

The British Horse Society:

# Volunteering Strategy 2024-2028

The  
British  
Horse  
Society



December 2023

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# WELCOME

Here at the British Horse Society we are proud of our long association with volunteers, who give their time, skills and experience freely to help horses across the British Isles; we simply couldn't achieve all that we do towards our objectives without their support.

Our vision for volunteering at the BHS:

**We're recognised for making our volunteers feel valued as an integral part of our diverse team. Their contribution to delivering our charitable objectives is celebrated and rewarded.**

It is our role to make sure volunteering for the BHS is flexible, inclusive, impactful and as easy as possible for everyone to get involved. Looking after volunteers, their safety and making sure that they are trained and equipped to carry out their role is our priority. We want to make sure that everyone who volunteers with us has a great experience and that they feel welcomed, inspired, supported and valued by our one team of employees, volunteers and stakeholders.

Over several decades, our volunteering programme has developed organically across the organisation. As we move forward we want to think more strategically about volunteering with the BHS and ensure that we are doing everything that we can to maximise the impact that our volunteers can have in furthering our objectives in their local communities. We want our volunteers to know that their volunteering efforts are important. Simply put, we want all our volunteers to have an incredible experience and know that every hour they donate is valued and that they are truly making a difference to the lives of horses and the people who care for them.

## THE STRATEGY

This strategy will define the British Horse Society's future direction for volunteering, considering environmental, organisational and societal changes, and current best practice.

We've identified five priority areas of focus that will increase the scale and impact of volunteering and ensure that our volunteers have a great experience:

- Empowering our volunteers
- More ways to get involved
- Volunteering for everyone
- Creating a volunteering community
- Supporting the volunteer programme

### **The strategy has been informed by:**

- Consultation with the BHS Home Team (our employees), through workshops with selected groups of employees and meetings with individual departmental leads
- Consultation with volunteers. The Volunteer Programme Advisory Group (VPAG) was expanded to include volunteers from across the British Isles and from a range of specialist areas. We tested out our ideas with this group and their feedback was vital to the strategy development.
- BHS volunteer survey.
- Chairmans' Consultation Committee
- BHS EDI Advisory Group
- NCVO best practice guidance
- Latest industry research



# Volunteering with The British Horse Society

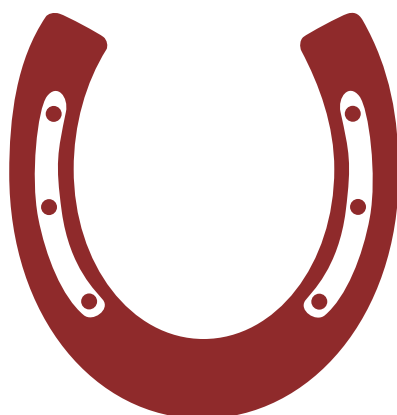
The  
British  
Horse  
Society

2022- 2023

“

I've had a great time over the last few years and made many friends through volunteering with The British Horse Society! It's great to know that I'm volunteering my skills and experience to such a worthy cause!

”



“

I love volunteering and would like to get involved more in my region. My experience has been that BHS supports and values its volunteers.

”

## Volunteer Numbers

397

Access and  
Rights of Way

191

Occasional  
Volunteers

410

Local and Regional  
Committees

217

British  
Riding Clubs

180

Welfare

61

Safety



Value of volunteer  
hours contributed  
in 2022: £1.94m



Average volunteer  
hours per volunteer  
per month: 10



DMMO\* applications  
submitted in 2022:  
739



Funds raised locally  
by volunteers in  
2022: £215,000

\*Definitive Map Modification Order

# WHERE WE ARE

## Volunteers support the BHS charitable objectives in the following ways:

### Governance

The British Horse Society is governed by its Constitution, charity law and by other statutory duties. Under the provisions of the Constitution, the Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the affairs of The British Horse Society and has the power to delegate this responsibility. The Board of Trustees are supported by Advisory committees whose purpose is to provide advice to the Board and ensure that The British Horse Society's policies are adapted to changing circumstances and are consistently applied.

### Access

Volunteers support us to enhance and maintain the UK's equestrian Access network. They provide localised advice, support and assistance for equestrian access and rights of way issues as well as carrying out a vital role to record as many bridleways in England as possible before 2031. They are also involved in identifying new routes and fundraising to protect rights of way for riders and carriage drivers. Volunteers are always on the look out to prioritise improvement projects in local areas and where appropriate seek match funding from the Ride Out Fund.

### Safety

The BHS is dedicated to making the world safer for horses and equestrians and volunteers support our Safety messages and promote equestrian road safety and the Dead Slow campaign. Volunteers also help promote the use of the Horse i app and liaise with partner organisations in their local area.



# WHERE WE ARE

## Horse Care & Welfare

Our network of volunteers can be specially trained to respond to Horse Care & Welfare concerns raised by members of the public. Volunteers also promote equine care and welfare by educating, advising and supporting horse owners and carers to prevent cases of neglect. They can also help us to promote responsible breeding and horse care at BHS healthcare and educational clinics.

## Participation & Education

Our 83 local and regional BHS volunteer committees organise and support local activities and events for equestrians which encourage Participation in healthy recreation involving horses, education on care and welfare issues, educational pathways and challenge awards, and promote the BHS, sharing information with their local equestrian community. They also fundraise to support both our national campaigns and to improve provision for equestrianism in their local area.

British Riding Clubs (BRC) provide support, encouragement, and participation opportunities for over 28,000 members via a national club structure. The volunteering opportunities within BRC include positions on the Advisory Group, official event stewards, Volunteers Club (comprising 80 people who volunteer regularly at championship events), individuals who volunteer within their local club and reciprocal volunteering by those who are part of a competition team.

To further our Education objectives, our voluntary Accredited Professional Coach (APC) Mentor scheme helps to guide and support both newly qualified and other coaches in their area.

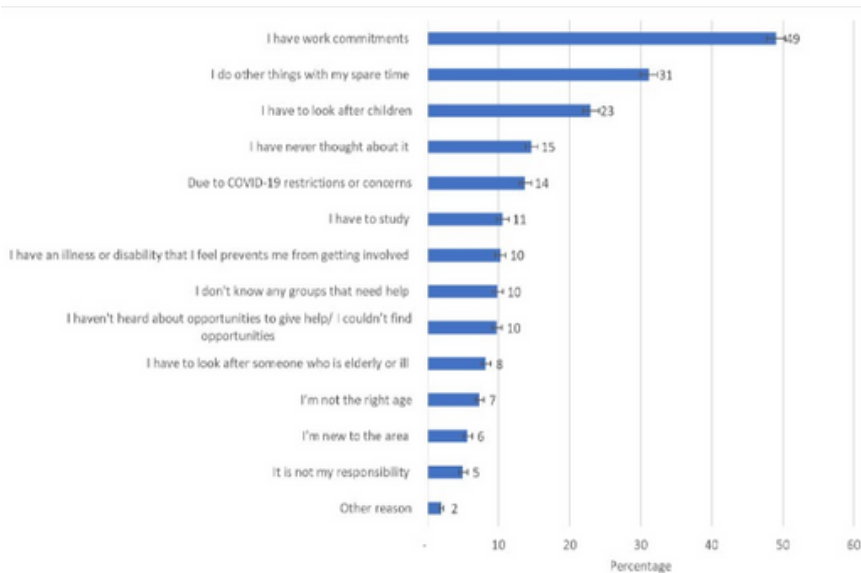
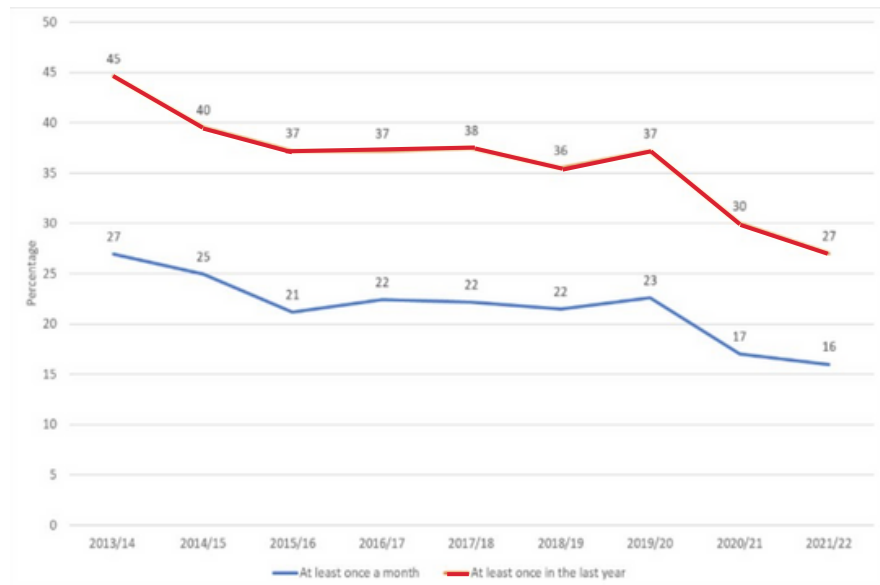




## CONTEXT

### Volunteering in the UK

Generally, volunteering in the UK is in decline. The Government 2020/21 Community Life Survey shows an 11% decline over 7 years in people who volunteer at least once per month:



The same survey asked why people are not volunteering. Reasons given for not taking part in formal volunteering or not volunteering more frequently, are shown in the graph to the left.

Increasing state retirement age, abolishing maximum working age and changes in society's attitudes to volunteering are impacting people's ability to volunteer, as they are working longer and have less free time available.



# OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

## Empowering our Volunteers

It is vital that our volunteers feel connected to the organisation and can see their part in the bigger picture to know that their work is valued and helps us to achieve our goals. Due to the size of the organisation, disparate volunteer activities and geographical locations of our volunteers we need to work hard to harness and retain that enthusiasm for the cause that motivated people to join us and give their time in the first place.

It is essential that the BHS remains relevant and that our volunteering offer reflects the changing needs of both the organisation and its volunteers. We have reviewed our volunteering and Committee structure considering a number of important developments:

### Internal

- Introduction of employed Welfare Field Officer roles
- Introduction of employed Access Field Officer roles
- Introduction of employed Business Support Manager roles
- Declining interest in Chairperson roles
- Introduction of specialist volunteer coordinators in the Access and Welfare Teams
- Growth in number of volunteers
- Introduction of new volunteer roles
- Organisational developments leading to obsolete volunteer roles
- Establishment of separate access and events teams in some Regions/Nations

### External

- National decline in the appetite for regular volunteering
- Digital developments in membership recruitment, communications and marketing/promotion
- Competition for volunteer time
- Need to diversify income streams
- Regulatory changes eg GDPR, Brexit

Our local and Regional Committee structure was established in 1947. It's a structure that is familiar and understood by those involved. It provides a broad range of roles and a conduit for communication between the organisation and its members. However, the external view is that it may appear old fashioned and exclusive, which could act as an additional barrier to younger people or others from under-represented groups. We continue to find challenges with recruitment to key committee roles, which reduces motivation and impact.

Our model has become complex due to organisational developments over time. We've increased organisational capacity in the Welfare, Access and Marketing and Communications Departments as well as creating the Business Support team to assist approved centres. The links and communication channels between employees and volunteers (particularly those fulfilling several roles) have increased as a result, meaning that it can be difficult for new volunteers to know who to contact for support and information. This complexity could create a further barrier to new volunteers joining us.





Most charities that rely heavily on volunteers, using a 'local branch' structure (eg RNLI, St John's Ambulance, The Conservation Volunteers) recognise the importance of providing a single point of contact, coordination and direction. Each volunteer in these charities knows who their 'volunteer coordinator' is and that person is responsible for welcoming new volunteers and introducing them to the role and team, providing opportunities for volunteers to get involved, coordinating and guiding activity to ensure impact against organisational priorities and attracting new volunteers. This reflects guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

### NCVO website

**"It's important that volunteers have someone to support them. This helps them do their role well and be safe. It takes time to recruit, train and support volunteers. This should be a clear part of someone's role"**

There is some anecdotal evidence which seems to show that our volunteers become more engaged and achieve greater impact where the Regional Manager has adopted a more directive role, acting as the volunteer coordinator who guides and supports a team of volunteers.

Now is an opportunity to identify where we have the necessary skills within the organisation and develop where we need to do so.

Discussions with the BHS Home Team, Regional Chairpersons and the VPAG have revealed diverse views on structure and ways of working. There are a number of alternative structures that could work better so we will pilot a variety of these to identify the most effective and use the data from those pilots to shape our future volunteering programme.

# OBJECTIVE 1

**Our volunteering structure is modern and fit for purpose, providing clear channels of communication, enabling impactful volunteering.**

## Measures of success

1. Our Terms of Reference for local, regional and national committees refreshed and approved by the Board of Trustees to remove unnecessary roles and incorporate new roles, reflecting the current arrangements.
2. Pilot of alternative models for volunteer coordination carried out, setting clear measures of success to evaluate their effectiveness.
3. Most effective volunteering structure for the BHS identified and implementation begun across the British Isles.
4. Appropriate training in volunteer management provided to relevant employees in order to improve our effectiveness in working with volunteers
5. All volunteer related policies and documentation reviewed and refreshed to reflect branding and modernise the language and tone.
6. The annual volunteer survey demonstrates increasing satisfaction scores.







## More ways to get involved

We have reviewed the opportunities for people to volunteer with the BHS against our organisational priorities and national campaigns. We must ensure that we recruit volunteers to those areas of our work where they can have the greatest impact and have identified new areas of work where we believe there is potential for volunteers to help.

Charitable area	How do volunteers contribute	How could volunteers contribute
Centre approvals	No involvement	Promoting the BHS approval scheme to equestrian centres to increase the impact of the Business Support Team.
Welfare	Providing advice to horse owners and enthusiasts	Organising stablemates days and fundraising for national and local welfare initiatives. Attend more welfare/care concerns
	Responding to non-emergency welfare concerns	
	Arranging or supporting a veterinary talk	
	Supporting at horse health days and local events	
Safety	Arranging or supporting a road and rider safety talk or presentation to non-equestrian group	Delivery of Henry the Horse presentations to primary schools. Delivery of local talks to non-equestrian and equestrian groups on road safety and the Horse I app. Represent the BHS on local rural crime partnerships in Scotland. Creation of a micro-volunteering opportunity around downloading the Horse-I app.
	Encouraging others to report incidents and near misses via the Horse I app	
	First point of contact for non-emergency safety issues	
	Encourage participation in the Ride Safe Challenge Award	
	Promote road safety awareness to local equestrians	



Participation	Organising events to promote BHS charitable objectives and support APCs	Increase engagement with under-represented groups through outreach activities. Share BHS/BRC volunteer resource, particularly occasional volunteers.
	BRC volunteers supporting BRC events	
Brand awareness	Promoting the BHS at shows and events	Improved alignment with volunteer activities and centrally organised campaigns. Micro volunteering opportunities in social media sharing.
	Promoting BHS campaigns through local social media groups	
Fundraising	Raising funds to support the delivery of local activities and national campaigns through local equestrian-focussed events and Ride Out	Running non-equestrian fundraising events and activities eg Facebook Birthday Fundraisers. Securing grant funding locally to support projects and events. Sourcing sponsorship from businesses. Providing corporate volunteering opportunities to raise funds.
Changing Lives Through Horses (CLTH) programme	Fundraising to support the CLTH programme	Supporting the scaling-up of CLTH centres to increase capacity.
Professional skills	APC Mentors providing support to new APCs.	Increased volunteering opportunities in professional capacity e.g. welfare clinics and delivering professional/school and college talks.
	Student Vet Champions raising awareness of BHS work to other students	

Involving new people in the BHS is vital to our long-term success. We will explore building new volunteering opportunities for more people in collaboration with employers, educational establishments and existing schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Corporate/employee volunteering is a key part of most organisations' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategies and is recognised as providing health, development and engagement benefits for companies and organisations. There is an opportunity for the BHS to develop a programme of corporate volunteering opportunities that will generate income and seed beneficial partnerships with commercial organisations. BRC Competitions, access clearance days and Ride Out events particularly lend themselves to this type of volunteering offer. However, as a new proposition for the BHS, this is likely to be a longer-term aspiration.

We want to respond to trends in volunteering. The desire for more flexible and micro/digital and remote volunteering opportunities is increasing. We will think more innovatively about how we respond to the availability of volunteers by considering the ways in which people volunteer, as people look for shorter, more accessible ways to make a difference.

“

**The volunteering process was easy to engage with and the BHS representatives were welcoming. Because I wanted to volunteer for the FATE scheme this was thoroughly explored in my 'interview'. The whole process was everything I expected from the BHS, totally professional, from first point of contact through to completion of initial training.**

”



We will 'skills match' our volunteers with the right opportunity. We want our volunteers to enjoy their volunteering experience, and we want to tap into the vast skills and experience our volunteers bring with them.

Any new volunteering opportunities will consider the range of skills our volunteers may bring, and where those skills don't currently exist, we will consider providing training and support to address this.

We will grow our existing volunteer base to increase impact. We have identified an aspiration to increase capacity in certain roles/locations, but these priorities may change over the lifetime of this strategy and will be reviewed annually:

Roles where there is a desire to increase capacity:

- County Access and Bridleway Officer
- Access and Bridleway Officer
- Safety Adviser
- Horse Care and Welfare Adviser
- Events and education officer
- Communications and Marketing Officer

**In some areas of our work there are measures in place to quantify the impact of our volunteers. In other areas, where there are no measures it can be more challenging to make the case for increasing the number of volunteers in those roles.**

We will prioritise recruitment and expansion of those roles where there are clear measures of impact and support those teams that do not currently have metrics in place to develop them.

“

I've had a long period of time off after having a child and doing volunteering work has kept my hand in and been good to have on my CV when I went back to work.

”

# OBJECTIVE 2

**We will increase the impact of volunteers in the delivery of our charitable objectives through creating new opportunities, expanding existing roles and recruiting more volunteers to existing roles, where impact can be demonstrated.**

## Measures of success

1. New or amended voluntary roles that reflect our organisational priorities (as above)
2. Increasing impact by volunteers in access, safety, welfare and committee roles
3. Recognition of all people who donate time to the BHS in our volunteer database (advisory groups etc), to achieve a more accurate record of the contribution of volunteers to the BHS.
4. Corporate volunteering offer created.
5. New volunteers recruited to existing roles to increase capacity (see table). The recruitment plan will focus initially on those areas selected to pilot new ways of working under Objective 1.

Role	Existing roles recruitment target
Safety Adviser	15 Based on minimum of 1 per County/region
County Access and Bridleway Officer (CABO)	22 Based on current vacancies
Access and Bridleway Officer (ABO)	TBC
Welfare Adviser	TBC
Events and Education officer	16†Based on minimum 1 per County/region
Comms and Marketing officer	34†Based on 1 per County/region

## Everyone Welcome

To increase our reach and impact it is vital that the organisation is inclusive and is representative of society, and this includes our volunteers. Having a diverse group of volunteers benefits all organisations and their communities by bringing new ideas and perspectives, opening the benefits of volunteering and making the organisation more representative of the communities they serve.

In the recent BHS 75th anniversary survey, two thirds of our members agreed that encouraging a more diverse group of people to enjoy horses should be a top priority. In parallel with the volunteer strategy, BHS is developing an EDI strategy, focused on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, race and socioeconomically under represented communities. The two strategies will be complementary in respect of diversifying our volunteer community.

The BHS does not routinely collect data on race, sex, disability, religion or belief of its volunteers. We do have some limited data on these characteristics from responses to the 2022 One Team Survey and this has been used to augment data held on our existing volunteer management system.

“

**I would like to see more diversity in your volunteers as the general population appears to be from a single demographic.**

”

## Analysis of the available data indicates that the following demographic groups are underrepresented when compared to general UK population:

- Younger People

The BHS volunteer community is generally an aging one. There is concern that knowledge cannot be handed on and that we will have no younger volunteers to take up the reins when our existing volunteers decide to retire. This is a particular a concern reported by our committees. The table below shows the current age profile of BHS volunteers.

Age Band	No.of Regular Volunteers	% of Total	No.of Occasional Volunteers	% of Total	All
0-19	4	0.4	11	5.4	15
20-29	54	5.1	28	13.8	82
30-39	108	10.3	20	9.9	128
40-49	164	15.6	22	10.8	186
50-59	273	26.0	54	26.6	327
60-69	274	26.1	49	24.1	323
70-79	146	13.9	18	8.9	164
80+	28	2.7	1	0.5	29

In 2023, the average age for a regular BHS volunteer is 55 and for occasional volunteers this falls to 50. As part of our overarching volunteer recruitment strategy, we will ensure that opportunities are actively promoted to people under the age of 55.

Volunteering provides personal development opportunities for those taking the first step into employment and we will match those opportunities (including training) with the goals and personal motivation of every volunteer.

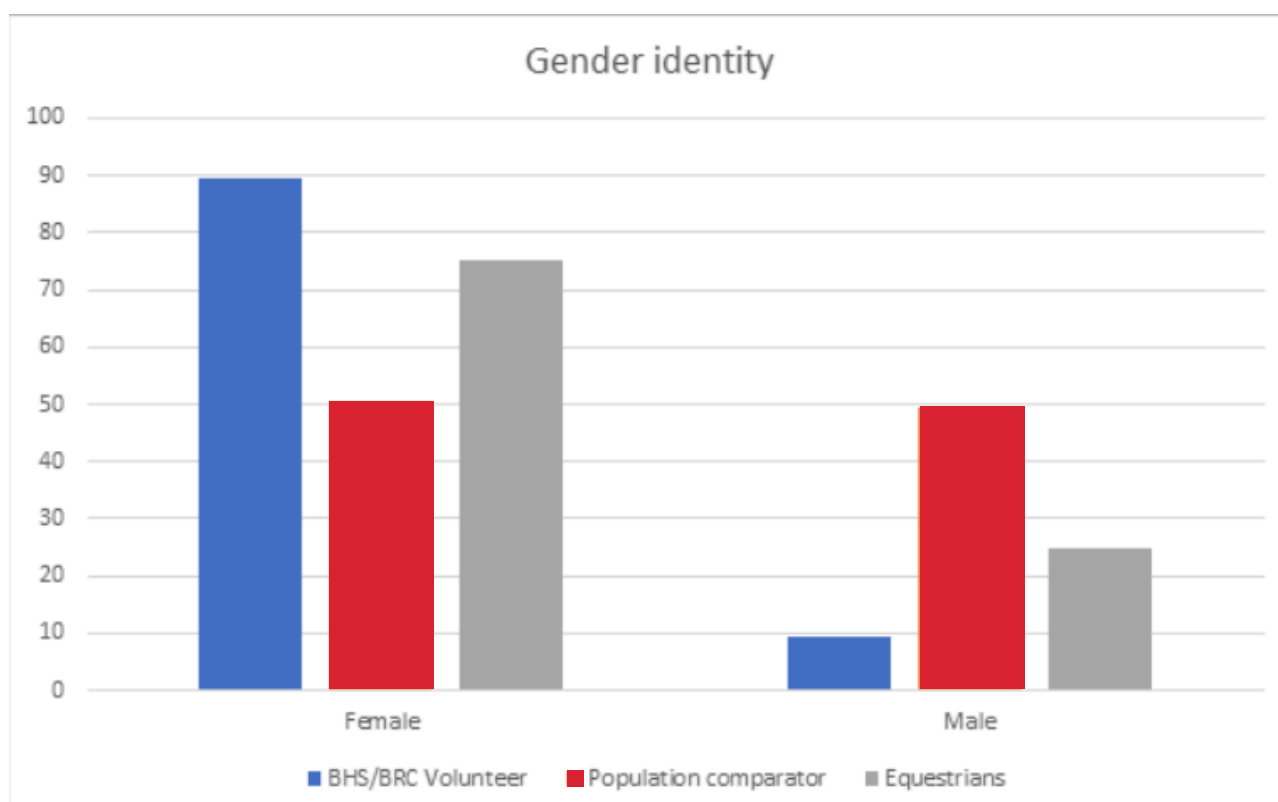
In order to understand how we could make our volunteering opportunities more attractive to young people we will establish a new advisory group of 18-30 year olds who will be instrumental in helping to shape our future volunteer offer.

We will explore building new volunteering opportunities for more young people in collaboration with educational establishments and existing schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, which provides volunteering opportunities and skills development for hundreds and thousands of young people each year.



- Males

Analysis shows that our current volunteer base is predominantly female. Comparing ONS general population statistics and equestrian demographic data, reveals that we have a disproportionately low number of male volunteers.



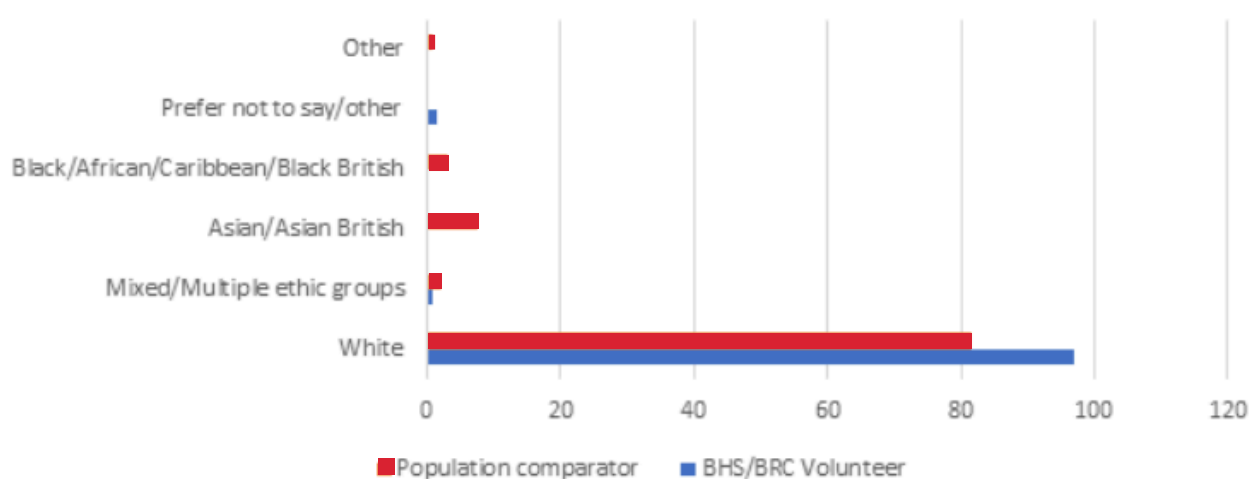
The popularity of equestrianism amongst females means that it would be unrealistic to use general population demographics as a benchmark. However, our overarching volunteer recruitment strategy, we will ensure that opportunities are actively promoted to males.



- Ethnicity

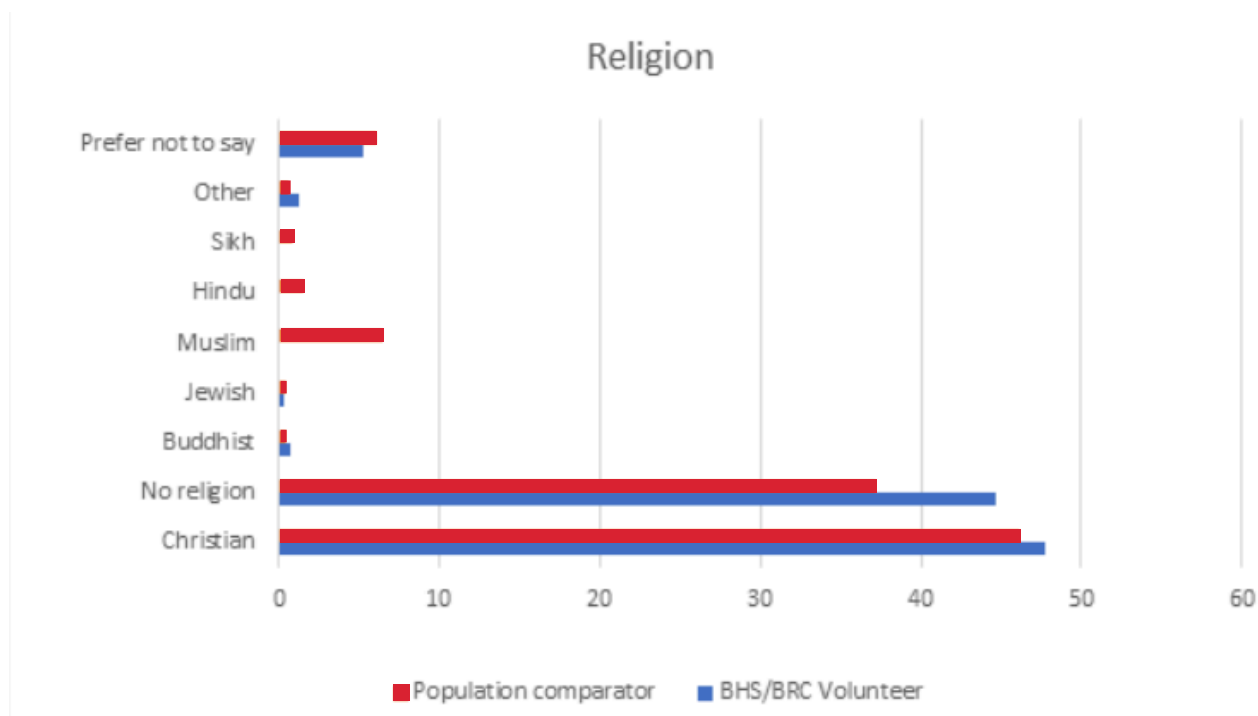
White people are somewhat over-represented amongst the volunteer community whilst other ethnicities are under represented. None of the volunteers who responded to the One Team survey in 2022 identified as Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British.

Ethnicity of BHS Volunteers compared with UK population



- Religion and belief

The percentage of volunteers with no religion is high compared with the UK population. Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims are significantly under-represented in our volunteer community.



“

Volunteering with the BHS has enabled me to focus on fascinating documents etc and right of way history and law, and work with other volunteers and professionals.

”







An initial discussion with our EDI Advisory Group has provided some ideas on how to make our volunteering offer more appealing to a more diverse audience, indicating that we will need to understand and respond to the different motivations that may apply to people from ethnic minority backgrounds and from under-represented faith groups. Emphasising the potential to develop new skills, CV enhancement and mapping progression into equestrian qualifications could all be useful.

Providing mentoring from more experienced volunteers and engaging with the volunteers we already have from underrepresented groups to gain insight into the potential barriers and constraints were also highlighted as important areas to explore.

We will analyse the research and best practice guidance on inclusive volunteering that has been produced by other organisations to inform our volunteer recruitment strategy. Ongoing engagement with the EDI advisory group in the development of this recruitment strategy will be crucial in understanding our target volunteers.

We will reach out to organisations who already engage with our target volunteers and seek to partner with them in co-designing roles and reaching new audiences.

This will be a long term area of development and may exceed the lifetime of this strategy.



# OBJECTIVE 3

**We will promote the BHS as an inclusive organisation and attract a new audience to the volunteer opportunities we offer**

## Measures of success

1. Demographic data collected as part of the annual volunteer survey
2. Policies and resources are inclusive, easy to understand and welcome all volunteers.
3. Establishment of a new advisory group of 18-30 year olds.
4. Volunteering roles are accessible to a wider audience, highlighting the personal development, wellbeing and training opportunities they present.
5. Time volunteered to the BHS by people from under-represented groups increased.



## Creating a Volunteering Community

Existing volunteers are a powerful recruitment means and provide a nationwide network of advocates for the BHS. They have an important role to play in the maintenance of equestrianism's social licence, as a trusted source of information for equestrian contacts in their community.

As part of the 2022 annual volunteer survey, respondents were asked to rate their experience against a set of set statements:

**We would like to know how you feel about your BHS volunteering experience. Please can you indicate whether you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.**

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree
<b>I feel like I belong to the BHS community</b>	4%	5%	17%	35%	40%
<b>I feel supported by the BHS</b>	4%	6%	20%	31%	39%

We want our volunteers to feel like part of the team. Good, timely communication is vital to achieving this.

Volunteers have identified that improved forward planning and advance notice of BHS initiatives and campaigns would be useful to them in organising their activities to support our objectives more effectively. We need to make sure that communications between BHS employees/head office and volunteers are relevant, clear, concise, and timely. Additionally, it is vital to the long-term success of the programme that we can share the volunteering opportunities that are available in a modern, timely way.

Currently, volunteers receive a monthly e-news from the volunteer support team. It normally contains 3-5 items or volunteering updates per month that should be of relevance to all volunteers, including training opportunities. The open rate averages around 40%.

The Access and Rights of Way e-news is also usually sent monthly. The average open rate is 47%. It generally has 4-6 stories, usually including one spotlighted Equestrian Access Group (EAG) and one detailed case study of a particular bridleway project. Access-specific training dates are also included. This goes out to EAG contacts as well as Access volunteers. Much of the information included is quite niche and may not be of interest to someone not actively involved in access work.

The Welfare volunteer newsletter goes out quarterly. We don't have stats for open rates etc. It is usually around 10+ pages long and includes example welfare cases as well as research updates & news on what the welfare teams have been doing. Welfare-specific training dates are also included.

In addition to the above, many volunteers will also receive the Member e-news, BHS magazine and a regional newsletter from their Regional Manager.

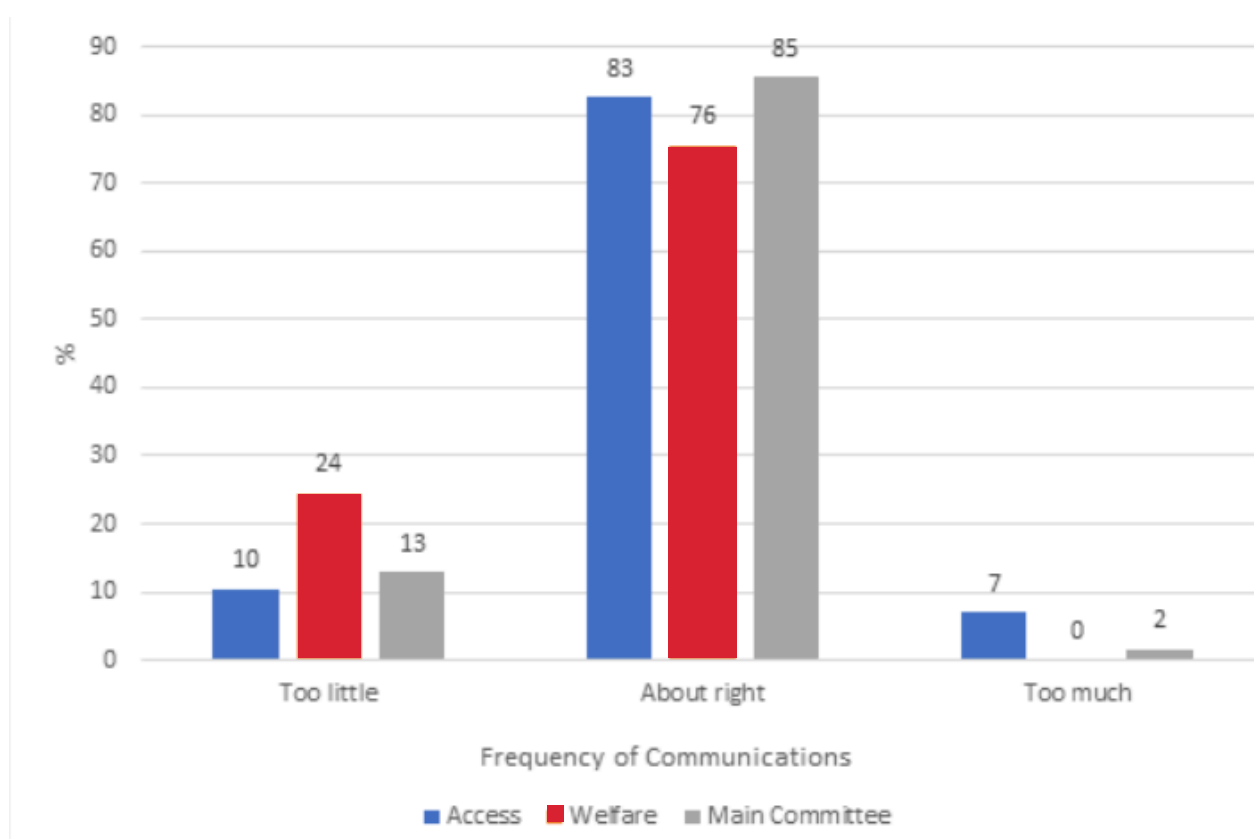
The 2022 volunteer survey revealed that volunteers felt they received the right amount of communications from the BHS (81%), however the open rates for the monthly e-news and Access and Rights of Way e-news indicate otherwise.

In the future, we will produce one newsletter a month, which would be personalised to the recipient. This would be better for the end user and much less work internally. Moving to this solution is dependent on the phased introduction of Dynamics 365.





There are small differences in satisfaction rates across different volunteering departments as shown in the graph below. In the short term, we will explore and address the reasons for the departmental inconsistencies by consulting with individual teams and volunteers and make sure that all volunteers receive appropriate and equitable communications.



Using information from our 2022 volunteer survey and a VPAG workshop held in July 2023, we know that BHS volunteers use a variety of methods to keep in touch with one another, including Zoom, telephone, email, WhatsApp and SMS.

“Keep listening and include us in decisions - focus groups are useful, even more so when outcomes are acted on”



When asked, existing volunteers told us that the top 3 ways they prefer to receive their communications from the BHS are:

- Email
- Virtual Meeting
- In Person meeting

The least preferred communication methods were social media, post and WhatsApp.

We were also informed by our volunteers that communications between departmental volunteers (such as Access or Welfare) and local committee volunteers can be challenging at times. We will pilot new ways of working, as described under Objective 1, to determine how these challenges can be overcome.

We will make communication as simple as possible for our volunteers, whilst adhering to GDPR. We will work closely with the Dynamics 365 project team to ensure the new system can meet our needs and that volunteers have the tools they need to easily communicate with others to organise activities, ask for advice, share best practice and network.

We will provide more training and resources on using social media marketing to promote activities, whilst adhering to BHS tone and branding guidelines. We will review and provide additional resources, templates and campaign materials for volunteer use and provide a suite of guidance to support them.

It is vital to provide opportunities for volunteers to input into our volunteer programme so that we understand how they feel about volunteering at BHS and how the experience can be improved to enable greater impact against our charitable objectives.

We provide a comprehensive induction programme, delivered by the HQ Team, for all new volunteers. This is an effective way of introducing them to our organisation and the resources they might need. However, approaches to welcoming new volunteers and introducing them to their local team vary between regions and counties. In some cases the Committee Chairperson will reach out to all new volunteers by phone or email but there is no consistency and no guidance from the BHS on this subject. In the absence of a pre-existing relationship, new volunteers may feel uncertain about their place in the team. There is an opportunity for more established volunteers to provide a buddy arrangement so that new starters feel welcomed into their role and have a friend to support them from the outset.

An important part of the volunteer experience is feeling valued. We must share the impact that our volunteers have to maintain motivation and encourage them to continue volunteering. In response to the statement 'I feel valued by the BHS' we received the following response:

- Agree 40%
- Somewhat agree 31%
- Neutral 22%
- Somewhat disagree 4%
- Disagree 4%

Whilst it is positive that the majority of volunteers did not disagree with the statement, there is clearly room to improve recognition of their contribution. Currently we have long service awards, presented at 5 yearly intervals, but these are not impact-based. We have introduced the You're A Gem awards in 2023, which provides each Regional Manager the opportunity to nominate one volunteer who had made an outstanding contribution in their role. Our National Awards also provide opportunities for volunteers to be nominated for recognition.



The rewards and recognition provided to all volunteers will be reviewed to ensure that we have an equitable offer for all. Dependent on the introduction of appropriate measures of impact, we will create a new system of recognition and thanks based on volunteers' contribution to the BHS, not just length of service.

Even with improved communication, a more engaged community and better recognition, most individuals will want to stop volunteering at some point. It is important to have a process to handle this stage of the volunteer journey, ensuring that the experience ends in a positive way. There is potential that individuals may want to rejoin as volunteers in the future, support the BHS with a financial contribution, or recommend us as a great organisation to volunteer with. Any feedback captured through such a process will help us to continually improve and refine our volunteer opportunities. We do not currently have an exit process in place.

**“ I found that the induction was a very useful session as it gave myself an idea of what my prospective role would involve. ”**



# OBJECTIVE 4

**Volunteers feel that they are a valued part of the BHS One Team, receive regular, relevant communications and have easy access to the information and resources that they need to increase their impact against our charitable objectives.**

## **Measures of success**

1. Increase in positive (agree) response to One Team statements, using the 2022 volunteer survey as the baseline
2. Increase in regional events/activities that support our national campaigns, using 2022 data as a baseline.
3. Increase in funds raised by volunteers to support our national initiatives, using 2022 data as a baseline
4. Increase in the proportion of volunteers who report that they receive a satisfactory level of interesting and relevant communications regarding their BHS Volunteering.
5. Channels available for consulting with volunteers on all aspects of our volunteer training, support, and development are fit for purpose and efficient.
6. Exit process in place.

## Supporting the Volunteer Programme

### Volunteer Management System

Key to achieving all the above is the provision of a robust digital volunteer management and compliance system. We need a way to capture accurate volunteer data, communicate with our volunteers, record and measure volunteers' achievements and impact and to ensure that we are providing a great experience. By measuring the impact that volunteers have in delivering our charitable objectives, we will be able to recognise achievements and excellence in a meaningful way and demonstrate the impact of our volunteer strategy.

To build on the existing successes of our volunteering programme, we need to create a consistent, collaborative, and supportive approach to volunteering across the organisation. We want to make sure our volunteering programme is sustainable for the future. To do this, we need an effective infrastructure in place, with appropriate resource and volunteer management systems to support employee capacity to involve volunteers now and in the future.

In our 2022 annual volunteer survey, only 25% of volunteers agreed 'BHS Volunteering is modern and embraces technology'.

The BHS is already undergoing a period of digital transformation, and a robust volunteer management system is part of this change. It is anticipated that the BHS digital strategy Core and Insights solution (Phase 2) will provide the system to achieve improved volunteer management. A single source contact management platform holding all volunteer information will provide the BHS with the digital tools required to support and manage our volunteering programme and provide a more consistent volunteer experience. We are adopting a centralised approach to volunteer data management, with the right systems and resources in place to support employees in effectively involving volunteers. The new platform will reduce data duplication and ensure that personal details are kept up to date and compliant with data regulation. It will also allow us to record more information regarding volunteering activity and allow the BHS to introduce an impact measurement system to assess and understand the contribution and value of our volunteers, and the volunteering programme. Finally, it will allow us to better recognise and reward volunteers' achievements and be more responsive and supportive to our volunteers needs.

### **Email communications/Microsoft Teams**

During 2022, we began rolling out dedicated BHS volunteer email addresses to provide a secure and GDPR compliant method for communication between employees, volunteers, stakeholders and members of the public. Engagement by our volunteers has been slower than anticipated so, following a volunteer role-level data risk assessment, we have created a targeted roll out plan.

Over the next 2-3 years we will implement mandatory use of a BHS email address for most volunteer roles:

When sufficient volunteers have activated their email addresses, we will begin Phase 2 of this project which will explore developing and implementing access to Microsoft Teams using their licensed BHS email address. We will introduce the use of Microsoft Teams as part of our pilot of new ways of working described in Objective 1, to enable our volunteers to communicate with each other and employees via the platform.

“ Although preferring in person meetings I have appreciated blended or virtual meetings especially during the darkest days of the year and during the pandemic. We currently meet virtually but hoping to get together in spring. ”







### **E-Learning Platform**

In 2023, we extended BHS Wise, our ELearning Platform for volunteers to use. Eligible volunteers will be able to access the platform and eventually take online learning modules in a wide variety of topics relating to volunteering, the BHS, running events, Horse Care and Welfare and Access and Road Safety.

Currently two learning modules are available, FATE training and Event Health & Safety. As uptake in volunteer emails addresses increases, we will extend the range of courses and topics available, to include both generic and role specific training.

There is limited employee resource within the Development Team to create new content, which will be a limiting factor on the pace of this project.





### **Employee Resource**

"Skilled volunteer coordinators and managers will make all the difference to the success of your volunteering programme. These individuals will need to be personable so that they can influence your volunteers, build trusting relationships with them and provide them with ongoing support. In addition they will need to have the skills to coordinate the delivery of your programme; and build partnerships with other organisations. Try to recruit people with these skills and/or support those in your team to develop them" - The Volunteering Fund: Guide to Inclusive Volunteer Engagement.

The BHS Volunteer Strategy will create a culture that encourages volunteer involvement across the organisation. We will build stronger cross-functional relationships between the Volunteer Support Team and specialist departments (including BRC) to effectively support employees in managing their volunteers, promoting a coordinated and collaborative approach to best practice. We will provide training, guidance and resources for volunteer coordinators and will review, revise and implement clear policies, procedures and guidance to manage our volunteer network so that the volunteers can carry out their roles and responsibilities safely and effectively.

As we implement this 5 year strategy, we will evaluate our employee and resource levels annually to ensure that we offer a supportive and responsive environment for our volunteers. We will review ways of working within the Volunteer Support Team to maximise efficiency and ensure optimum use of available employee time.

We will explore the benefits of achieving a volunteering accreditation through Investing In Volunteers (IIV) to demonstrate our commitment to our volunteering vision. IIV is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. Achieving the standard shows volunteers - and potential volunteers - how much they are valued and will give them confidence in our ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience.



# OBJECTIVE 5

**The BHS Volunteering programme has robust volunteer data management and utilises technology to provide digital solutions for training and communications. Volunteers will be coordinated and supported by a network of trained and experienced employees.**

## **Measures of success**

1. Volunteers adopt the BHS volunteer email addresses wherever possible, whilst performing volunteering related tasks and communication
2. A robust Volunteer Management System in place that cost effectively and efficiently manages volunteer personal data alongside their training and volunteer activity records.
3. A wide range of volunteer e-learning and resources available via BHS Wise.
4. All employees involved in volunteer coordination have their training needs identified and met, ensuring that they have the opportunity to increase their skills in supporting volunteers.
5. Increase in the number of survey respondents who agree that 'BHS volunteering is modern and embraces technology' as measured by the annual volunteer survey
6. The BHS achieves the Investing in Volunteering quality standard.
7. Organisational structure and resources are reviewed annually to ensure excellent support for volunteers.



# DELIVERY

A detailed and ambitious, cross-functional delivery plan has been created to prioritise and guide our activity over the next 5 years to ensure that this strategy is implemented. We will involve volunteers at appropriate stages of delivery to gain insight and assess the strategy's impact.

The Head of Volunteer Support will be responsible for monitoring performance against the delivery plan and will ensure that supporting teams and individuals meet completion dates and performance targets, or that those dates are adjusted appropriately where circumstances dictate that changes are required.

Relevant departments will incorporate actions from the delivery plan into their departmental operational plans from 2024 and for the lifetime of the strategy and take ownership of the delivery actions relevant to their departmental areas of impact.

Progress reports will be provided to the Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees, as appropriate.

The Strategy is intended to be a dynamic document and will be reviewed annually by the Development Director with the Head of Volunteer Support to respond to any strategic organisational changes.