

Aylesford

PARISH COUNCIL

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL,
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Environmental Services Committee Meeting 19 March 2024

Re: Request to investigate making public footpath MR438 at Podkin Meadow wheelchair accessible

David Munn – West Kent Area Manager for the Public Rights of Way & Access Service at KCC has contacted the Parish Office regarding a request they have received to make public footpath MR438 in Podkin Meadow (which goes straight across the middle of the field) wheelchair accessible.

KCC have received the same type of requests for other footpaths within the Borough.

There are two kissing gates at Podkin Meadow, one at the Mill Lane/Warren Road end and one at the Crematorium end. These were put in a number of years ago to stop the off-road bikes from accessing the land as Podkin Meadow was suffering quite badly with this which obviously had an impact on residents' quality of life as a result of the anti-social behaviour.

Since the kissing gates were installed, the problem ceased.

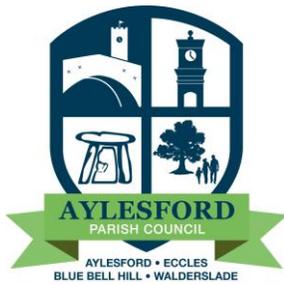
Normally the landowner can just say yes or no to these types of requests received from KCC, giving no justification, however as a Parish Council we are covered by the Equality Act 2010 so have to make a considered opinion and decision backed by an Equality Impact Assessment. That does not mean the Parish Council has to agree, but if it decides not to make any adjustments there must be a justifiable reason, in the event of it being challenged by the requester.

The Parish Council are required to assess the request and balance any benefits there would be to those with disabilities with any disbenefits that may arise from any potential wheelchair accessible entrance for the wider community/population.

The Council needs to consider allowing the two access points on Podkin Meadow to be made more accessible for a wheelchair user.

The thought process should include

1. What is there now and why is it there?
2. Is it because of a problem that might occur?
3. Is it because of a problem that has occurred?
4. If it is because of a problem that has occurred, has it been effective in preventing said problem?
5. Is there an effective need for the existing gates?
6. What would the impact be if the existing gates were to be removed/changed?



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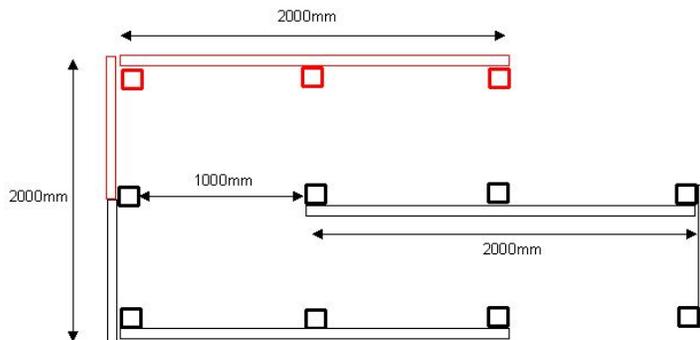
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The council then needs to look at and consider the various options which are.

1. Replace the kissing gates with just a gap of 1m. (would this be effective at preventing any problems that the existing gates seeked to stop? If not, why not?).
2. If the answer is no, then repeat the above (in brackets) for a motorcycle inhibitor.
3. If the answer is still no, then repeat for a RADAR kissing gate.
4. If it is still a no, then repeat for the last option which is an 'accessible' chicane.



Motorcycle Inhibitor, although a mini moto would be able to get through this type of gate.



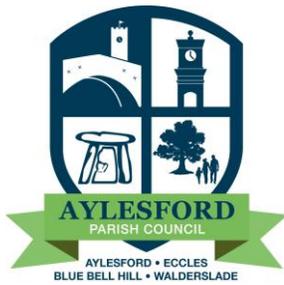
Simple 2 leaf chicane (black)

8 No 100mm x 100mm x 1500mm posts
 6 No 100mm x 50mm x 2000mm rails
 6 No 100mm x 50mm x 1000mm rails

3 leaf chicane (black and red)

11 No 100mm x 100mm x 1500mm posts
 9 No 100mm x 50mm x 2000mm rails
 3 NO 100mm x 50mm x 1000mm rails

Example of an 'Accessible' Chicane. The only difference to make it accessible is that the enclosed space at the end would have to be 2m long instead of the 1m shown in the drawing. This does mean that it would be accessible by motorcycles.



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The RADAR kissing gate will look just like the existing gate that is there but with a wider gate and a bigger compound and will have a RADAR lock that allows the gate to be fully opened, so that it acts just like a normal gate. The weakness with this option is that a mini moto could get through the compound, if a standard motorcycle is put up on its back wheel it can then be maneuvered through, and anyone can buy a RADAR key off the internet.