East Sussex & Kent Equestrian Access Group

Campaigning for improved equestrian access and connection of bridleways

Newsletter – March 2026 (Updated 22/03/26)

Introduction

A small group of us have been working to address the growing issues around equestrian access — particularly the loss of horsebox parking and safe off-road riding, especially on Forestry England land like Battle Great Wood, Friston and Abbot's Wood.

This is already having a real impact. Riders are being forced onto roads, and that's a serious safety concern — especially for children, less experienced riders, and horses that aren't road-safe.

We've started engaging politically and have had a response from Kieran Mullan, who confirmed that Forestry England are reviewing horsebox parking at Battle Great Wood, and indeed are working on improvements (see latest update below). While that's positive, it's only one riding area — and overall, East Sussex has been disproportionately affected compared to other parts of the country.

Alongside this, we are also liaising directly with Forestry England and East Sussex County Council to ensure equestrian access and safety are properly considered at a local level as well as nationally.

Latest Update 20/03/26 – Great Battle Woods

Forestry England has confirmed that the permit parking scheme will extend to include Great Battle Woods from 01/04/26.

Existing permit holders (Bedgebury, Hempstead, Kings Wood): log in and update your vehicle registration (ANPR system).

New users: apply via Forestry England:
https://www.forestryengland.uk/

Summary of meeting (No 1) 19/03/26 20 members attended

What Members Said

- Serious safety concerns, especially for children
- Happy to pay for fair parking
- Strong support for coordinated action
- Loss of horsebox parking and off-road access (Battle, Friston, Abbots Wood)
- Restrictions limiting access (e.g. Brede Woods height barriers, Camber weight restrictions)
- Increased road riding = increased safety risk
- Poor bridleway connectivity
- Need for connected, safe routes – explore new options/ farmland etc

What's Happening Now

- Facebook group growing rapidly 22/03/26 Over 500 members !!!!
- Survey underway to gather evidence – Please complete and share (see below)
- Engaging with MPs, Forestry England, BHS, DEFRA, ESCC
- Building links with other bridleway groups

Have Your Say – Complete the Survey

Help us build the evidence needed to improve access and safety.
👉 https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/G6q3CuTXTV

Next Actions

- Gather rider stories and evidence
- Focus on Friston Forest & Bexhill routes
- Review parking sites (Butchers Hole, Seven Sisters, Brede, Camber)
- Gather evidence via survey
- Develop campaign / petition
- Build national network of other bridleway groups
- Formalise East Sussex and Kent Equine Access Group Committee structure
- Target local equine influencers

Next Equine Access Meeting (No 2) 15/04/26

Queens Head, Sedlescombe, TN33 0QA 19.00-21.00. More info to follow

Our Focus

Build evidence | Grow support | Push for MP action | Work with Forestry England