

Department for Transport Proposed Changes to the Cycle Racing on the Highways Regulations (1960)

Response of The British Horse Society

The Society notes that there is growing pressure to adjust the regulations to introduce a presumption that cycle racing on the road is a legitimate activity that should be permitted by the authorising body on the condition that race organisers follow relevant rules.

Everyone has the right to pass and repass on a highway; cycle racing on the road can prevent other users, especially non-motorised users, from safely exercising their legal right to pass and repass on the road. This particularly applies to equestrian users of the road, who have to use the road for exercise purposes and to access any bridleways and byways or other off-road riding facilities that may be situated within their locality.

The closure of local roads so as to allow cycle races to take place can involve inconvenience and possible animal welfare problems for horse owners who keep their horses at DIY livery and who are unable to reach their horse, or for a veterinary surgeon to reach a sick or injured animal.

The Society considers that it is important that the requirement in Section 16A(8) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, that "*When considering the making of an order under this section, an authority shall have regard to the safety and convenience of alternative routes suitable for the traffic which will be affected by the order*" is always taken into consideration. It is important that that traffic is made aware of any alternative routes.

Horse riders and carriage drivers are vulnerable road users, and the risk of fast-moving cycles startling a horse is high. The consequences for both riders and cyclists, and indeed also for other road users, can be extremely serious. Large groups of speeding cycles are particularly threatening. It is important that the opportunity is taken in any amendment of the existing regulations to ensure that the regulations apply to sportives and triathlons which have the same impact on other vulnerable road users as do cycle races. The attached appendix outlines recent problems that equestrians have encountered in respect of cycle racing or sportive events.

Participant numbers on sportives can run into thousands, much greater than any road race. These can cause equestrians and walkers serious problems as cyclists partaking in these events, often having paid a large participation fee, are reluctant to slow down and jeopardise their finishing times.

The Society does not consider that the present restrictions regarding races on roads, with speed limits of 40mph or lower, should be abandoned. These roads have these speed limits for very good reasons, for example bends with poor visibility, and are routes that are commonly used not only equestrians but by walkers aswell, restricted widths, and denote that these roads are not suitable for racing. Often these roads will be rural roads, or roads on the urban fringe where equestrians will be regularly riding and expect to be able to ride with some confidence that they are not going to meet hordes of racing cyclists.

The Society supports the proposals for empowered marshalls. However it is important that any signage is not placed on highway verges so as to prevent the safe passage of horse riders thereon, or placed on the carriageway forcing equestrians to move into the centre of the road to pass them. Signage should be firmly fixed, with no flapping tape.

It will be important that any empowered marshalls receive appropriate training so that they are aware of equestrians' needs and the likely reaction of horses to racing groups of cyclists.

Appendix 1

Details of cycling incidents that have endangered equestrians and been reported to the British Horse Society on its horse accidents website <http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/> over the past 18 months:

Surrey – 4 incidents

1. Riding on narrow country lane by myself. Group of cyclists suddenly appear from behind and start streaming past me and the horse. Horse spooked and spun around. I tried to stop the cyclists from overtaking. Horse slipped on road and went right down. I went over his head and fell off. Horse got up and bolted towards home. Crossed the main A248 Dorking road and carried on up bridle path. Yard manager met him on bridle path. No obvious injury at that point but the next morning he had a swollen right hind leg. Vet treated him and found he has fractured his tibia. Surgery. Box rest.
2. I am writing in on behalf of a friend so don't know the exact details. Another friend and I were out hacking and luckily a minute from a bridle path as a motorbike came behind us announcing a cycle race was on its way. Thankfully we reached the bridle path before they appeared but only by seconds. We could not believe how many cyclists there were and how fast they were coming. We were very relieved to have been off the road. On returning to our stables another friend was there who had also been out hacking and she was not so lucky. The cyclists were upon her before she knew it and the horse went into complete panic, she fell off and horse ran off. She landed on the road but thankfully had few injuries although did say she had hit her back hard, possibly suffering this evening! She could have been killed! Someone caught the horse, brought her home in the car and another friend went back and rode horse home. She is very shaken and is already saying ' he will do it again when he sees another cyclist, so I hope she has not lost her nerve.
3. Waiting to cross road opposite my field entrance when a peloton of cyclists came racing along Highams Lane in the opposite direction. My horse took fright and reared up, backing into a ditch. Fortunately she did not go over. The people in the race car at the back of the peloton laughed at my situation.
4. I was riding along my normal Sunday route close to country home when I encountered a long snake of lycra clad cyclists travelling at speed, their bums skywards, and their heads touching their handle bars, preceded by a car with amber lights aloft, its driver yelling at me to get out of the way. Just prior to this I had been warned to get off the road by a lady in a fluorescent jacket wildly waving a red flag. Our horses are very good in traffic but shied at something on the near side of the road into the path of the cyclists who were

travelling so fast and without any attention to their surroundings that they could not stop. As my horse spooked, and they could not take avoiding action, the cyclists fell off in a heap, and hurled abuse at me. Luckily no-one was hurt, although the language used by the cyclists was foul in the extreme. It was a horrible experience and I dread to think what might have occurred should a less experienced horse or rider have been involved. Imagine what might have happened if they had met children on ponies. The cyclists were out of control and had no consideration for passing horses on the road.

Ayrshire – 1 incident

I took my pony pair out on Wednesday evening last week and after 3 miles found a sign saying Cycle event. I know that there are often races at weekends but had never known of any taking place in evenings. We encountered a marshal who indicated the bikes would be back round the circuit in half an hour. This should have given us time to return home but his timing was out and we met 50 bikes at race speed on a narrow country road with nowhere to go other than a very small gateway. My groom held the ponies who were absolutely terrified. I phoned the police who said it was nothing to do with them and it was a local authority issue. I phoned the LA and they transferred me to the Roads Department who knew nothing of the event. My property is situated on this road so we have no option other than to use it. The signage was useless as it gave no indication of the date or time of the event. They frequently go up on a Friday and are removed on a Monday leaving equestrians to stay home all weekend or risk meeting a race. I have since found the British Cycling web-site.

Berkshire – 1 incident

Having only moved my horse to the area 10 days ago, I set out to ride about up the Drift Road to the bridle path (up to Lordlands Farm) from Blackbird Lane where my livery yard is located. There were some flags on the road by Pickins Farm giving a 1km marker for a cycle race but no other visible markers. The Drift Road is quite undulating so although straight it is not possible to see right the way along. As it was almost 4pm and I had seen no signs of the race as I drove to the yard, I made an assumption that any cycle race would have been in the morning. As I got to Hornbuckle Farm a van arrived, turned into the drive and a woman jumped out announcing that a cycle race was on its way through. She told me that the main party was arriving imminently and that a second group were about 5 minutes behind. I waited in the driveway as the first large group came passed me and then trotted up the road to get to the bridle path ahead of the 2nd slower group. With hindsight this was probably a mistake but I estimated that I had time to reach the bridle path safely. My horse is good on the roads and had passed the earlier flags with just a small spook and had stood quietly whilst the cycles and motor bike outriders had gone passed.

As I came nearer to the bridle path entrance I realised that there were cars, onlookers and flags on the road by the bridle path. This had been hidden by the undulations of the road. Looking back down the road I saw the 2nd group of cyclists approaching. I had no alternative but to get to the bridle path as quickly as possible. My horse was spooking but continued forward. As I reached the bridle path entrance I realised that 2 cars belonging to race organisers were parked across it blocking the entrance and I had nowhere to go. At this point there were cars coming in the opposite direction, the race was rapidly approaching, the onlookers were cheering but from my horses point of view the scariest of all there was a white plastic bag blowing on the verge! I shouted at them to move the car, got my horse up on the verge and turned him around so that he could see the bikes. In the kerfuffle his back legs went in the ditch causing him to plunge but altogether he was a star.

Fortunately the first motorist coming the other way was a livery from my yard who stopped and offered help. For her intervention she then got shouted at by the motorists behind her for stopping in the middle of the road.. She shouted at the organisers to slow the race but they didn't really have time.

By this time the race had passed, we had extricated ourselves from the ditch and the car was moved, allowing us to continue up the bridle path, thankfully although a bit shocked neither myself nor my horse were any the worse for this.

Derbyshire – 1 incident

Bunch of cyclists from a cycling club approached from behind the horse at excessive speed descending a hill. This startled the horse making him bolt into on-coming traffic.

East Sussex – 1 incident

My Daughter and I were hacking along the country lanes when we noticed a very large number of bikes heading towards us at high speed from the rear and appeared to be a racing. We continued to walk in single file and the bikes continued to pass at speed, two - three abreast. The horses became visibly upset to the point of terror but the cyclists showed no awareness and continued their race. The horses were trying to escape; the younger horse surged forwards and kicked out at the bikes but struck our other horse and broke her near hind. The injured horse, Willow, still tried to evade the cyclists and the broken leg was clearly visible but the cyclists just pushed past. We managed to move Willow on to the grass verge and her leg was broken so badly it just swung loose. Two cyclists did stop and helped hold the horses until a vet was able to attend but this took nearly an hour before Willow could be put down. These two cyclists had seen what happened in front of them and admitted to us that the large group of racing cyclists were at fault, causing the unsettled horses to spook.

Gloucestershire – 1 incident

An organised cycle race (unfortunately I can't remember the club name) overtook us on the main road, despite us requesting to let us trot a couple of hundred yards to get out the way. It was a large race, which came past in a group of at 20+ at speed. It spooked my horse but luckily he did not bolt or spin into the cyclists. What's more the cars that were marshalling the race came past after, giving barely a hair width of space between horse and car. At no point did anyone slow down or apologise. There were no signs up when we had left for our ride and was returning when we encountered them. A race marshal did warn us a race was coming, but he carried on his way even though we were trying to ask which direction it was coming from, and if we had long enough to ride the stretch of main road until the lane we turn off at.

Hampshire – 1 incident

My friend and I were riding along a bridle path/restricted byway. Previous to the incident we had been passed numerous times by cyclists. They appeared to us to be on some kind of race. All were polite and we all said good morning and we as riders moved over to the edge of the path to let them pass in safety. This path is approximately 2 to 3 metres wide. After about 100 metres there was a gap leading in to a field. I got off my horse and my friend went to follow me on hers. At the same time several (5/6) cyclists came past us. It appeared to both of us that the speed of the cyclists and the closeness of them clearly spooked her horse which rushed through the gap and so spooked my horse, in doing so my horse took off in fright and galloped away. The horses are stabled about a mile away from where this happened and my horse went in that direction. When I got back to the stables my horse had been caught, and was clearly quite distressed. Apparently he had galloped back to

the stables, galloped full speed through the yard and out the other side, passed several farm cottages and into a field.

Leicestershire – 1 incident

I hacked along this route (Wysall to Thorpe in the Glebe) because there was a signed, organised cycling event in my home village and I wanted to keep out of their way. Hacking home, 30 French cyclists all in the same team colours came down the hill and around a corner then up behind me and swished past, traveling at least 20mph. They had at least 300 yards to see me. It was dry and sunny. My horse is good in traffic and we are used to groups of 5-8 cyclists, but this spooked him and he tried to take off with me. I got him on to the pavement and then crossed the road using a gap between the group on to a wider verge. Only one of the cyclists tried to slow the people behind him down as he appreciated what was happening. Finally a motorbike outrider came past at the back of the group, but I don't think he even saw me, although the pavement is lined with large trees. This is a rural area, where tractors and trailers and horseboxes are common, not a pack of cyclists. I think they were unrelated to the other event, which were individuals. Surely meeting a horse and rider should be part of any event's risk assessment - official or as this seemed to be, a team training run?

North Yorkshire – 1 incident

Bike race bikers came past very close and cut me up

Nottinghamshire – 1 incident

I was riding up Fiskerton Road on my 4 year old towards Swallow lane, on reaching the turning for New Manor Farm; I saw a large group of cyclists about to turn the corner at quite some speed. Before I knew what was happening, my horse had turned and bolted back down the road (in the direction of the cyclists) while the cyclists continued to travel alongside us. I shouted for them to stop as I couldn't pull up my horse (we were galloping down the road/grass verge, half in a hedge) but they didn't. Eventually the cyclists noticed I was in trouble and started to pull up. We ended up back by Holly Crescent before both all the cyclists and I pulled up. I managed to dismount my horse and move into a nearby field and then the cyclists continued on their ride. A lady and man who stopped to help me had told me that there were a number of cyclists who were shouting abuse at me although I was in a bit of a panic to notice. I don't know if it was an organised event. I couldn't find any info on the British cycling website, but there was a substantial number of riders involved, all riding at speed in proper cycling attire.

Jersey – 1 incident

A group of 20+ mountain cyclists in foggy conditions on a main road swung left into a minor road toward us. We were all wearing hi-viz clothing (riders and horses) and travelling in single file. Cyclists were not wearing any hi-viz clothing and were mostly dressed in dark unobtrusive colours apart from the back marker who wore a hi-viz jumper. We could see the cyclists before they turned off the main road but we had no idea that they would not carry straight on along the main road. We were clearly visible prior to them turning. They turned as a pentagon into the minor road and did not pull into single file. Instead they took up the whole of road in front of us and when one or two cyclists in the pack asked what they should do, the leader said keep going. By this time the middle and rear of the peloton had swung onto a parking layby, thus approaching from our left, where we would normally have sought refuge. Naturally the horses spooked and the 11 year old girl who was on the pony directly behind me was thrown at a junction after the pony bolted all the way back to the other end of the minor road and beyond. The riders continued following us at speed on their bicycles all of this time. They reached the give way line at the T-junction and

continued on their way and away from us.

At this T-junction my friend was mounted, but both myself and the 11 year old girl were dismounted. I was trying to stop my horse from running after the pony who had continued on further down the road. I am therefore very confident that the cyclists would definitely have been aware that the little girl had probably fallen and was possibly injured but not one single person in the pack stopped or asked if she was okay. However a man from a nearby house did come out onto the road to help catch the pony. The girl sustained minor abrasions to her knee, bruising, had a fright and her jodhpurs were ripped when she landed. The minor road is relatively busy and it was incredibly lucky that a car was not coming toward us.

Staffordshire – 1 incident

Riding along Cranebrook Lane leading onto Bullmore Lane overtaken by Cyclists who did not make their presence known with no vocal or bell, were not wearing Hi-Viz and seemed to be actually racing going fast so much so they would have run over the 2 elderly walkers and their dog which was on a lead if the walkers had not basically dived into hedge, the 2 people complained to myself as the cyclists had nearly run over their dog, also had caused my horse to react.

West Midlands – 1 incident

My friend and I were riding our horses on a country lane when we were overtaken at significant speed by a cycle road race. This very much unsettled our horses. Although we were both wearing high viz vests and mine had the legend please pass wide and slow clearly visible on the back the cyclists didn't slow down and passed us at high speed.

As a result of my horse spooking and becoming agitated I indicated to the remaining cyclists approaching from behind to slow down using the appropriate Highway Code hand signal. When that had no effect I shouted to the cyclists behind several times to slow down please. Only one of the cyclists slowed down (a junior rider), the others didn't and one of them shouted back that it was a road race i.e. wouldn't slow down.

My horse was spooked by the race to the point where I had no choice but to dismount from my horse.

West Sussex – 1 incident

We were on our way home, approximately 10 minutes from the stables. The horses jumped suddenly at the noise of a group of 20 or so race riders, many of whom slowed down and shouted back to alert others that horses were further up the lane. We got to a driveway and turned the horses so they could see the cyclists. The horses were fine and the cyclists passed. Within 2 minutes we could hear loud shouting as another group came flying around the bend behind us. By this point my horse was starting to get wound up but stood nicely as about another 20 or so riders came past us. We just got around a blind bend when all of a sudden a mass of cyclists all shouting that they were coming around the bend (AT SPEED) came flying around the bend behind us. We tried to get into a driveway to let them pass but it was too late, my horse reared up and fell back on top of me, breaking 2 vertebrae in my back, most of my ribs, my tail bone and causing massive internal bruising and a massive internal bleed. The cyclists came around the corner at such speed and all across the road. In my opinion they had clear disregard for any other road user. If a car had been going around the bend towards them the cyclists would have been killed. This is a route used regularly by riders at my livery yard and this had never happened before, there were no warnings or signs by any organiser and no marshals.

Appendix 2

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.
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 female¹. 25% of riders are aged under 16 years, and 48% aged under 24.²
4. The BHS is committed to promoting the interests of all equestrians and the welfare of horses and ponies through education and training.

The Paucity of the Equestrian Public Rights of Way Network

5. The length of the public right of way network in England currently amounts to 188,700km, consisting of 146,600km of footpaths, 32,400km of bridleways, 3,700km of byways and 6,000km of restricted byways. Horse riders therefore, currently have access to only 22% of public rights of way and horse-drawn vehicle drivers to only 5%.

The safety of roads for equestrians

6. As many rights of way are now disconnected from each other equestrians are forced to use roads to connect them. However many are inaccessible because the roads that link 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.
7. The BHS has produced a Code of Conduct for horse riders and cyclists

http://www.horseaccidents.org.uk/Advice_and_Prevention/Cycles.aspx

Dated 21/10/13

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¹ The health benefits of riding in the UK
http://www.bhs.org.uk/Riding/Health_Benefits_of_Riding.aspx

² The National Equestrian Survey 2011