the path twice yearly. We all pay a substantial council tax fee, so surely this must be included. If the Charney Army are prepared to help maintain its safety, that is of great added benefit.

We are all encouraged to walk, run, cycle etc for our mental and physical wellbeing so a safe countryside path provides that stimulation.

In relation to biodiversity, not a problem. There is plenty of room at the sides of the path to allow for nettles, weeds, plants etc to enable butterflies, insects and wildlife to thrive.

The footpaths throughout our countryside should be safely maintained for all to enjoy, both human and wildlife.

With thanks

Received 08 June, signed by one resident:

I feel that the Charney footpath representative must be someone who regularly, ie several times a week, walks the two paths that we have in Charney. The bridlepath is now so narrow that it is impossible to see where your feet are going so therefore rabbit holes, roots and overgrown vegetation are a constant threat. Whereas the recommended width for a bridlepath is 12 feet this is impractical here but a path wide enough for two people to walk together and chat easily would do wonders for everyone's wellbeing. It is amazing that in Oxfordshire countryside we as a village have such a lack of comfortably walkable paths. As it is at present the bridlepath is a serious threat to health and safety. On my last walk yesterday I nearly fell twice despite taking much care. Horses must find it impenetrable. Regards and hoping for action

Received 08 June, signed by one resident:

As a regular user of both village paths, I am concerned that the bridle path may be allowed to become overgrown in the name of biodiversity. These paths are not a luxury; they are an important part of village life, supporting walking, exercise, fresh air, and the physical and mental wellbeing of those who rely on them. They should remain safe, accessible and welcoming.

In practical terms, the bridle path needs to be clear enough for everyday use, including for two people to walk side-by-side without brushing through nettles or dense growth. This matters all the more because, if these paths become unworkable, there is nowhere else for people to walk safely: the roads in and out of the village have no pavements. For many residents, these routes are therefore essential, not optional.

This is, above all, a practical issue. If the paths are allowed to become too overgrown, people will use them less, and the village will lose something valuable. These routes support everyday health, social connection and enjoyment of the countryside, and that should not be overlooked.

Although Oxfordshire County Council has the formal responsibility for maintenance, we are fortunate in also having a willing and capable local volunteer group in the Charney Army. With a bit of coordination, they could help tactically to keep the path open and passable. That feels like a very positive village response: not setting biodiversity against access, but working together to make sure the path remains both usable and cared for. Biodiversity matters, and I would fully support efforts to encourage it in places where it can thrive without reducing access along a well-used route. There are other areas in the village where that approach may be better suited, such as the playing field, which is often over-mown and could perhaps be managed in a more wildlife-friendly way without affecting an important path used by residents every day.

I therefore hope the bridle path will be kept properly clear and comfortably usable, with vegetation cut back enough to preserve a good walking width. With the highway authority meeting its responsibility and the Charney Army offering practical support where helpful, we can keep this path open for the people who depend on it, while supporting biodiversity in places where it can flourish without closing the way to those who walk it.

Received 08 June, signed by one resident:

To whom it may concern,

I am emailing you with regard to the overgrowth on the Stanford Bridle Path, mentioned in June's Charney Chatter.

I strongly believe that the Bridle Path should be maintained to provide a clear passage for use both by horse riders and by foot traffic.

There are quite a few areas of the path which have overgrown tree roots and holes of varying sizes which can be navigated safely when the path is clear and cut back. However, when the path becomes overgrown, these are almost impossible to see, thereby posing significant dangers to horses and riders, and to pedestrians alike. Horses getting their feet stuck in holes can cause catastrophic injury, which I am sure everyone wishes to avoid.

I wholeheartedly agree that we should promote biodiversity and work to protect the ecosystem, but I disagree that it needs to be an "either / or" scenario. Surely we can provide sanctuary for bees etc whilst also providing safe passage for residents to walk / cycle / ride too?

I tried to walk to the little bridge from the Field at the weekend, not realising how bad it had become, and returned covered in nettle stings and scratches - I even had to pick my little dog up in parts as he was too small to be able to get through some of the really thick patches.

I am also pregnant, and the path now poses significant trip hazards to me (and countless others!) so I don't feel comfortable taking this risk in my current condition and I certainly won't when my baby gets here!

Luckily we have the other path that takes us to Cherbury Camp but, in my opinion, only having this path makes me want to drive to other walks for a change of scenery - surely using my car unnecessarily is worse for the planet than a little bit of overgrowth maintenance?

There is ample room either side of the footpath to be able to leave plenty of growth untouched, whilst also providing a clear path for horse riders and other users. We have to share the planet, and this is what should be promoted - not a stark "one or the other".

Thank you for taking the time to read my email, I hope it will be of some use.

Yours faithfully,

Received 09 June, signed by two residents:

As requested in the June Charney Chatter we would like our view to be taken into account on this subject. We walk this path relatively regularly and believe it is important to maintain a clear, reasonably wide path, especially if there is more than one person and even more important whilst walking a dog. As the path is a bridle path it is even more necessary for anyone riding a horse to be able to see the path clearly, in order to avoid animal holes at the edges of the path and encroaching vegetation.

Whilst we understand and sympathise with the desire to maintain biodiversity wherever possible, this should not be at the expense of the requirement to maintain a safe and enjoyable environment for people and animals to be able to make use of the bridlepath.

We believe the necessary clearance work should ideally be carried out by OCC but given the likely response time and their stretched resources, it would be far more practical for Charney Army to undertake this work as soon as possible, if they are able and willing to do so.

Kind regards

Received 12 June, signed by one resident:

Good evening,

The bridle path at the back of the playing fields is a well used path by many in the village for walking dogs, cycling and for simply going on a walk. Currently it is so overgrown that there are sections that are almost impassable. This does make it a safety issue for young people or those unsteady on foot.

I know there has been some ongoing discussion about bridle path and responsibilities of maintaining it. Whilst I realise that this is the responsibility of others, I am happy for willing volunteers to take on the task if that is the best / most expedient option.

Kind regards

In addition to these emails, several people stopped me on my walks with Todd (my dog) to ask about when the path might be cleared. I did ask these people to email, but nothing was received.

Best wishes

Tracey