

# Welsh Government Consultation Document Draft Road Safety Delivery Plan

## Response of The British Horse Society

### The British Horse Society

1. The British Horse Society (BHS) represents the interests of the 3.4 million people in the UK who ride or who drive horse-drawn vehicles. With the membership of its Affiliated Riding Clubs and Bridleway Groups, the BHS is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK. The BHS is committed to promoting the interests of all equestrians and the welfare of horses and ponies through education and training.
2. The equine industry is estimated to be worth £7 billion to the UK economy and to employ 220,000 – 270,000 people.
3. 90% of riders are female<sup>1</sup>. 25% of riders are aged under 16 years and 48% are aged under 24 years.<sup>2</sup>
4. The Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales, published in December 2005, was prepared by the British Horse Industry Confederation in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Assembly Government<sup>3</sup>.
5. The Strategy includes the following aims:
  - Aim 2** 'Increase participation in equestrianism and develop the social contribution of the Horse Industry.'
  - Aim 3** 'Boost the economic performance of equestrian businesses.'
  - Aim 5** 'Increase access to off-road riding and carriage driving', including the encouragement and improvement of urban and suburban riding and carriage driving.

### The Paucity of the Equestrian Public Rights of Way Network

6. The length of the public right of way network in Wales currently amounts to 33211km, consisting of 26320km of footpaths, 4965km of bridleways, 431km of byways and 1495km of restricted byways. Horse riders therefore, currently have access to only 21% of public rights of way and horse-drawn vehicle drivers to only 6%. **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.

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<sup>1</sup> The health benefits of horse riding in the UK – Research undertaken by the University of Brighton and Plumpton College

<sup>2</sup> The National Equestrian Survey 2011 (BETA)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bhic.co.uk/downloads/full-strategy-report.pdf>

## Road Safety

7. Over the years road design has provided safe refuges and paths for walkers and cyclists, but in the process has mainly forgotten the needs of equestrians and in some cases made things even worse for equestrians. In Rhondda Cynon Taf the erection of barriers forced horse riders off their customary safe route and forced them to ride on the road instead when this was deemed by the Council not to be appropriate for walkers and cyclists because of safety issues.

8. The NHS Hospital episode statistics for 2010 – 11 show that there were 3,875 'animal rider or occupant animal drawn vehicle injured in transport accident' (V80)

<http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=211>

9. 441 road accidents involving horses have been recorded on The Society's [www.horseaccidents.org.uk](http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk) reporting website since it was launched in the autumn of 2010. Many accidents and near misses are still not being recorded yet so the total should be much higher

10. In 2011 there were 225 incidents on roads reported to the website. These included:

- 8 rider fatalities
- 52 serious rider injuries
- 19 horse fatalities
- 18 serious horse injuries.

11. The BHS recognises the need to educate equestrians and motorists to understand how to make our roads safer both for equestrians and motorists alike and has produced two advisory leaflets 'Road Sense for Riders'

[http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/Advice\\_and\\_Prevention/Riding\\_on\\_the\\_Road/Be\\_Seen\\_Be\\_Safe.aspx](http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/Advice_and_Prevention/Riding_on_the_Road/Be_Seen_Be_Safe.aspx)

and 'Horse Sense for Motorists'

[http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/Advice\\_and\\_Prevention/Riding\\_on\\_the\\_Road.aspx](http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/Advice_and_Prevention/Riding_on_the_Road.aspx)

and a [\*Hit Your Brakes, Not My Horse\*](#) poster

12. The [Think!](#) Campaign highlights the need for drivers to take care when they meet horses on the road.

13. The BHS Riding and Road Safety test is taken by more than 4,000 candidates a year. The test helps educate riders in road safety in order to

minimise the risk involved when riding on the roads. The test is available to all riders from 12 years of age and is supported by the Department for Transport.

14. Horse riders are already discriminated against or ignored in most of the Regional Transport Plans (eg, SEWTA and SWWITCH) and in the National Transport Policy for Wales. The reason given is that they do not come under transport but they still have to use the roads in the same way and therefore should be accorded the same safeguards as walkers and cyclists.

15. Best practice dictates that equestrians should be included in these plans. West Berkshire Council includes a section on equestrian travel in its Local Transport Plan Active Travel Strategy –

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=23411>.

*'As part of increasing Travel Choice the LTP has a walking (AT1) and a cycling (AT2) policy. It also highlights horse riding which, in many parts of the District, is a significant leisure activity..... Reducing congestion and improving road safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders..... Equestrian activities usually take place in the rural areas but equestrian establishments on the urban fringe are popular as many horse riders live in urban areas. Equestrians prefer to travel using the Rights of Way Network (bridleways and byways), rather than the road network. However, in many areas the ROW network is fragmented meaning equestrians are required to use the road network as a link between bridleways and byways'*

16. Horses are a form of transport, whilst the majority are ridden recreationally some are still used as a form of transport or in the course of a person's employment. By far the greatest use of the bicycle is also recreational. Just as walking is an alternative to using a car, so going on horseback or in a horse-drawn vehicle is the alternative to using a horsebox or a car with a horse trailer in order to reach a destination with a horse. Both of the latter are undoubtedly transport, and the use of a horse on its feet is undoubtedly the green alternative to these means of transport.

17. The BHS supports the Welsh Government's ambition to improve road safety for all users and agrees that any death of a horse rider and carriage driver on the roads is avoidable and unacceptable. The BHS is disappointed that the Welsh Government has failed to recognise equestrians as vulnerable road users, and asks is the safety of equestrians on our roads to be forgotten about until 2020?. It is disappointing that the BHS was not consulted during the preparation of this draft Road Safety Delivery Plan.

## **Response to the Consultation**

**Question 1:** Do you agree that this vision is the right one for Wales

The BHS agrees that the vision of 'A continued reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads, with the ultimate goal of no fatalities in the future' is an admirable one and looks forward to the day when the Welsh roads are safe enough for equestrians to use so that there are no equestrian fatalities on Welsh roads.

**Question 2:** Do you agree that the introduction of targets is a good idea?

Yes, the introduction of targets provide a measure against which outcomes can be assessed.

**Question 3:** Do you agree with the targets being proposed?

Whilst the targeting of the total killed and seriously injured is understandable it should be recognised that many equestrians that are involved in road accidents are spared death and serious injury because their horse takes the full force of the impact from the vehicle and it is therefore often the horse that is killed or seriously injured instead of them.

**Question 4:** Do you agree with the adoption of an outcome – based approach is the right one?

Yes

**Question 5:** Do you agree that the proposed governance structure is the right one to introduce and support?

Yes, provided that equestrian road safety statistics are monitored and evaluated as part of this structure.

**Question 6:** Do you agree with the vulnerable groups that have been identified? Have any been omitted?

No, as stated above the BHS is flabbergasted that equestrians (horse riders and carriage drivers) have not been identified as vulnerable road users in this document. Paragraph 76 states that 'Research shows that reducing speed on roads dramatically reduces the severity of collisions and encourages more people to walk and cycle,' the same applies to horse riding and carriage driving. It is important that the Active Travel Bill looks and encourages people to horse ride and carriage drive more regularly as well as encouraging people to walk and cycle more regularly.

**Question 7:** Are the actions being proposed in respect of vulnerable groups correct for the Welsh Government and partners.

No because they do not incorporate equestrians.

**Question 8:** Do you agree with the causation factors identified? Have any been omitted?

Yes. However the BHS believes that many injuries involving vulnerable road users could be avoided if drivers had a greater appreciation of vulnerable road users needs, and that they have an equal right to use the roads.

**Question 9:** Are the actions being proposed in respect of causation factors correct for the Welsh Government and partners?

Yes. However, in addition there needs to be more education of drivers to have a better awareness of vulnerable road users.

**Question 10:** Do you agree that the right road – specific issues have been identified? Have any been omitted?

Yes. However it is important that the use of passively safe street furniture on the trunk road and local road networks does not impede the safe passage of vulnerable road users on road verges and margins.

In many places wide grass verges which offered a safety zone for riders have been removed and turned into pedestrian & cycle paths.

Equestrians have no legal rights to use these paths and need such rights so that they can once again get safely off the road as and when required. These paths are often links to bridleways.

Where the few multiuser paths exist in Pembrokeshire walkers cyclists & equestrians there is no conflict and all get along well as is the case across the country

**Question 11:** Are the actions being proposed in respect of Safer Roads correct for the Welsh Government and partners?

Yes, if they are amended to include equestrians

**Question 12:** Do you agree that this is the right approach to future Welsh Government funding arrangements?

Yes

**Question 13:** Are the actions being proposed in respect of funding arrangements correct for the Welsh Government and partners

Yes, save that

- the Active Travel Bill should include provision of safe routes for equestrians as well as walkers and cyclists;
- consideration should be given as to whether any further legislative changes can be made to support reductions in equestrian casualties on the roads as well as walking and cycling casualties

Dated 7 December 2012

