

EQUESTRIANS in Hampshire

A reference guide for Transport,
Planners, Developers and
other decision makers



Hampshire
Countryside
Access Forum



ROAD SAFETY

3,288 horse riders and carriage drivers in England and Wales were admitted to hospital during 2019-2020 through transport related accidents

(source: NHS Hospital Episodes Statistics).

£328.5 MILLION

The approximate annual **contribution** to Hampshire's local economy supporting many small businesses in the county.

£4.7 billion - the contribution made by the equine sector to the UK economy excluding the racing industry (source: [British Equestrian Trade Association](#)).

EMPLOYMENT

Second **largest rural employer** after the agricultural sector in the UK

(source: [British Horse Industry Confederation 2017 Mid-Sector Manifesto](#)).

INDEX

PAGE NO.

What this guidance is for	3
Key points - Why these are important to you	4
Key Actions - What you can do	5
Supporting information, best practice, facts and figures	6
1. Highways and Road Safety	6
2. Countryside, Access and Rights of Way	8
3. Employment and Economic Benefits	10
4. Health and Well-being - Health Benefits of Horse Riding and Access to Animals	11
5. Planning, Development and Growth, and Policy	12
Contacts / Where to find more information	13

The Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) is the Local Access Forum (LAF) for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. The Forum's statutory purpose under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 is to advise local authorities and other bodies on access issues, both in the rural and urban environments. For their part, local authorities and others are required to take account of advice from HCAF.

The Forum is independent of any council or interest group – it comprises local members of the public with a wealth of experience in aspects of countryside recreation and rights of way. Members are volunteers, appointed to represent an interest rather than a specific organisation. They are balanced between those who use public rights of way (PROW) (walkers, horse-riders, carriage drivers, cyclists, disabled users and vehicle users), those who provide access (farmers, land managers etc) and other interests (e.g. conservation, education). It is this wide range of interests that enables the Forum to provide balanced advice.

HCAF is concerned about the impacts of new developments in Hampshire on the PROW network, multi-user routes, accessible green space and carriageways that together enable residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the countryside. HCAF members in response to this concern have developed this guidance document, focused on equestrian needs.



What this guidance is for

Hampshire is one of the most densely horse populated counties in England. Unlike the walking and cycling sectors, the benefit to the equestrian sector of the **UK Government's 'Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales'** has not filtered down to local level as part of transport planning. This national government strategy, originally devised in 2005 and published in 2011 as part of the Coalition Manifesto, sets out to foster a robust and sustainable horse industry, increase its economic value, enhance the welfare of the horse, and develop the industry's contribution to the cultural, social, educational, health and sporting life of the nation.

The Hampshire Countryside Access Plan (CAP) 2015-2025 sets out Hampshire County Council policies and actions to improve countryside access in Hampshire. It provides a high level vision of what is required for a range of users including equestrians. There is now a need to turn these aspirations into action to support the Government's strategy. This document sets out to help achieve this goal by:

- Providing guidance to help decision makers to develop strategic local/transport plans and undertake master planning that includes the needs of equestrians.
- Guiding developers at an early stage in preparing planning applications and identifying opportunities to meet the needs of the equestrian community.
- Explaining why equestrian activities are important both to individuals and to the local economy, promoting a healthy lifestyle and individual well-being.
- Providing guidance on what decision makers can do to support the growth of the equestrian sector in Hampshire.
- Improving connectivity of the public rights of way (PROW) network which is one of the highest priorities identified in the CAP, together with more paths which can be used by cyclists and horse riders.
- Suggesting ways to improve safe road connections between the PROW network to minimise risk.
- Ensuring that Hampshire's Rights of Way network remains accessible to all.
- Acting as a tool to encourage co-ordination and effective working relationships between Hampshire County Council/District/Borough Councils and the equestrian community.

Driving for the Disabled

©Riding for the Disabled Association



Key points - Why these are important to you

The UK Government's Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales has eight aims. Aim 5 is 'to increase access to off-road riding and carriage driving'. Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022 (page 60/61) recognises equestrians by embedding Aim 5 of the Strategy into Policy 25 of its Strategy in relevant guidance and decision-making processes in order to improve safety, network connectivity and network quality for equestrians. See page 14 for the link to this Policy. A conservative estimate of the number of horses, ponies and donkeys in Hampshire is 60,020 (figures based on the recently published Defra horse passport data records). Feedback from local authorities has indicated that they would welcome more information about how they can be inclusive of equestrians in their work, engagement and consultations.

Summarised below are key points that have been identified through research as what is important and why:

- **Improved safety** – equestrians are legitimate, vulnerable road users - alternatives to road links between PROW and other off-road routes need to be considered, such as creating multi-user routes by managing the verges, creating parallel routes, and utilising other routes with public access (ORPAs), etc., that are currently under utilised to connect communities.
- **Minimising risk** – increases in traffic volume and speeds should be evaluated and mitigated. Equestrians have the right to use roads between the PROW network and need to feel confident when doing so, particularly those that are relatively inexperienced.

- **An inclusive approach** – equestrians, unlike other recreational users are not automatically included in the planning process.
- **Supporting Hampshire's economy** – equestrians are estimated to contribute at least £328,429,400 pa towards the local economy as at 2023 (figures based on BETA data). Creating better and safer routes will encourage equestrian activity and increase business opportunities.
- **Rural employment** – many large and small rural businesses depend upon the equestrian sector in Hampshire. Nationally it is the largest rural employer after the agricultural sector and employs many individuals in both urban as well as rural areas.
- **Working with the community** – consultation with local equestrians will identify where limited resources need to be targeted.
- **Creating opportunities** - safe access to the countryside and the natural environment for all non-motorised users creates an opportunity to support healthy and fit communities and a desirability to live in an area with access to open space. An example is making better use of under utilised ORPAs (other routes with public access) to connect communities. Horses connect people to Hampshire's rich landscape and a way of life.
- **Preserving and protecting Hampshire's heritage** – equestrian leisure activities are the most common equestrian pursuit. The PROW network provides a safe environment for equestrians and it is vital that it remains accessible, maintained and enhanced for future generations.

©British Horse Society



Key actions - What you can do

The Hampshire Countryside Access Forum recommends the following key actions to help meet the aspirations of Hampshire's CAP and the UK Government for more safe access to off-road riding and carriage driving:

Policy

- Involve equestrians in developing local policies to ensure the equestrian community is linked into key areas of planning; transport; health and well-being; economy; community; tourism and environment, thereby meeting responsibilities to a legitimate vulnerable road user group and creating parity with other recreational users.
- Planners should ensure developers have complied with all planning conditions in relation to PROW and non-motorised routes ensuring, for example, that diverted PROW are completed and safe to use BEFORE development takes place.
- Recognise the importance of unmetalled, unclassified country roads (UUCRs) and other routes with public access (ORPAS) and how they can be better utilised and maintained to help connect the PROW network.

Road Safety and Highways

- Provide horse crossings on busy carriageways ensuring that they are safe, clearly visible and fit for purpose.
- Consider using local highway authority powers to provide horse riders with the same legal rights to use cycle ways and grass verges as per other recreational non-motorised users.
- Recognise that new utility routes, such as cycle ways, will also be used as recreational routes and that these should be addressed as integrated rather than as separate activities. They create an opportunity to provide safe links between PROW for horse riders.

Engagement and Consultation

- Research and engage with local equestrian organisations (e.g. riding clubs, livery/training yards, the [British Horse Society](#), the [British Driving Society](#), British Carriage Driving, other local equestrian access groups) either directly or indirectly at the pre-consultation stage to find out where people exercise their horses, ponies and donkeys and what their needs are.

Improvements and New Connections

- Consider how the connection of urban and countryside routes can be improved through existing PROW, the creation of new multi-user routes for use by all non-motorised users and how the road network facilitates this connectivity. Consider, where practical, the upgrading of a PROW to allow horse riders and cyclists safer access through a development site to connect to adjoining off-site routes.
- Provide adequate parking for horse transport at safe PROW network locations – many equestrians now have to transport their horses to ride them in safe areas due to the urbanisation of what were once rural locations in which they live and keep their equines.

Management and Maintenance

- Ensure PROWs are maintained and when routes are subjected to traffic regulation orders on motorised vehicles consider how to avoid excluding non-motorised vehicles such as horse-drawn carriages. This could be by installing lockable bollards set with a 1.8m gap allowing a carriage access to a route, but preventing four wheeled motor vehicle access. Codes for locks can be given to legitimate users by Hampshire Countryside Service or the local Parish Council which should also hold the codes.
- Wherever possible provide surfaces and widths that are fit for purpose for the environment and all users, e.g. on new routes where a sealed surface is necessary consider using water-permeable surfacing made from recycled rubber granules and aggregates bound with a specially formulated polyurethane binder that fully meet the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) requirements.
- Ensure bridleway gates and other 'street furniture' are safe for horse riders and carriage drivers that comply with Hampshire County Council's [Countryside Service Design Standards](#) and the recommendations of the [British Horse Society](#) and [Natural England](#)
- Improve signage to ensure people understand rights and responsibilities on shared routes.
- Where PROW are diverted they should go through green space wherever possible away from estate roads and other highways - see [Defra Guidance to Local Authorities Circular \(1/09\)](#). The width of the diversion should be compliant with both [Hampshire County Council Design Standards](#) and [British Horse Society](#) recommendations and surfaces should be fit for purpose and the environment.

Case study

Natural England, in partnership with the British Horse Society, Centrewire and the Pittecroft Trust, has created the country's first ever specialist centre to open up access to the countryside for wheelchair users and those with mobility needs as well as disabled and able-bodied horse riders, cyclists and walkers. Natural England research shows there are around 519 million visits to paths, cycleways and bridleways in England each year.

Launched in October 2018, the new National Land Access Centre, located at Oxfordshire's Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, has been designed to demonstrate the use, maintenance and installation of gaps, gates and stiles meeting the new British Standard for improved countryside access.

Mobility issues can be a major barrier to people heading to the countryside. Over 20% of England's population cannot use public rights of way, either because they cannot use stiles or kissing gates themselves, or they are accompanying someone who can't. This new facility will help ensure those who usually struggle with access are able to enjoy England's beautiful countryside.

Supporting information, best practice, facts and figures

1. Highways and Road Safety

Rules 214 and 215 of the 2023 Highway Code explicitly recognise equestrians as a legitimate vulnerable road user group.

The PROW network provides equestrians with off-road routes on which to enjoy their recreational activity. It is, however, a network that has become fragmented by the highway network so that non-motorised users have to use busy roads to access these rights of way.

Equestrians are particularly affected by this fragmentation. Horse riders have access to only 22% of the total PROW network and carriage drivers have access to 5% – see section 2 on Countryside, Access and Rights of Way. Once development takes place there is often a knock-on effect requiring equestrians to use busy carriageways, which were once quiet lanes to access safe off-road routes. This means coping with HGVs, noiseless electric cars, speeding traffic and vehicle drivers unused to horses. Rural roads which are narrow with poor visibility can be just as risky to negotiate for the same reasons.

1 in 5 incidents were a result of cars colliding with horses.

30% of riders reported road rage abuse, but many more incidents go unreported.

National Driver Offender Schemes will in future recognise horse riders as vulnerable road users within all their courses, including the Speed Awareness Course.



15

**Dead?
Or Dead Slow?
Your Choice**

The
British
Horse
Society

Horses are unpredictable. Passing horses wide and slow can prevent deaths of drivers, riders and horses.

#thinkhorsethink15

bhs.org.uk/deadslow   

The British Horse Society is a Registered Charity Nos. 210504 and SC038516

Dead Slow? Good Choice

It's not just the horse that will suffer when involved in a road accident. The average horse weighs half a tonne and on impact can cause significant damage to a vehicle and the people inside.

Protect yourself. Protect your car.
Protect horses and riders.

15

If I see a horse on the road,
then I will...

- 1 Slow down to a maximum of 15mph
- 2 Be patient; I won't sound my horn or rev my engine
- 3 Pass the horse wide and slow (at least a car's width)
- 4 Drive slowly away

Thank you for driving
safely around horses.

bhs.org.uk/deadslow   

Reduce road accidents and you reduce NHS costs

3,288 horse riders and carriage drivers in England and Wales were **admitted to hospital** for 'animal-rider or occupant animal-drawn vehicle injured in transport accident' in 2020-2021 (source: [NHS Hospital Episodes Statistics](#))

82% the percentage of accidents involving equestrians caused by **speeding vehicles** or **passing too close to horses**

Between 2010 and 2023 the BHS horse accidents website has recorded:

44 riders killed,
1,592 injured

570 horse deaths
and 1,436 injured

Only 1 in 10 horse related road accidents are reported (source: [British Horse Society](#))

26% of horse riders were victims of road rage

BHS Hampshire statistics 2022

158 road incidents 36 horse fatalities (this figure includes New Forest ponies and donkeys)

These statistics demonstrate how important it is that planning authorities, developers, Highways and Strategic Transport understand the requirement for safe access for equestrians on the roads and the connectivity to PROW. Hampshire's accident record is currently relatively low in relation to the horse density of the county, except in the New Forest where 34 ponies and donkeys were killed in 2022 alone. The aim is to not only sustain Hampshire's current record, but to seek out ways to improve it.

Horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians successfully share routes. The development of a cycle network, funded by the public purse, provides an excellent opportunity to create multi-user routes to be used by all non-motorised users. Where practical, horse riders should be given access to all new paths and cycle ways and opportunities should also be taken to changing rights on existing routes where safer access is required. This could, in many cases, be achieved at little or no extra cost.

Not addressing road safety issues when there is an opportunity to do so will have an impact on future generations of equestrians. They will not feel confident to use carriageways and vehicle drivers will not be used to passing equines safely, thereby limiting, and increasingly preventing, equestrians from enjoying the same open spaces that other user groups enjoy.

Case studies:

Cambridgeshire County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Luton Council, now have all inclusive non-motorised user policies. [Lancashire County Council Vulnerable Road User Audit](#). LCC states that it has a duty of care as an authority to all road users. As part of its commitment, policies and procedures have been put in place to promote the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, **equestrians**, children and the older pedestrian and disabled people with a range of impairments including mobility and sensory impairments.

Equestrian activity is included in the [West Berks Active Travel Plan](#) which is a model that has made life easier for planners whilst delivering benefits to equestrians.

[The Department for Transport and the British Horse Society](#) collaborated on the THINK! video which supported the Society's 'Dead? Or Dead Slow' campaign to raise the awareness of avoiding accidents by passing horses 'slow and wide'. This campaign won the Driving Instructors Association 'Driver Education of the Year' award in 2016.

Active Travel plans should include the needs of equestrians. During 2020 Hampshire County Council held its first Active Travel Summit. The inclusion of equestrians in Active Travel Plans is in line with the national government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Review. Jesse Norman, in the House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018, stated two points: "We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders". And that "Horse riders are vulnerable road users—there is no doubt about that, and there never has been—and they have been included in the work we are doing."

2. Countryside, Access and Rights of Way

Many rural parts of Hampshire are becoming increasingly urbanised as a result of development. The pressures of this are confining equestrian activities to ever-smaller areas.

- Hampshire Countryside Services, as the Highway Authority for Public Rights of Way, maintains and manages the PROW network.
- Hampshire Highways manages the road network including unclassified unmetalled county roads (UUCRs) that are on what is called the List of Streets and are also known as ORPAs (other routes with public access).

Combined with the scale of development and the associated increase in volume and speed of traffic, equestrians are becoming less confident in being able to access PROWs using the road network.

The UK Government's 'Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales', originally devised in 2005 and published in 2011 as part of the Coalition Manifesto, sets out to foster a robust and sustainable horse industry, increase its economic value, enhance the welfare of the horse, and develop the industry's contribution to the cultural, social, educational, health and sporting life of the nation. It has eight aims, one of which is to increase off-road riding and carriage driving routes.

The County of Hampshire has 4,500 km of PROW. This network of footpaths, bridleways restricted byways and byways open to all traffic is highly valued by residents and visitors alike, enriching quality of life and contributing to good physical and mental health, community cohesion and a strong rural economy. The

graphic below clearly identifies who has the rights to use PROW together with the number of kilometers available. The Definitive Map provides legal protection to these routes.

The work carried out by Hampshire Countryside Service is vital to ensuring the PROW network remains open and maintained to enable this recreational activity to continue for future generations.

In 2016 the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) recommended that, where practical, horse riders and carriage drivers should be given parity with other recreational groups in relation to road safety and access to non-motorised routes.

Planners, Developers, Highways Department and Strategic Transport are creating environments that help walkers and cyclists to reach open green spaces through the development of shared routes. Hampshire's CAP 2015-2025, and the county's walking

and cycling strategies support this work. The planned delivery of these strategies presents an opportunity to recognise and include equestrian needs within a local community.

Surfaces and widths of routes must be compliant with Hampshire County Council Countryside Service Design Standards and the recommendations of the [British Horse Society](#) and [Natural England](#).

Where it is necessary to install street furniture to restrict motorised vehicles on byways, then it is recommended that lockable bollards are used set at a gap of 1.8m with a clear visible line of sight to enable carriage drivers to negotiate them safely. This also allows for access to the route by an emergency vehicle should the need arise. Padlock codes can be given to legitimate users by the Countryside Service.

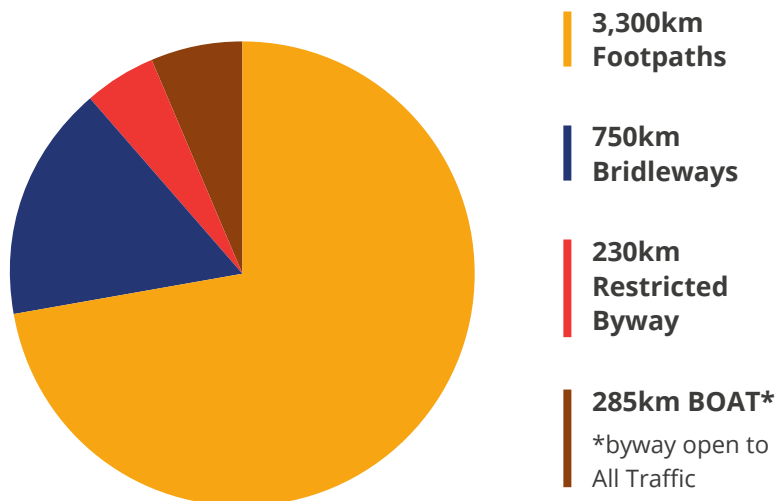
In addition, there is a vast network of other routes shown on the OS map that are available for public use which could provide more and better connectivity between communities for non-motorised users. Known as 'other routes with public access' (ORPAs), these unclassified, unmetalled country roads (UUCRs) are depicted on OS Explorer maps as white roads usually with a green dot on them. They are the responsibility of Highways and are identified on the 'List of Streets' database maintained by Highways. These roads potentially provide important connectivity between rights of way and offer opportunities to enhance access to the countryside.

PROW access

4,500km (3,000 miles) of paths enable people to exercise, explore outdoors and connect with nature.

870,000 - the estimated number of miles that are ridden or driven in Hampshire each year

2031 - the cut off date for recording unrecorded historic routes under the CROW Act 2000



Leisure riding/carriage driving are the most common equestrian pursuits.

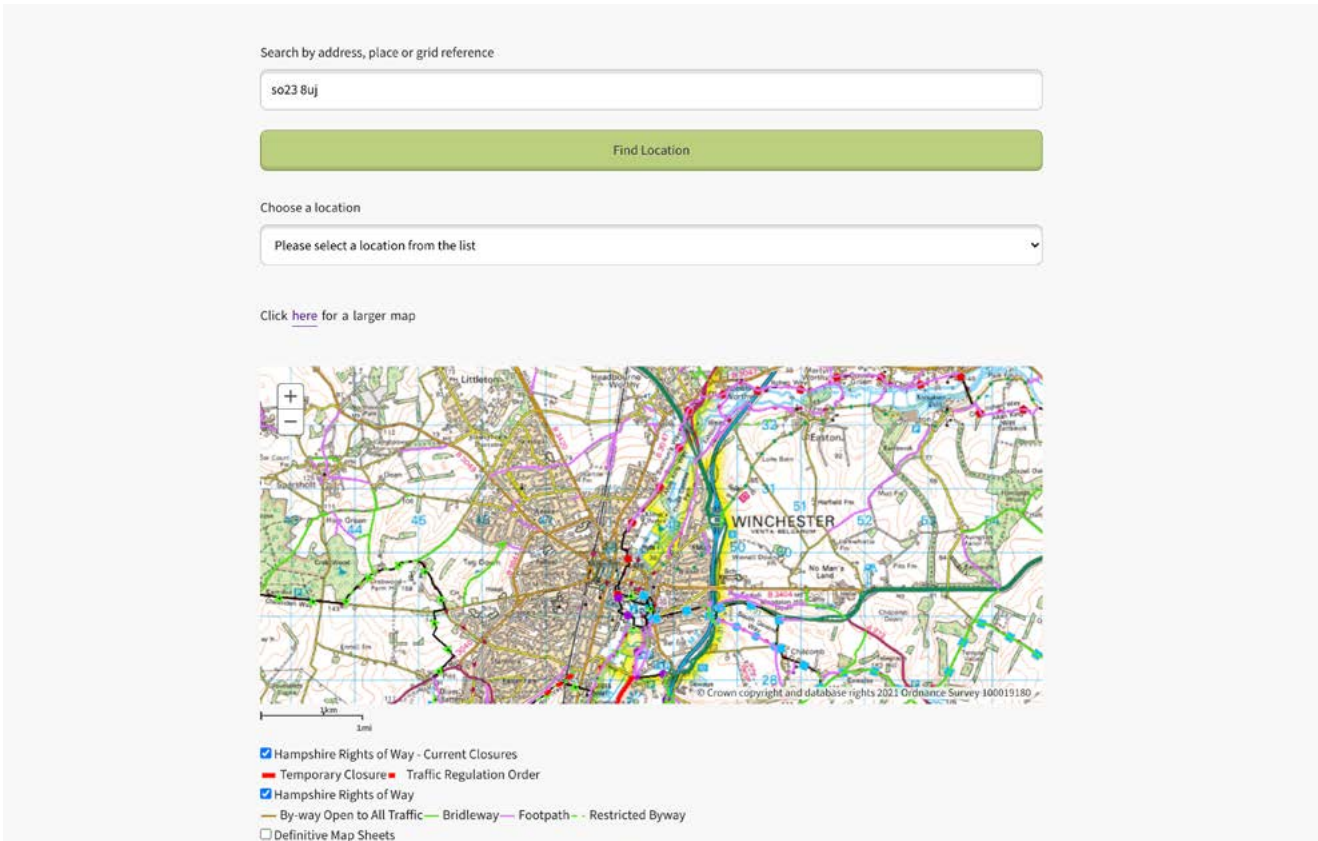
Only 22% of this network is available to horse riders and cyclists

Carriage drivers can use just 5%

Case Studies

The [Hampshire County Council online rights of way map](#) is the envy of people living in other counties who do not enjoy such a good facility. The Hampshire Countryside Access Forum instigated the GIS layer for adopted roads (A, B, C, U, T and W) that was added to the PROW online mapping that identifies where UUCRs/ORPAs are located. These layers can be switched on or off. This online map means that people who wish to view both rights of way and UUCRs/ORPAs need only go to one access point to obtain information as well as being able to report a problem.

The online map is taken from the Definitive Map for the county and is used as a reference point for people undertaking historic research to identify unrecorded and under-recorded PROW. Under the CROW Act 2000 a deadline of 2031 for registering unrecorded routes was included in the legislation. Applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) not received by Hampshire County Council by that date will be lost forever. For more information go to: <http://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/access/campaigns/2026> and www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved



<https://maps.hants.gov.uk/rightsofwaydefinitivemap/>

Say Hi

Horse riders and cyclists have been sharing routes for many years and both are recognised vulnerable road users. However, many people are unfamiliar with horses and how to behave around them. Equestrian and cycling national bodies are working together to ask cyclists when approaching from behind to warn horse riders and carriage drivers by saying 'Hi' and never passing on the inside of a horse. The campaign warns everyone to 'expect the unexpected'.

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/be-nice-say-hi-cycling-uk-and-bhs-guidance-cyclists-and-horses>

Grants

There are various grants that can be applied for to improve connectivity of off road routes and access to the countryside for all. A Hampshire bridleway was resurfaced in 2021 at a cost of £79,000, £50,000 of which was a grant from Tarmac. There are many such businesses out there with money to award to schemes that enhance access to the countryside and add to the health and well being of local residents. The BHS funding department can advise on such grants



3. Employment and Economic benefits

The UK has one of the highest quality equine industries in the world and is recognised as the leading source of equestrian expertise. It is also the second largest rural employer after the agricultural industry

Hampshire contributes to this through its rich equestrian heritage. The county has training facilities that attract top international riders and trainers to live and work here. It boasts one of the country's leading equine veterinary practices; it is home to one of the country's largest training colleges for equestrians; as well as a world-renowned riding therapy center and other well-respected educational facilities.

Hampshire is one of the most densely horse populated counties in the UK as indicated in the [British Horse](#)

[Industry Confederation 2017 Mid-Term Manifesto for the Horse](#). Equines are kept in both rural and urbanised environments, despite the reduction in the availability of land around our towns and cities. There is a supply chain of small and medium sized businesses that provide the services required to look after their needs creating jobs in local communities and income to farmers. If equestrian activities are supported then the rural economy will grow and create opportunities for both small and large businesses.

£328.5m – approximate value the equestrian sector contributes annually to Hampshire's local economy, excluding the contribution made by the horse racing industry

The horse industry is the **2nd largest** rural employer after the agriculture industry in the UK (source: British Horse Industry Confederation)

60,000+ - the estimated number of horses in Hampshire registered with Defra. In addition, in 2018 there were 5,764 ponies in the New Forest.

Types of employment



• Training yards



• Saddlers



• Harness makers



• Horse transporters and vehicle repairs



• Vets



• Riding schools



• Horse dentists



• Livery yards



• Small agricultural repair businesses



• Educational colleges



• Farmers



• Physiotherapists



• Stud farms



• Horse tourism



• Racing establishments



• Clothing outlets



• Practitioners of alternative medicine



• Feed merchants



• Farriers

Hampshire has 2 National Parks (South Downs National Park and The New Forest). It has 7 country parks as well as 12 long distance trails. Preserving and improving connections to these trails will help develop horse tourism and support an additional revenue stream for the Parks and for the Hampshire rural economy as a whole.

4. Health and Well-being – Benefits of Horse Riding and Access to Animals

The UK Government is committed to helping people develop a healthier lifestyle by providing, amongst other things, easier access to safe routes and recreational activities in both urban and countryside areas. The National Planning Policy Framework supports this commitment – see sections 3 and 5:

It is widely recognised and supported by scientific evidence that giving people access to safe green open spaces promotes health and well-being. A fact that has been officially recognised during the 2020/21 COVID-19 Pandemic.

Equestrianism is an extremely popular and healthy outdoor activity for people of all ages and abilities. It is a diverse and family-friendly sport where men and women compete on an equal basis. It extends from amateur and community participation to international success.

Equestrian activities stimulate positive psychological feelings and a sense of well being. They also engage a higher proportion of people with disabilities than other sports.

One of the key findings of the British Horse Society report prepared by the University of Brighton and Plumpton

College is that horse riders with a long-standing illness or disability are able to undertake horse riding and associated activities at the same level of frequency and physical intensity as those without such an illness or disability. This also applies to carriage drivers.

1.82m – number of horse riders in the UK. 90% of over 45 year old are female

3 times a week – the average number of times horse riders and carriage drivers participate in equestrian activities

25% - the proportion of riders below the age of 16; this illustrates how riding encourages young people to enjoy the countryside and outdoor activity

8% of equestrians considered themselves disabled in some way

In Hampshire there are:

- **14** Riding Clubs
- **488 young people** who are members of 14 active Pony Clubs
- **540 disabled riders** are catered for by 13 riding for the disabled groups on a weekly basis;
- **2 carriage** driving groups for the disabled
- **1 harness club** associated to British Carriage Driving
- **200 members** of the British Driving Society
- **4,728** Members of the British Horse Society (as at 2023)

These statistics are indicative only of the level of participation in equestrian activities and do not reflect the true levels of participation. It is known that there are many other active equestrians who are not affiliated to any of these groups.

Case studies:

Horses, donkeys and ponies are recognised as an important link to mental wellbeing, particularly to those people who are vulnerable and in need of emotional support. Across the county equines are helping to re-connect young people with society and also helping the elderly.

'Changing Lives Through Horses', a British Horse Society flagship programme, helps young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). It is designed to help them to reconnect with society through engagement with horses, gaining confidence and skills that will help them for life. This scheme was successfully piloted at a Hampshire riding centre. It reflects many other similar projects across the country established by other organisations helping thousands of vulnerable people.

Broadlands Riding and Carriage Driving for the Disabled, located in Medstead near Alton, provides therapeutic lessons for children and adults to help those with many varied problems including learning difficulties and complex disabilities to seek new horizons and achieve new goals. As a team, safety is a priority. From the moment of arrival everyone is always carefully managed and cared for.

The Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) enriches lives of people through horses and ponies providing therapy, achievement and enjoyment to people with disabilities all over the UK. It has been carrying out life-changing activities for over 50 years, offering activities for all age groups and, where possible, to people with any disability. It relies on voluntary help, donations and legacies to deliver its services.



Mill Cottage Farm Experience, Alton – this family run business takes farm animals to people, including residential homes where donkeys can be taken into the home to be petted by people who cannot get out of bed or are too infirm to stand.

5. Planning, Development and Growth, and Policy

Equestrians, unlike other recreational users, are not automatically included in the planning process. This is partly due to the lack of an equestrian strategy for the county and to a lack of knowledge of equestrian needs generally.

The economic and health benefits of increased equestrian activity can, however, best be secured by building equestrian considerations into the planning process from the earliest stages onwards. Planners and developers should develop contacts with equestrian interests and representatives, and consult them alongside all other interested stakeholders, as plans develop and mature.

The requirement to provide more housing and employment in rural environments affects the daily lives of people who already live there, often in vibrant communities that have a large part to play in the success of new developments. Historically equestrians have been an important element in the cement that binds these communities, and it is therefore correspondingly important to identify their needs and provide access for equestrian pursuits.

Since equestrian activities are not specifically supported within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the way that other recreational pursuits are it is all the more important that local planning policy should support and facilitate a duty of care to this category of vulnerable road user. Equestrians should be considered alongside other non-motorised users as an integral part of planning policy for infrastructure and building developments.

The NPPF promotes a healthier lifestyle by providing, among other things, easier access to safe routes and recreational activities in both urban and countryside areas through the development of green infrastructure policies. This presents an excellent opportunity to local planners to include the needs of local equestrians as one of the user groups when developing these policies.

See Section 6 Point 84 (Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy) and particularly Section 8 (Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities) where Point 100 states:

'Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example, by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.'

Planning of a new cycle way in developments often focuses on the creation of utility routes; however these will also form the backbone of recreational routes. People do not stop using these routes at weekends simply because they are not cycling to work or going to school. Therefore there is an opportunity to include equestrian use to provide safe off-road access where appropriate. Sustrans, the charity responsible for the creation of the cycleways network, states that, wherever possible, equestrians should have access to the cycleway network and is working closely with the British Horse Society to achieve this.

Green Infrastructure Plans create ideal opportunities to be inclusive of all non-motorised users where it is practical to do so.

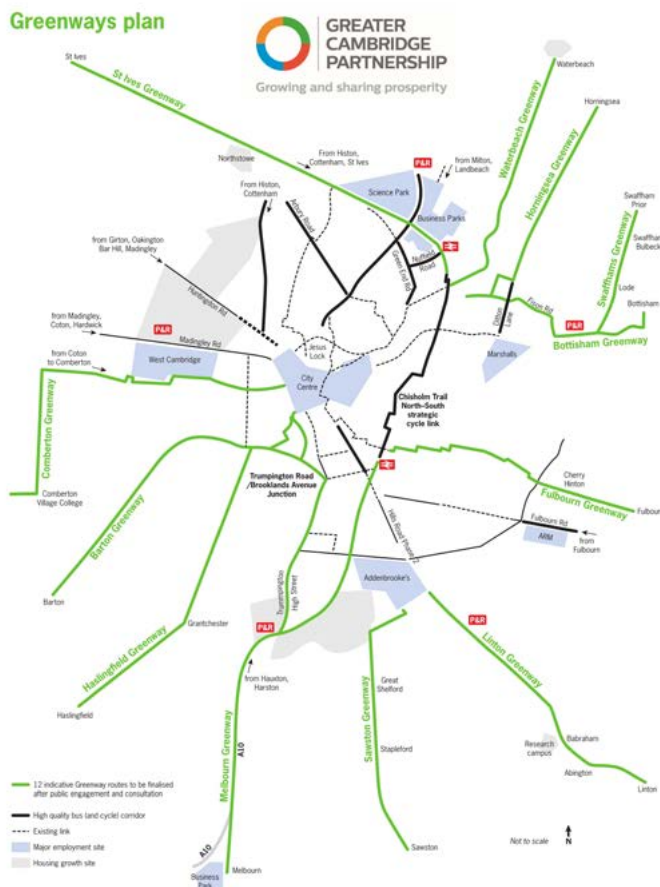
Case studies:

West Berkshire is an example of an authority that has recognised the need to include its equestrian community in developing planning policy. As a result, equestrian activity is included in the West Berks Active Travel Plan.

Mid-Sussex Plan – Development Policy 22 says that developers must consider access for all non-motorised users in their plans.

Current examples of where there are opportunities for the inclusion of equestrians in green infrastructure plans are Basingstoke & Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013-2019) and the Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy, which includes the Greater Cambridge Greenways Project.

In 2016 the Greater Cambridge Partnership commissioned a consultant to review the 12 greenway routes that lead into the centre of Cambridge. The study identified a number of missing links that could be provided on private land, generally on field edges, so early consultation with landowners was essential to discuss possible alignments or alternatives. Horse riders will also be able to ride these routes alongside other non-motorised groups.



Contacts / where to find more information:

Basingstoke and Dean Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013-2029)

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/344.pdf>

British Equestrian Trade Association

<http://www.beta-uk.org>

British Horse Industry Confederation/Equine Sector Council /2017-Mid Term Manifesto for the Horse including horse density map

<http://nationalequineforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Equine-Sector-2017-Manifesto-for-the-Horse-UPDATED.pdf>

British Horse Industry Confederation/Equine Sector Council

<http://equinesectorcouncil.org.uk>

British Horse Society advice leaflets

<http://www.bhs.org.uk>

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding/access-and-bridleways-advice/>

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/about-us/our-safety-work/>

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/changing-lives-through-horses/>

Broadlands Group Riding for the Disabled

<https://www.broadlandsgroupprda.org.uk>

Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/2557/green-infrastructure-strategy.pdf>

Defra Guidance to Local Authorities Circular (1/09)

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7971d9ed915d04220687b3/pb13553-rowcircular1-09-091103.pdf>

Hampshire Countryside Access Plan – 2015-2025

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/countryside/HampshireCountrysideAccessPlan2015-2025.pdf>

Hampshire Countryside Access Forum

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/hcaf>

Hampshire County Council Online Rights of Way Map

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway>

Hampshire County Council Design Standards

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/designstandards>

Highway Code

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-about-animals-47-to-58>

Lancashire Vulnerable Road User Audit

<http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/council/meetings/displayFile.asp?FTYPE=D&FILEID=17468>

Mid-Sussex Plan

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/>

National Planning Policy Framework

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182995/NPPF_Sept_23.pdf

NHS Hospital Episode Statistics

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182995/NPPF_Sept_23.pdf

Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022 - see pages 68/69
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>

Riding and Carriage Driving for the Disabled

<https://www.rda-southeastregion.org.uk/how-we-can-help-you/carriage-driving>
<https://www.rda.org.uk>

UK Government Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-the-horse-industry-in-england-and-wales>

Updated in 2021

Important pieces of legislation:

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

2031 – the cut off date for recording unrecorded historic rights of way

2018 – Deregulation Bill comes into force (expected date)

Abbreviations:

HCC – Hampshire County Council

HCAF – Hampshire Countryside Access Forum

CAP – Countryside Access Plan

PROW – public rights of way

UUCR – unclassified, unmetalled county road

also known as:

ORPA – other routes with public access

OS – Ordnance Survey

NPPF – National Policy Framework

BHS – British Horse Society

Acknowledgements

Version 2: updated October 2023

Thank you to the British Horse Society, Riding for the Disabled Association, Greater Cambridge Partnership for supplying images and to Hampshire Countryside Service for its support.

