

British Horse Society (BHS)

Presented by: - Jenny Parsons, Country Access and Bridle Officer, British Horse Society

Background

Key Issues Highlighted: -

1. Accidents

Equestrians are acknowledged as vulnerable road users.

- Most accidents involving horses and cars are due to speeding, poor visibility and poor road crossings. Horses are flight animals and many drivers do not appreciate that horses can shy (and be half way across a road) at the most unsuspecting objects.
- Police do not record equine accidents unless a person is injured – However the BHS believes there are almost 3000 equine accidents each year.
- Due to their size young inexperienced ponies have to be ridden by children who are themselves new to the roads. Making them especially vulnerable on the roads.

2. Misunderstanding

There is often misunderstanding between riders and other road users. Often signals (Such as slowdown/ overtake) are often misinterpreted or drivers have little knowledge of how to react when they meet a horse and rider (how to overtake etc).

3. Horse Industry

In the UK it is estimated that the equine industry grossed over £3.4 billion (2002). In Devon today it is estimated that there are over 30,000 riders all of who support a thriving equine industry.

4. Accessibility

Only 22% of horse owners have access to transport the remaining 78% are dependent on the surrounding ROW network for safe off road riding. There are a number of Parishes, which have minimal/ no access (no bridleways or byways). Thus many riders are highly dependent on the road network.

5. Potential Horse Tourism -Devon

This area has a high amount of Potential, GB survey found that riding was the third most popular activity holiday

Devon has a lot to offer: -

- Many farms are looking to diversify
- Beautiful scenery including National Parks – Exmoor and Dartmoor
- Bridleway network (albeit fragmented) gives immediate access to the countryside
- Extensive B and B experience

Recommendations for the next DLTP (2006-2011)

1. Perception Needs to be Changed

Many car drivers are intolerant to riders needs, drivers need to respect riders as much as they do cyclists and walkers.

2. Social inclusion

Greater social inclusion leads to greater tolerance, more riding schools need to be encouraged. Also multi and shared use of other non-motorised routes will increase interaction between riders and other road users.

3. Quiet Road Schemes

The greatest amount of conflict between rider and the motorist occurs in urban areas, designated quiet roads would be of great benefit. This would further benefit all alternative modes of transport allowing opportunities for unbroken circular routes. A quiet road network map may also be useful for horse riders.

4. ROWIP

ROWIP is giving opportunity to greatly improve off road riding opportunities.

DEVON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – 2006-2011

5. Joined Up Thinking/ Forward Planning

Greater joined up thinking and forward planning from Devon County Council and the Highways Authority would lead to greater opportunity to maximise the benefits of the ROW network and consultation.

6. Long Distance Riding Routes

A Long distance riding route connecting Devon and Cornwall is required.

7. Safer Crossings

Safer crossings are required especially on fast roads.

It is dangerous

- For a horse to wait on a central reservation to cross a dual carriageway.
- To place Cycle ways alongside the carriageway – it pushes horses into the traffic.
- For horses to cross staggered junctions

At Dangerous Road Crossings.

- More Pegasus crossings should be used
- Gateways should be inserted set back from the road

8. Unclassified Country Roads - UCRs

Although fragmented, UCRs are of high local value – Connecting Bridleways, offering a non-tarmac surface and is traffic free.

- However many are signed ‘non-through Road’ this is misleading and acts as a deterrent to implying no throughway. The BHS suggests resigning to ‘Unmetalled Road’.
- UCRs should not be permitted to fall into disorder, as these roads are particularly good resources for riders.

9. No More Signage

Too much signage clutters the verges – resulting in many riders being forced on to the roads in order to get round.

10. Preserve Verges

Verges must be preserved, during resurfacing verges are often compromised.

11. Complaints

Their needs to be improved complaint procedure between the Highway Agency and the public. (Possibly through their web site?)

Handouts

Jenny Parsons:- circulated the following handout

Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 Panel Hearing, British Horse Society.

Panel Discussion: -

- The National Parks and open spaces are very important to riders. However in the majority of cases these areas are only accessible to local riders, those who are further afield have access problems.
- In the Pony Club there are a number of riding schemes which include road safety training.
- In Sweden many farms are diversifying and are setting up riding routes (Toll routes) these are mutually beneficial to horse/ rider and landowners. Toll rides have been successful in the SE however it would have limited effectiveness in Devon as there are smaller farms – harder to achieve routes etc.
- Devon County Councils Devon Horse Initiative is currently investigating ways to join up Devons bridleways.
- In the Future the BHS would like to see a section of the LTP dedicated to horses in which quiet road schemes are introduced and crossing issues are addressed.
- Horses can only get training by being on the roads the possibility of using Devon Drivers Centre, as a training centre should be investigated.
- There is very poor inclusion of the requirements of riders in the current drivers’ test.