**Bentley Wood Access Policy**

**Introduction**

Bentley Wood is a wonderful local resource for wildlife and people. In addition to the limited public rights of way, the Trustees allow access to the wood on other paths provided visitors take note of the Access Policy.

Its tranquillity, attractiveness and abundant wildlife make Bentley Wood a delightful place to visit at any time of year. It is recognised as of national conservation significance as a nature reserve due to its importance for many species. Ground nesting birds and deer are especially susceptible to disturbance. To ensure that visits to the wood are as enjoyable as possible for all visitors and cause the minimum disturbance to wildlife, the Trustees have updated the Access Policy and it is summarised here.

**Right of access**

Other than on public rights of way, members of the public have no general right of access to Bentley Wood. However, in general the Trustees permit access along woodland paths and tracks unless a closure notice is shown. Access is not allowed other than along these paths and tracks.

**Dog walking**

Dogs should be kept under close control at all times and on a leash from 1 April to 31 July each year. To be under close control a dog has to remain on the paths and tracks; if its obedience cannot be relied on, it should be kept on a leash at all times. Dogs should not be allowed to disturb wildlife or enter ponds. Dog owners are asked to respect the fact that other visitors may be apprehensive about meeting dogs.

At all times, owners are asked to pick up and take away dog faeces for safe disposal elsewhere, as they are very unpleasant and also a health hazard. Toxocara parasites occur in dog faeces and can cause an infection; in most cases there are only mild symptoms that require no treatment. However, in rare cases, infection of the liver, lungs, eyes and brain can occur with severe symptoms. Most people make a full recovery but there is a risk of permanent loss of vision. The parasites can remain in the soil for many months so it is important to “pick up and take away”.

Please be a responsible dog owner.

**Horse riding**

Apart from on public bridleways, horse riding in the wood is by permit only and restricted to certain paths and tracks. Riding is not allowed off these tracks or along any wet or waterlogged track. Permits may be withdrawn if riders ignore these requirements or cause a nuisance to other woodland users. Riders are reminded to wear their conspicuous hat bands when riding in the wood and to keep to the firm part of the tracks, not the soft grassy edges which are home to plants and butterfly larvae.

**Cycling**

As well as the public bridleways, cyclists are permitted to use the hard tracks but not grassy, wet or waterlogged tracks. Cyclists should keep to the firm part of the tracks, away from the soft plant-rich edges.

**Restricted activities**

The following activities are not permitted without prior consent:

* Organised group activities
* Any off-track access
* Motorised entry
* Camping or barbecues
* Hunting, shooting, trapping or collecting
* Professional dog walking with groups of dogs

**Summary**

A copy of the full Access Policy (of which the above is a summary only) is available. For details of this or for any further information please email: secretary@friendsofbentleywood.org.uk