

The British Horse Society Comments  
The Three Parishes Plan  
Adderley, Norton in Hales and Moreton Say

The British Horse Society (BHS) welcomes the chance to comment on The Three Parishes Plan as we note there is no mention of horses or equestrians in the plan. We want to ensure that the needs and safety of horse riders are taken into account particularly when considering improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure and opportunities\*.

There are more than 20,000 horses in Shropshire with nearly 3,000 in the TF9 postcode (DEFRA 2021). As roads become busier the safety of vulnerable road users including horse riders is compromised. In the calendar year 2022 there were 68 horses killed in UK road incidents and a further 125 injured. Thankfully no riders were killed in road accidents last year but 139 were injured. The majority of incidents occurred when drivers passed too fast or too close.

We are very pleased to see the Plan acknowledge that “*transport is not just about functional journeys, but is also about recreation and opportunities for physical activities such as walking and cycling*”. Horse riding and horse care are important in providing physical activity, particularly in a group who are often less active – older women. The BHS and the Sport England have both conducted research to demonstrate this is the case (see Appendix).

Equestrians are also an important contributor to the economy. The British Equestrian Trade Association National Equestrian Survey (2019)<sup>1</sup> indicated that the economic value of the (non-racing) equestrian sector is £4.7 billion per annum with £4,174 spent on average per horse which represents a significant contribution to the local economy.

Horse riders (and indeed cyclists) do not like to use busy A and B roads but are sometimes forced to in order to access a fragmented network of C roads and Public Rights of Way (PROW). Horse riders and cyclists have, theoretically, access to just 23% of the PROW network in Shropshire but in practice it is much less owing to extensive fragmentation. The fragmentation in The Three Parishes is considerable with several routes severed or ending on/crossing the busy A roads (often at the edge of the Parishes) and other routes of uncertain PROW status.

Various factors need to be taken into account when considering the needs of horse riders alongside those of cyclists and pedestrians.

On sections of A or B roads earmarked for improvements, cycles and horses should not be segregated unless both are off the main carriageway. If they are not allowed to be in the same space as cycles then horses are forced onto the road carriageway squeezed between cycles (possibly oncoming cycles) on one side and motor vehicles on the other. This is very dangerous situation for everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.beta-uk.org/pages/news-amp-events/news/national-equestrian-survey-2019-provides-optimistic-view-of-industry.php>

In general, everywhere that cycles are allowed, horse riders should also be allowed. Horse riders are legally entitled to use all highways and PROW except footpaths. They should therefore not be excluded from any part of a highway - including the footway or verge (road margin) - that is proposed for use by cycles/pedestrians only. In some cases, roadside footways that have already been designated for cycle/pedestrian use and sections of the highway already designated for cycles only should also be upgraded to allow use by horse riders.

The canal towpath may also be suitable for horses – they were of course originally designed for use by horses. Small ponies and riders able to dismount can readily navigate any low bridges.

Also to note is that the Sustrans Paths for Everyone initiative is ensuring that NCN routes are fully opened up for horse riders. Thus horse rider safety must be taken into account when putting forward proposals that relate to the existing NCN 552 route.

Where PROW footpaths are suitable for upgrade to Bridleway then this will also help keep horses and cycles off the roads.

If a project to open up the old railway line is ever considered then this should be a multi-user route and designated at least a Bridleway and added to the Definitive Map or if possible a Restricted Byway so that horse drawn vehicles could also use the route.

Where there is no possibility for horses and other vulnerable road users to be off the roads or the roads are not wide enough to segregate vulnerable road users from motorised traffic we strongly support the introduction of Quiet Lanes/20 mph zones/Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

Nino Binns  
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\*The Dept for Transport has recently confirmed to the BHS:

*“...we do encourage LAs [Local Authorities] ... to look for opportunities for safety improvements for horse riding as part of design and roll out of new or upgraded active travel schemes,..... particularly if they are nil or inconsequential in cost.*

*LTN 1/20 is also clear that engagement with equestrian groups at design stage is recommended and for mixed off road routes equestrians are considered as part of the design considerations (such as with parapet heights).”*

## Appendix

### **The Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK.**

The following data comes from research undertaken by the University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society.

- 68% of questionnaire respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week. Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government's recommended minimum level of physical activity.
- Women have been identified in government studies as a social group with relatively low levels of participation in physical activity. Some 93% of questionnaire respondents were women and 49% percent of female respondents were aged 45 or above. These are comparable figures to a major Sport England survey which found that 90 percent of those participating in equestrianism are women and 37 percent of the female participants in equestrianism are aged 45 or above. The gender and age profile of equestrianism is not matched by any other sport in the UK<sup>2</sup>
- Amongst the horse riders who took part in the survey, 39% had taken no other form of physical activity in the last four weeks. This highlights the importance of riding to these people, who might otherwise be sedentary.
- Horse riders with a long-standing illness or disability who took part in the survey are able to undertake horse riding and associated activities at the same self-reported level of frequency and physical intensity as those without such an illness or disability.

For further information, please see:

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/ganngxh/health-benefits-of-riding-in-the-uk-full-report.pdf> \*

Also available from [www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice](http://www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice), under other publications "Health Benefits of Riding".

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<sup>2</sup> Sport England (2010) Active People Survey (2010/11)