



# Welcome Pack

## Access & Bridleway Officer

Issued: January 2026



# Welcome

Welcome to BHS volunteering - thank you for becoming a volunteer Access & Bridleway Officer (ABO). We're grateful for your support and excited you've joined the team.

Within this pack, you'll find a range of helpful information and useful resources to support you along your volunteer journey. From top tips to getting started in your role, to training and resources available to you, your role enables us to improve off-road access for horse riders and carriage drivers across the UK. We are here to help, so reach out to the team if there's anything you need.

You will have received an email with the key contacting within your region. This includes your Access Field Officer, Regional/National Manager, and fellow volunteer Regional or County Access & Bridleway Officer (RABO/CABO).

Connecting with other local volunteers is a great way to meet others in your area and an opportunity to further your local knowledge about other projects being worked on. Your Access Field Officer or Regional/National Manager can let you know more about volunteers in your area and upcoming meetings.

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## What you can expect from us

### Volunteer induction

Come along to our volunteer induction sessions and meet other BHS volunteers.

You can sign up for your induction [here](#).

**Click to  
book your  
volunteer  
induction**

### We're here to support you

Need advice, guidance or further information? We're here to help.

One of your key contacts at BHS is our Access Stakeholder Coordinator. Their role is to support you along your volunteering journey, help with any queries about BHS and access you may have, or connect you with the team members and fellow volunteers who will be able to support you.

The Access Field Officer (AFO) for your region works at a local level across their area. They can support you in your role, whether it be liaising with a council or assisting you with a planning consultation response.

The Access HQ Team can also provide resources and information. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

### Your BHS volunteer email address

All BHS volunteers are issued with their own BHS volunteer email address, and it's important you use your allocated email address when carrying out your BHS volunteering role. This ensures we're compliant with General Data Protection

Regulations (GDPR) and supports our privacy policy.

If you need support with your email address, you can help [here](#) or email our team on [volunteer@bhs.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@bhs.org.uk).

### Volunteer policies

If you need to check any volunteer policies, you can find these [here](#).



## Communications

To make sure that your volunteering is going smoothly, we'll keep in touch regularly. You can expect to hear from us approximately eight weeks, six months and a year after you begin volunteering with us.

We'll also contact you throughout the year with news from BHS, access and role-specific updates. We're always available should you have any questions or need help outside of these times.

### Ride Out e-news

Ride Out is our Access & Rights of Way e-news, sharing news, updates and event information. Contact the team if you have an item you'd like considered to feature in an e-news.

**Click to  
sign up for  
Ride Out  
e-news**

### Notes from the Access & Rights of Way Committee

Our Access & Rights of Way Advisory Committee (AROWAC) meet at least three times a year.

Made up of volunteers and members of our Access team, the committee objectives are to advise on policies we, the BHS, are pursuing, to secure and maintain rights of access for equestrians, and to enthuse all audiences about equestrian access and volunteering.

The committee consider legislation and case law, input to our lobbying activity, work collaboratively with stakeholders, advise on campaign development and training opportunities, as well as championing BHS, access and rights of way, and volunteering to stakeholders.

Following each committee meeting, you will be sent a copy of the notes to update you on past, present and upcoming activities.



## Equestrian access training and information events

We want to make sure you have the skills, knowledge, and resources you need to be successful in your role. Our equestrian access training courses and resources equip you with the knowledge to act confidently in your role.

Throughout the year, we host a range of access and rights of way training and learning opportunities, alongside a range of other topics and fundraising events. If there is a topic you'd be interested to learn more about, please get in touch with your ideas.

All Access volunteers are required to attend our "Introduction to Equestrian Access" training. The course consists of a series of online modules to work through in your own time, and they can be repeated if needed, and there is a live session hosted on Microsoft Teams to look at case studies and support you with any questions you have.

We strongly encourage you to complete all the courses we offer but if you wish to respond on our behalf to public path orders, planning applications or proposals to change rights of way, you must complete our 'Changes to Equestrian Access' course too. In addition, it's important to liaise with your Access Field

Officer, County Access & Bridleway Officer (CABO) and Regional Access & Bridleway Officer (RABO) before responding to any public queries regarding bridleways or byways.

All our training is run virtually, and some sessions can be run on demand. You can find all available access and rights of way training and information events, and make a booking, on our website [here](#).

As a volunteer, you can attend our equestrian access training courses free of charge.

**Book online** and use code **VOL100** at checkout, contact the Access Stakeholder Coordinator, or email [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk).

Use  
discount  
code  
**VOL100**

## Project 2026 training – England & Wales

All of our Project 2026 training is free to attend.

Learn how to identify historical routes and the key resources used to study them from experts in the field. Find out what your evidence can unlock and how to create a systematic research method to investigate your routes.

Click to  
watch

Watch our handy training video, **Getting Started with 2026**, to learn more about Project 2026.

### Other Project 2026 training

- How to Submit a DMMO Application Correctly
- Using Dobbin – the 2026 Mapping & Research Website

**Book your free place online here.**

# Volunteer resources

## Access advice and guidance documents

Our advice ranges from what to do about blocked routes, recording a right of way, to and information on gates, surfaces, bridges, and other structures on rights of way. There is a wealth of information available, but if you can't find what you're looking for, let us know.

**Click for  
advice and  
guidance**

## Access resources and case studies

A wealth of access information, case studies and useful templates can be found on "ABOs Info", including 'Creating Multi-user Public Rights of Way' and 'Defra's Rights of Way Circular 1/09'.

Due to the sensitivity of some of the content, the website is password protected. Please use the following login details to access. We ask that you do not share this outside the BHS.

If you'd like to contribute to the website, or have any queries about content, please contact **[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)** for an individual account to be set up for you.

### **Click here to explore ABOs Info**

[http://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

**Username:** Access

**Password:** &Bridleways

## DOBBIN

DOBBIN – which stands for "database on bridleways and byways information" – is a volunteer run resource and allows users to plot and edit routes being researched for DMMO applications, upload route files for

riding and carriage driving, and view maps that others have created.

Visit **[www.bhsaccess.org.uk/DOBBIN](http://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/DOBBIN)** to discover more.

## Books

Reference books are available on long-term loan to volunteers. If you'd like to borrow a book please contact **[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)**.

If you no longer require these books, or you resign as a volunteer please return the books to us. We can send a pre-paid label to enable you to do this.

- Rights of Way – A Guide to Law and Practice
- Rights of Way: Restoring the Record
- Our Common Land



# Maps

## The Definitive Map

The Definitive Map forms the legal record of public rights of way in England and Wales. To find the Definitive Map for your area, search online for your county and “Definitive Map”.

If a way is shown on the definitive map, it's legal, or conclusive, evidence that the public had those rights along the way at the relevant date of the map (and has them still, unless there's been a legally authorised change).

- Kept by highway authorities (county councils or unitary authorities)
- Can be viewed online and at the Map Holder's office (check availability with the authority)
- Shows footpaths, bridleways, restricted byway and byways
- May also show other rights of access
- Local authorities may list other routes on their website, as well as the Definitive Map.

### **The definitive map is accompanied by a statement which describes each right of way:**

- If the statement defines the position or width of a right of way shown on the map, the information is conclusive evidence of the position or width of the public's right of way at the relevant date.
- If the statement contains a record of any limitation or condition attached to the public's rights, then that too is conclusive evidence of the existence of such a limitation or condition at the relevant date.

If you find a route and you're not sure whether it's a public right of way, you can confirm its status by checking the local authority's definitive map. The online version may include a warning that the digital version is not the definitive map, however the data comes from The

Definitive Map, and is the most accurate and up-to-date available. For every authority, the actual, published definitive map is on paper, and is likely only to be available to view by appointment, and may not be up to date.

## Ordnance Survey

Ordnance Survey (OS) maps will show the routes as per the Definitive Map and are available UK wide. Remember that any map may not be completely up to date as

more recent changes to the Definitive Map may not yet be included. Unrecorded routes are also not shown on OS maps.

### **You can find and view maps...**

- As a paper copy, purchase from Ordnance Survey [here](#).
- On the OS online map [here](#).
- Via the OS Maps app, download [here](#).
- Find a free version of the OS map [here](#). On the right-hand side, select Ordnance Survey from the 'view layer' options.

### **The OS map scales we recommend are...**

- 1:25,000 – the easiest scale to follow equestrian routes on the Explorer maps (orange covers). Explorer maps show the field boundaries.
- 1:50,000

The map legend will show the various symbols on the map, including the public rights of way on the map. You can view the legend [here](#).



## Getting started in your role

Here are ten suggestions for actions that you can take as a volunteer in your area that will help improve equestrian access.

Remember, your Access Field Officer and other BHS volunteers in the area are able to support you.

1

### **Attend our Equestrian Access training courses**

These are invaluable courses; remember you can repeat as often as you like to refresh your knowledge. See what's coming up [here](#).

2

### **Ask your County Access & Bridleways Officer (CABO) and Regional Access & Bridleways Officer (RABO) if they need help**

Often the number of commitments they have with Local Authorities prevents them doing a lot of their local 'leg work'. See if you can assist and learn from them as you do so.

3

### **Call or email your local council(s) Public Rights of Way team to introduce yourself**

This means that they may invite you to their Local Access Forums, can inform you of any developments/plans that affect rights of way, and consult you if they are changing any route furniture (such as bridges, gates, signs) or surfaces.

You may find it helpful to get to know the equestrian representative on your Local Access Forum too. If there is not an equestrian representative, consider if this is something you'd be interested in doing. Let us know if you are on a Local Access Forum by emailing [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk).

You can find more information on Local Access Forums here:

**England**

**Wales**



4

#### **Attend Parish Council meetings**

These are great forums to learn about new planning applications, developments, route diversions and local issues around access. Plus, you can introduce yourself to your local community.

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5

#### **Register with your local council's news/events/planning notification system**

If you are in an area with both a district council and a county council, they have different functions so register with both.

If you have a protected landscape (National Landscape (was Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or National Park), they too have functions affecting access and may also have bulletins.

Often, these notifications are the first and best way of finding out about changes or events in your area.

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#### **Visit local livery yards, equestrian centres, clubs/organisations and Equestrian Access Groups to introduce yourself or drop off leaflets**

Ask if they have a web page or online community which you could monitor to see what is important to them.

Often local riders are not aware that the BHS can help with access issues. You can also offer to run workshops or do a talk for them, if you are comfortable doing so.

Think beyond riders - try a cycling or walking group, the local Women's Institute or other community group, local history society or archaeological group. And don't forget carriage-drivers!

This is a great way of meeting people who may tell you about a route, especially senior generations who will have known old routes.

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7

#### **Start researching a grid square on an OS Map**

Choose a 1:50K grid square on OS Maps, find potential routes and go and walk/ride them (where legal/safe to do so), add them to DOBBIN/start your research!

If you're not sure, try the BHS video **Getting started with 2026**, and for DOBBIN, look at the 'How to' resources on the **website**, or book onto one of our **Project 2026 training** sessions.

Aim to add or cross off at least one route a month in your parish(es). When you add a route to DOBBIN, don't forget to add your initials, date added and where you are up to with your research, so it shows in the introduction section, making it easier for others to see your progress and to offer help.

8

### **Organise a route clearance day or Map My Hack event**

We can help you with planning events.

From bridleway clearances to open a route for use once more, to Map May Hack events which aim to identify aspirational locations to have access to, identify possible areas for historic research, and discuss locations for improvements.

Events are a fantastic way of meeting and engaging with the local equestrian community, using local routes and generating good will.

Contact your Access Field Officer to discuss more about organising an event.

9

### **Introduce yourself to your local Equestrian Access Group**

Our affiliated Equestrian Access Groups (EAGs) help to uphold our values and promote equestrian access at a grass-roots level, monitoring local equestrian rights of way and working alongside local authorities and other groups. They are a fun, sociable way of getting groups of equestrians together.

Find out if you have an EAG near you [here](#).

10

### **Look at DOBBIN 2026 and see if there is a route you can research**

Many promising routes are displayed there, why not pick one that is not yet under investigation within your area of responsibility or nearby and start working on it?

Find out more [here](#).







## Our Access campaigns & projects

Our key campaigns across our core foundations of education, welfare, access and safety allow us to make a real impact on the lives of horses and those who care for them in many different ways. Ranging from our Dead Slow campaign which aims to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities experienced from equestrians on the road, to our Second Chance programme where rescue horses are rehabilitated into our Approved Centres – none of the work we do would be possible without your donations.

All of our campaigns can be found [here](#), and you can find out more about our access and rights of way campaigns below.

### Fundraise for us

Our aim for the Ride Out Fund and Access Fighting Fund is for it to grow through donations and fundraising events across the UK so it can continue to benefit our vital access work in the years ahead. Direct donations to each fund are accepted, and organising an event is a great way to raise money as well as awareness of the cause you are championing. Thank you to the groups who have worked hard and raised lots of money for the funds already, we couldn't do our work without you!

**Click for our  
top tips for  
successful  
fundraising**

### Access Fighting Fund

The **Access Fighting Fund** helps safeguard our future ability to defend against threats to equestrian rights of way and allows the Society to fight to save equestrian routes through legal action, at public inquiries, and in court.

The fund is used to support our volunteer Access & Bridleways Officers, and Affiliated Equestrian Access Groups (EAGs) who need legal representation at Public Inquiries. The fund is also used to take counsel's advice to make sure that any action we take in court has a good chance of success.

### Apply for support from the Access Fighting Fund

If you require the support of the Access Fighting Fund, please email us on [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk) in the first instance,

providing your name, contact details and an outline of what support is required. We'll get in touch to discuss further.



## Ride Out Fund

The **Ride Out Fund** was launched in 2015 and provides financial support for projects that open and restore safe off-road routes for equestrians, as well as other users, around the UK. This can involve a range of projects, including off-road surface improvements, repairing or installing new

infrastructure such as gates or mounting blocks, linking two routes together, and even creating brand new off-road equestrian routes. The more money we raise for our Ride Out Fund, the more projects we can support in the future for the safety of all off-road users.

### Apply for funding from the Ride Out Fund

To apply for funding to assist with projects that benefit local equestrian access, you can find the application process on our website [here](#). The easiest way to apply is

to complete our online application form [here](#), or you can email [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk) to request a copy of the application form in Microsoft Word.

## CASE STUDY

### Whitmoor Common, Surrey

An overflowing ditch and stream would regularly flood the equestrian access on Whitmoor Common, forcing riders onto busy roads around the area in Surrey.

The BHS Ride Out Fund granted £3,000 toward the £14,500 drainage and resurfacing project, transforming the route and enabling year-round access.

**Before**



**After**







## Ride Out UK

**Ride Out UK** celebrates the joy of horses, accessing off-road routes and raising awareness of the importance of safe places to ride and carriage drive.

With a range of events on offer, from leisure rides around beautiful country estates, to online information evenings,

there's plenty to take part in and raise money for the Ride Out Fund.

Speak to the Access Team, your Access Field Officer or Regional / National Manager if you have an idea for a Ride Out UK event.

## Rideathon

Get involved with our annual fundraising challenge – **Rideathon**. Simply set a target distance to cover, secure your sponsors, and take the reins for Rideathon.

The challenge is all about celebrating the joy, freedom, and adventure of horses –

and raising much needed funds for the Ride Out Fund to protect our off-road routes.

We'd love to see as many of our volunteers taking part as possible. Stay tuned to hear more news about our next challenge.

**In 2025, across our Ride Out UK events and Rideathon we...**



raised £27,078.07,



welcomed 1,761 participants,



and planned 40 events.

## Project 2026

Changes to the law introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 meant that many historic routes used by horse riders and carriage drivers in England and Wales would be lost on 1 January 2026 if they hadn't been formally recorded. The Welsh Government has repealed this provision in Wales.

In 2022, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), who deal with rights of way legislation in England, announced its intention to repeal the 2026 deadline. This was later changed, moving the deadline to 1 January 2031. In December 2024, after lobbying by BHS and other organisations,

the UK Government again announced it had decided to repeal the deadline.

In the face of such uncertainty and, regardless of the deadline, our work must continue to record these routes, as this is the best way to protect them from obstruction, development, and neglect. Our advice to all our volunteers engaged in this is to keep going with the hard work – cut-off date or not, the best way to protect these routes from obstruction, development or neglect is to get them recorded by making a DMMO application.

A copy of Defra's press release is available to read [here](#). The BHS' press release can be read [here](#).

### Project 2026 funding

Funding for Project 2026 is available for applications within England only, however applications for Wales are still just as important to be made to ensure that routes are accurately recorded.

Funding for Project 2026 from Sport England via British Equestrian continues under the current arrangement until the end of March 2026. They remain very supportive of the project, and we have had discussions with them about a potential third phase of Project 2026 and what that

might look like. We will be looking to refocus some of our support on to those with existing applications who are now facing appeals and inquiries where applications are refused, or orders are contested. This can be incredibly time consuming and difficult but is just as vital as getting the original application researched and submitted. If you have applications that are at this stage and would like some advice or help, then please contact us on [P2026@bhs.org.uk](mailto:P2026@bhs.org.uk).

### Get involved

We're committed to recording as many historical equestrian routes as possible, but we need your help to do this vital work.

Learn more about our **Project 2026** and get involved. If you need support or have any questions, contact [P2026@bhs.org.uk](mailto:P2026@bhs.org.uk).

**Learn more  
about  
Project 2026**





## Keep in touch

We're excited to be working with you, with the support of our volunteer, we can protect and improve equestrian access for others to enjoy for years to come.

Your welcome letter includes detailed information about the Access team including who we are, the team structure,

and contact details. If you need to contact a different region or team at BHS, you can find the details on our website.

We love to hear what you're working on, no matter how big or small and where possible we'd like to be able to share your achievements with others.

### Useful contacts

Our standard working hours are: Monday to Thursday, 08:35-17:00  
Friday, 08:35-15:00

#### Access Team

[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)  
02476 840515

#### Volunteer Team

[volunteer@bhs.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@bhs.org.uk)  
02476 840538

#### Switchboard

[enquiry@bhs.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bhs.org.uk)  
02476 840500

**Find your  
Regional  
Contacts**

**Contact  
our other  
departments**



**For horses. For people. For life.**