

**Department for Transport  
Consultation on a Draft National Policy Statement for the National Road and Rail Networks**

**Response of The British Horse Society**

The British Horse Society (BHS) is the foremost and leading equestrian charity in the UK. We represent the interests of the 3.5 million people who ride or drive horse-drawn vehicles, and have over 75,000 members and over 40,000 members through BHS Affiliated Riding Clubs and BHS Affiliated Bridleways Associations.

As the UK's foremost equestrian charity, The British Horse Society has responsibility to enhance and maintain the UK's national equestrian access network and ensure that equestrians can safely reach that network using the local road network. Our ambition is to improve the public access network for recreational equestrian use, which will also improve access for walkers and bicyclists who use byways and bridleways.

In England horse riders have access to only 22% of public rights of way and horse-drawn vehicle drivers to only 5%.

Many rights of way are now disconnected from each other because the roads that should connect them are no longer safe for equestrians to use because of the speed and volume of motorised traffic on them. This leaves many equestrians without a safe local route to use.

Whilst recognising the importance of the national road network and the statement that the UK's roads are amongst the safest in the world, safety is still a major concern of many equestrians who ride or carriage drive. Hospital admission statistics for 2012 – 2013 state that there were 3,540 admissions to hospital for “animal-rider or occupant of an animal drawn vehicle injured in a transport accident” which equates to just over 9 people per day.

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB12566/hosp-epis-stat-admi-ext-caus-2012-13-tab.xlsx>

It is therefore important when bringing forward improvements or enhancements to the national road network to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists that equestrians are included in this laudable aim.

It is not just transport that is an engine for growth on our road network. The network itself is in many instances a recreational resource and is used as such by many walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers and this use makes a significant economic contribution to many local economies. It is therefore important that any development of the network recognises this and that appropriate mitigation measures are taken to ameliorate any detrimental effect that development may have in respect of this issue

It is noted that the Government is committed to sustainable travel and will invest in developing a high quality cycling and walking environment however it is important that when addressing the needs of cyclists and walkers in the design of new schemes, that the needs of horse riders and carriage drivers are also addressed. It is unreasonable to provide safe facilities for cyclists and walkers and not to do so for equestrians.

Paragraph 5.170 recognises the importance of rights of way, National Trails, and other rights of access to land (e.g. open access land) as recreational facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, the same applies to carriage drivers who have access to only 5% of the public rights of way network. It is important when considering whether mitigation measures put forward by an applicant to address adverse effects on these recreational facilities, that all categories of users are provided for in those mitigation measures.

The Society considers that common land and public parks should be included in the example in paragraph 5.170 as well as 'open access land'.

Mark Weston

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Weston". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Director of Access

The British Horse Society

25<sup>th</sup> February 2014