

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

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Bringing Horses and People Together

The Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP
Minister of State (Decarbonisation and Technology)
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry House
London
SW1P 4DR

9th February 2023

Dear Minister,

Re: Active travel

I refer to the launch of the £32.9 million funding to create a national network of active travel experts.

The British Horse Society supports the principle of active travel but to date the majority of schemes appear to be excluding horse riders.

You will recall stating in the House of Commons debate on road safety on 5 November 2018 – *'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.....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.'*

In the Active Travel debate on 9 July 2019 The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Michael Ellis) stated *'Active travel includes horse riders and bridle paths—this debate includes them.'*

Since then we have had the amendments to the Highway Code which have afforded walkers, cyclists and equestrians greater protection via the hierarchy of users. It is therefore surprising that active travel schemes are currently in many cases not affording increased safety to horse riders, due to them being excluded.

Examples of this are set out in the appendix hereto.

Our accident statistics continue to demonstrate why horse riders should not be excluded from active travel schemes - 68 horses killed, 139 riders injured in 2022, and incidents reported to us up 21% in 2022.

The exclusion of horse riders from active travel schemes results in horses being forced onto roads where segregated cycle/walkways have in part taken the verges previously ridden, forcing equestrians to be

sandwiched on roads with HGV and commuter traffic on their outside and cyclists on their inside which is surely a recipe for disaster?

Whilst it is often alleged that horse riding does not replace car journeys, we maintain that in certain instances it does, and the Society would like to see this increase, but for it to increase horse riders like walkers and cyclists need safe routes to use, they need to be included in active travel schemes.

A growing number of horse riders do use their horse to make every day journeys for everyday tasks, such as posting a letter, collecting a pint of milk, fetching the newspaper etc, as is illustrated by the attached document. This is something that we want to encourage.

An increasing number of horse riders who historically have gone out for a hack direct from where they keep their horses, are now having to box their horses up to access their nearest safe route to ride, thereby increasing motor journeys, because the roads they need to use to access those routes are no longer safe. Allowing horse riders to use active travel routes would help to turn the tide on this worrying trend.

Also, the significant recreational potential of most active travel routes should also not be overlooked. By ensuring that these routes are equally available to, walkers, cyclists and equestrians, the economic, health and well-being benefits will be maximised, particularly for societal groups that are often overlooked in such schemes. This strengthens the case for a policy of inclusion in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

It is imperative that local authorities and Active Travel England are given a clear steer from Government that active travel schemes should not exclude horse riders, unless there are justified and stated reasons why they cannot be included.

The British Horse Society would welcome the opportunity of discussing, with you and your officials, how our concerns can be addressed.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Weston

Director of Access



Alan Hiscox

Director of Safety

For return correspondence, please contact Mark Weston, Director of Access, The British Horse Society mark.weston@bhs.org.uk

Appendix

Examples of exclusion of horse riders from active travel schemes.

The North Somerset Active Travel Action Plan does not include horse riding – although it has been demonstrated that inclusion does work as parts of the Festival Way, the Strawberry Line and the Pier-to-Pier routes which are open to horse riders.

Kent Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Surrey County Council Active Travel plans all exclude horse riders.

The A66 scheme only includes equestrians for small section in Yorkshire the rest of the country they are excluded.

Old Tram Bridge part of Government's Levelling Up Fund <https://www.lancs.live/news/lancashire-news/prestons-old-tram-bridge-replacement-23650657> Lancashire CC's current stance: " We are not in a position to say what it will, or will not carry, although the bridleway status of half of it means either the other half is unrecorded bridleway, or the bridleway half is wrongly recorded; we await the outcome of the definitive map modification order application. It could be downgraded to footpath but there is no evidence it should be. The other half can't be downgraded as it isn't recorded as anything to downgrade from.'

The Cambridgeshire County Council Active Travel Strategy excludes horse riders.

Bournemouth Christchurch Poole & Dorset Councils are promoting 6 Active Travel corridors having gained £79 million through the Transforming Cities government fund, all of which exclude horse riders. The BHS have challenged the councils on this as it excluded equestrians. The response was that "including horse riders could jeopardise the funding as horse riding was not in the original bid.'

The Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan excludes horse riders.