

## **Introduction and about us**

The British Horse Society Scotland is keen to be fully involved in National Planning Framework 4 both as a community group and a representative of the equine industry. We therefore welcome this call for ideas and address your five questions from an equestrian point of view.

We have a membership of over 8 thousand members, fifteen regional committees, accredited professional coaches and affiliated equestrian businesses acting locally to improve the lives of horses and riders across Scotland.

In Scotland we are an energetic stakeholder with involvement in the National Access Forum, animal welfare initiatives and in education delivery; driving forward our key aims of safety, welfare, access and training. We also run an approvals system for riding schools, livery yards and training and tourism facilities.

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/bhs-in-your-area/scotland>

<https://pathways.bhs.org.uk/career-pathways/>

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/enjoy-riding/find-a-place-to-ride>

## **Horses are good for the economy and good for people**

The equine sector is increasingly influencing land use, especially in peri-urban areas where the demand for land is already high, the horse is an important economic driver in Scotland.

With over 70k equines in Scotland, equestrianism is worth £650 million to the Scottish economy annually with the Scottish Racing industry contributing £300 million and the rest of the industry generating £355 million according to recent research (Developing Benchmarks & Trends to Measure Equestrian Activity in Scotland - A report produced by the British Equestrian Trade Association August 2019 And Scottish Racing Annual Review and 2019 Outlook)

The psychological and physical health benefits of riding and caring for horses in Scotland are well documented, and the benefits of participating in horse riding activity can generally be divided into two categories: physical and psychological.

[https://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/2391/2015\\_scoping\\_study\\_on\\_the\\_equine\\_industry\\_in\\_scotland](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/2391/2015_scoping_study_on_the_equine_industry_in_scotland)

## **1. What development will we need to address climate change**

The British Horse Society Scotland thinks it is vital that NPF 4 fully addresses climate change concerns as our nation aims to be net zero by 2045 therefore the framework must seek more renewable energy sources and encourage innovation and design improvements that support the circular economy and encourages society to reuse as much as possible while we plan for zero waste.

The horse is infinitely sustainable and our industry works with research like this to further decrease our carbon footprint; <http://xn--hllbarhst-12ae.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Report-sustainable-horse-2016.pdf>

Windfarms are a great asset for horse riders for gaining off-road access, however some of the earliest windfarms will soon be reaching towards the end of their consented operation and this will continue. These will either need extended, repowered or de-commissioned. It is essential that Scotland's renewable energy capacity does not decline.

We must encourage the equine industry to thrive and keeping horses on the land is vital. Useful examples of this include diversifying into equestrian livery or to run an equestrian tourism hub, planning matters should include encouraging the use of derelict or redundant farm buildings for equestrian opportunities. As equestrian is not considered to be a form of agriculture under the terms of planning, it is considered that applicants are often faced with increased barriers to overcome. Such developments are required as part of farm diversification and should be more widely welcomed to encourage the re-use or replacement of existing buildings rather than new build developments on greenfield sites. More guidance could be made available on the siting, design and external appearance of what such climate change friendly equestrian related developments should look like.

Rural depopulation is a problem in Scotland, yet horses can help keep people in the countryside by providing leisure and business opportunities. NPF 4 should facilitate the wholesome world of the horse and develop the broadband capacity all over Scotland to allow people to run equestrian businesses anywhere while working at home and travelling less as seen during the Covid 19 lock down.

Stemming the flow of people from our sparsely populated areas must be at the forefront in order to create a thriving rural Scotland by 2050. The landuse planning system has an important role to play here. Increasing the population of rural areas of Scotland is vital.

Covid-19 has shown how well people have adapted to working from home. Organisations similar to ourselves have utilised the technology available to alter their way of working and it is likely that this will continue when normal business resumes. A greater use of online events, meetings and training will help address the climate change concerns. We need to travel less overall.

Horses and ponies can have a direct positive affect on nature

<http://www.traprainponiesofexmoor.com/> equines are excellent conservation grazers as seen in the Moorland Mousie project at Trapain law and North Berwick Law in East Lothian.

Planning for active travel across Scotland should facilitate multi-use active travel – including for equestrians and carriage drivers. Segregated routes and car free zones are positive initiatives in this respect helping address climate change and protect nature. Nature based solutions like natural flood defences and maintaining grassy tracks (instead of synthetic material) could also help address the climate emergency as we see active travel opportunities encourages people to use more sustainable options.

## **2.How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?**

By looking after horses you look after people. Meeting the highest animal welfare standards is vital so NPF4 should support regulations and packages that underpin good animal husbandry, part of this is good housing and facilities – encourage industries like equine to look to healthy modern solutions like; <https://www.equiculture.net/what-is-the-equicentral-system>

The modern way of caring for animals like the equicentral system and other track grazing methods aim to consider the five domains of animal welfare instead of the five freedoms, thus catering for mental states and considering the whole life of the horse not simply negating poor physical states <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-five-domains-and-how-do-they-differ-from-the-five-freedoms/>

Planning can protect and preserve our Scottish wilderness; our national parks and develop more protected areas of natural beauty while keeping them accessible to the public and visitors. Create and preserve green belt and green spaces and promote connectivity but keep them natural thereby planning for environments that keep people (and nature) well and physically active. Keep Scotland as a scenic equestrian tourism destination by safeguarding the special places and habitats and encourage sustainable tourism opportunities. Support opportunities for enjoying and learning about our natural environment, that means support the creation of trails.

Equestrian tourism and horse riding are considered to correspond to the 'sustainability trinity' by integrating economy, society and the environment while along with all outdoor sports being important in educating the public about the environment. Equestrian tourism encompasses, racing, horse shows, museums and displays as well as riding schools and pony trekking. In Scotland we see areas like the Scottish Borders calling themselves Scotland's Horse Country capitalising on equestrian tourism, this sort of regional focus should be encouraged and relies on community input. We have four indigenous equine breeds in Scotland; Clydesdale, Eriskay, Highland and Shetland, these in themselves generate economic, social and cultural activity and need to be supported.

Scottish equestrian tourism has been an economic success story across Scotland. We need to embrace that tourism should involve everyone and therefore communities and organisations like the BHS need to be at the heart of this. The planning system needs greater collaboration between stakeholders.

Create forests for recreation and protect public access in all forests and woodlands, make forest management plans easy to read and contribute to.

Protect, core paths long distance active travel and multiuse routes and ensure they are fully multi-use accessible; catering for walkers' cyclists, horse riders and all abilities.

There is a greater desire for our members and other horse owners to live in rural Scotland, however there are many barriers as to how this can be achieved. Living in rural Scotland can improve people's own mental well-being. Again, this has been evident during the Covid-19 outbreak. More emphasis needs to be made on the long-term differences in health, quality of life and in their own mental health.

More and more people are living by themselves or in smaller households, which again is another challenge in itself in delivering the required number, type and location of houses up to 2050. This may create a need for more new settlements in the rural community and also the regeneration or revival of existing communities. Communities need to be empowered in order to make a difference, which in turn would make places more like places in terms of vibrancy, diversification, creativity, safety and inclusion. Make the community take more ownership and control.

### **3.What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy so that it benefits everyone?**

In terms of equestrian land use; all permanent construction of stables, arenas, shelters and jumps require planning permission. One aspect of this that merits discussion is; that while equine use is similar to an agricultural in planning terms, diversification into livery for instance, is a different use and a change of use for the land itself might also be required, this proposition needs examination as diversifying into horses should be encouraged. The only equestrian use that falls within the agricultural definition is producing horses for slaughter, working horses on the land or turning horses out for grazing only. As soon as more is being done to the horses than merely grazing, planning permission will be required, this system needs to be simplified.

The British Horse Society has a professional network of Accredited Professional Coaches. Many coaches do freelance coaching at their own home in their own facilities. However, in theory this would be a material change in use of the dwellinghouse – this is something that should be a permitted change of use to support rural employment and diversity. Again, this is something that differs between the Local Authorities as to how this is viewed.

Given the value of horses to wellbeing, sustainability and society; equestrian planning and the rates system should be reviewed to encourage businesses. Currently we see all 32 local authorities treat the subjects of planning permission, business rates for equestrian business and licensing under the Riding Establishments Act differently. NPF4 should seek to create a fair and encouraging playing field. Essentially equestrian businesses are sports facilities and therefore should enjoy favourable planning and taxation regimes. This could increase access to horses and ponies especially around the green belts of Scotland's seven cities.

The Scottish equine industry adopts policies that ensures equality of gender, race, age and ethnicity, NPF4 will too.

Promote where outdoor recreation is encouraged, support the spirit of the Land Reform (Scotland) 2003 Act the gives everyone in Scottish society a right of responsible access to most land, build transport links that paths and tracks that get people to embrace a heathy outdoor life.

#### **4.What policies are needed to improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?**

Local partnerships and place-based decision making are necessary policies; consult with communities both local and communities of interest and make sure plans are fair to all, people know the most about the places they live and now they can also own community land or run local renewable enterprises. Representative organisations like The British Horse Society Scotland should be a statutory consultee for all planning matters to make sure the needs of our sector are met.

Existing equestrian uses should be protected for the future generation.

Vacant and derelict ground should be encouraged to be re-used. Scotland currently has around 11,600 hectares of vacant and derelict land. Even though there is a correlation between vacant and derelict sites and former industrial areas, it is not solely an urban problem.

The concept of greenbelts should be the same across all Local Authorities in Scotland and a more proactive positive stance should be taken in order to promote acceptable development.

#### **5.What infrastructure do we need to build to realise our long-term aspirations?**

Scotland needs even more connectivity through the creation of multi-use routes that can be walked, run, cycled and ridden. We also need even safer roads and rural road connectivity that encourages rural industries like horse riding and agriculture to comfortably use the transport corridor and not be frightened off roads by the speeding car having precedence. Road safety statistics for horse rides make horrific reading.

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/dead-slow>

Scotland has an extensive network of roads, if they are shared fairly, they have the potential to encourage industry, leisure and wellbeing.

NPF 4 should facilitate more major integrated public transport opportunities like the Waverley line which unlocked significant housing, commercial and leisure opportunities in the Scottish Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh. A good example is the way this railway line has increased attendance at Kelso races, one of Scotland's five race courses.

NPF 4 must also support digital connectivity for all businesses and encourage communication and provide training and opportunity that keeps enterprise in the countryside. Digital connectivity is crucial in the way that we live and work from now until 2050 – the recent Covid-19 outbreak has pushed us all into this at a significant rate. This needs to continue beyond Covid-19 and be the new norm. Digital connectivity would facilitate the development of sustainable equestrian tourism growth.

Forestry and woodland is so important to both the character and encouragement of activity in Scotland – we support the restoration and creation of both native woodlands and well managed commercial forestry which offer diverse habitats, scenic beauty and places to enjoy equestrian activity as well as helping address climate change. Forest planting needs to take public access into account, the tree based green infrastructure should accommodate all non-motorised users and be welcoming. to all public.

Better use could be made of existing infrastructure to promote connectivity.

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