

Re ; Chideock Parish council formal objection to the proposals set out by Dorset Council regarding Bridleway 18 .Response to the Planning Application ROW 18 : 3363197 (near Golden Cap Holiday Park ,DTY6 6JX)

To; helen.sparks@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

From; clerk@chideockparishcouncil.gov.uk on behalf of Chideock Parish Council.

Date; 29th May 2026

Background.

Chideock Parish council is formally raising its objections to the proposals by Dorset Council that the Northern section of Bridleway 18 should be recognized as a county road. This matter has taken several years to be considered by the Inspectorate, but it was originally opposed by Chideock parish council on behalf of the village and in association and support of the then community group. The village opposition to the proposal by the Dorset ROW that the bridleway was a county road, arose during the consideration by the County Council of a planning application by West Dorset Leisure. At the time, the report produced by Dorset County ROW team to support the supposition that the Bridleway was a county road, was disputed and the Community group produced a rebuttal document , “Status and Extent of Public Rights of way at Mill Lane, Chideock with Appendices” in 2015 (see Appendix 1).

The history of the development of bridleway 18, at the top of Mill Lane is already well documented, once a dirt track leading down to Mill and onto Seatown, during the war it was concreted over to make way for gravel extraction. The bridleway lies between on the left (as you go towards the sea), a caravan park and on the right land owned by the national trust. There is a permissive path into the national trust land at the top of the field and at the bottom, entered through a cattle gate. During the months of May to November/December, cattle graze in the national trust fields and therefore access is restricted. In addition, there is no access for those who are disabled or who have children in pushchairs or prams. In addition, during the winter months when it has rained the fields become muddy and can boggy following the cattle having been in the fields and the fields are then chewed up.

The Bridleway, therefore is of primary importance to everyone in the village and those visitors, who wish to walk to Seatown from Chideock. The only other route being along Seahill lane, which is a narrow road taking all vehicular traffic from Chideock to Seatown. On this road, there are no pavements, it has a national speed limit of 60 miles per hour and as you can imagine is exceptionally busy. In other words, the only safe route from Chideock to Seatown, for the villagers, for the elderly, for the disabled, for children and families, is along Mill Lane and down bridleway 18.

The current situation remains unresolved and it remains the case that for those who use Mill Lane/bridleway 18, during the months that the caravan site is open, find themselves competing with oncoming vehicles on daily basis. In fact, the matter is much worse than this, when vehicles force pedestrians into the hedge so that they can drive up or down the bridleway, showing no actual concerns for the fact that they do not have a right of way. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that during the last 11 years the caravan park has expanded with the village of Chideock and Seatown experiencing approximately an additional 4,000 individuals arriving on a weekly basis during the summer months. Needless to say, those who do not live here, often do not adhere to the speed limits or the signage that asks them to slow down.

The reason that the Northern end of bridleway 18 should remain a bridleway, rests upon a health and safety issue, there is no other safe pedestrian passage way to Seatown from Chideock. While it remains the case that the caravan park has already got vehicular access from Seatown and through a private road which runs from the Broadmead estate. Equally, both properties that sit below the caravan park have access through the road to Seatown.

Chideock Parish council's position in response to the points raised within Dorset Councils current position.

1. The NERC ACT 2006, subject to exemptions, will have led to the extinguishment of any unrecorded mechanically propelled vehicular rights. The DCs presumption in stating that points B-C-D-E are a highway maintained at public expense and a bridleway has led to inaccurate information being recorded on the definitive map. The accurate information is that this is a bridleway only. However, this section of the bridleway southwards has no recorded vehicular rights. Chideock parish council requests an extinguishment of this "dual Status", based on inaccurate information having been entered on the definitive map. All private rights would be preserved but would need to be proven.
2. Until 2012, there had never been any suggestion by Dorset County council about the extent of the County Road, it ended at Roadstead farm, as did the 30 mile an hour signage. Senior ROW officers, Highway superintendents and Road safety officers were all in agreement that the County Road finished at Roadstead farm. Due to concerns related to safety, the senior ROW officer agreed that due to safety concerns that it should become a bridleway, and all such signage would be put in place.
3. From 1996 until 2012, there was no mention of dual status and was not mentioned in the 1996 order confirmed by the Secretary of State, which then led to the current signage that is in place.
4. Bridleway 18 has never been maintained in the past or up to the current date, as a county road from Point A to Point E.
5. There is a misrepresentation of the word, "Highways" by Dorset council regarding the statement made by Mr. Weld in 1934. At the time this statement was made, the pathway that existed between points A and E, was not open to vehicular traffic, and in fact it is unlikely that there was such traffic but more likely it referred to horse/ carts and pedestrians/farmers/labourers.
6. In the 1953 sale of "part of Chideock estate" easements are given in the Title deeds with regard to a vehicular right of way over various parts of the concrete track and the parish council would consider this conclusive evidence that the pathways evidenced in green ink on the 1932 map are Footpaths only.
7. Access for residents of mill cottage and the mill building was given by the Weld estate in 1953 with rights of vehicular access through the lower Southern end of Mill Lane, after point E towards Sea town.

8. Prior to the second world war, point A to E was a track through a gated field leading from the Mill up to Frying pan (a house on the northern edge of Mill Lane). This track was concreted over by the Americans in the second world war in order to move shingle from the beach .
9. The concrete track has never been metaled road and it remains in its original state.
10. Point A to point of the bridleway is not owned by either the National trust or WDL.