

## **Councillor Barry Parsons**

Welcome to the official opening of the new public bridleway link which connects Cookworthy Forest to Halwill. This route will become a real asset to the area along with all of the other work that is going on to improve access for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists in Ruby Country. Devon County Council is working hard to create and improve the infrastructure in partnership with the Ride the Ruby Country Project.

First and foremost Devon County Council would like to thank the landowners that have agreed to the creation of this new link, including:

- Mr Down and his family
- Mr and Mrs Ovens
- Mr and Mrs Mitchell
- Russ Collins and the Forestry Commission (which kindly arranged the work within the Forestry that we see before us)

Secondly I would like to thank the contractor, Andrew Moon, of Carey Valley Woodland and Estate Management, who was able to create the good all-weather surface on the dismantled railway track from some pretty atrocious ground conditions that were present before work began. The County Council's Engineering and Design Team and Road Safety Team worked alongside the Public Rights of Way Officer, Steve Gardner, to ensure that a safe crossing could be made of the A3079.

Thirdly, I would like to thank Mark Betson of the Ride the Ruby Country Project for his tireless work to forge links with the rural businesses in the area and inspire them to tap into the ever-improving access resource on their doorsteps. Mark has engaged with many local businesses and farms since starting on the Project.

Devon County Council is making steady progress on the **Ruby Way** from Hatherleigh to Holsworthy and Bude, and also the **Pegasus Way**, a long distance bridleway which will ultimately connect the free-riding areas of Dartmoor with Cookworthy Forest (where riders can freely make use of any of the forest roads). Thanks are due to Russ Collins of the Forestry Commission for the new unsurfaced route he has put in nearby for the benefit of horse-riders. Devon County Council is also trying to improve safety of other rights of way that join and cross the A3079, for example with its recent proposal at Northcombe Plantation which, if completed, will provide another safe crossing of the A3079 on tracks usable in all weather conditions.

Therefore, I invite you to make us of, and enjoy, this new bridleway link which not only provides a key link between Cookworthy Forest and Halwill but is also a key piece in the jigsaw of the new Ruby Rides guide to be published shortly. That is, this is part of the new 16 ½ kilometre circular ride taking in Halwill, Beaworthy, Halwill Junction and Cookworthy Forest which some of you may be planning to trial today. The Ruby Rides guide highlights the partnership and close links that exist between the County Council, Ride the Ruby Country, the British Horse Society, South West Riders and local walkers, horse-riders and cyclists.

**Finally, I have great pleasure in declaring this public bridleway officially open!**