

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change,
Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Ymchwiliad i bolisi coedwigaeth a choetiroedd yng Nghymru | Inquiry into Forestry
and woodland policy in Wales

FWP 09

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Ceffylau Prydain – Swyddog Mynediad a Llwybrau
Ceffylau Rhanbarthol ar gyfer Cymru
Evidence from : The British Horse Society – Regional Access and Bridleways Officer
for Wales

First, I would like to say that I am pleased that this Welsh Government Committee is developing a Strategy Action Plan for the Policy and also that user groups are to be part of this consideration.

However, I have a real concern that there has been no mention of horse riders at all so far! I hope that this omission will be rectified.

Priority Action Point 13 has so far ignored the needs of horse riders. They are accepted by the Welsh Assembly Government as VULNERABLE ROAD USERS in the same way as walkers and cyclists and are indeed probably the most vulnerable of all. The forests and woodlands that equestrians have used has given them somewhere safe to ride off-road. There is, in fact a CONCORDAT between The British Horse Society and Natural Resources Wales that has been in place for a number of years. It is important that in the future equestrians are given the same access opportunities as are walkers and cyclists.

Horseriding and the care of their horses make a strong contribution to improving the physical and mental health of equestrians – and being able to ride out off-road safely is a huge part of this. – as recommended in **Priority Action Point 12**.

It is important that ALL User Groups are consulted when new developments in woodlands are being planned so that existing legitimate activities such as horse riding and walking are not displaced or endangered by lack of consideration of their needs as a result of the new development – such as new mountain bike trails which cross their existing routes without sufficient care in designing the crossing points.

Until recently there was virtually no conflict between the various users on woodland paths but now, the numerous mountain bike trails being developed that are crossing walking and horse riding routes with little thought as to how it might affect them is a source of conflict as well as endangering them. These other legitimate users may not be aware of a speeding downhill cyclist crossing their path until it is too late.

An example of this problem is the Bike Park Wales development in Parc Gethin Woods Merthyr. This problem could have been avoided if the BHS had been included in the consultation process but I knew nothing about it until horse riders told me later that the

workers of the Mountain Bike Group involved as well as the cyclists themselves were telling them that they could no longer use their bridleways in the woodland – totally untrue.

It needs to be emphasised to all users that, together with their rights to use woodland paths, there must also come their responsibilities and their consideration for the well-being of other users.

THE NUMBER OF HORSES IN WALES AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE WELSH ECONOMY.

The input of the equestrians into the local economy of Wales also needs to be considered. This input is over and above their contribution as citizens.

The National Equine Database statistics for 2012 showed that there were 134,748 passported horses in Wales.

The British Equestrian Trade Association statistics for 2015 found that horse owners spend approximately £3,600 on each horse every year. In Wales this represents an input of £485 million annually into the Welsh economy.

In addition to this monetary input, horse ownership also provides work and support for businesses in rural areas which is much needed – as well as giving employment to farriers, vets, farmers and feed merchants and livery yards which rely on this income.

These same horse owners and riders also need safe off-road routes to ride out on, especially on the fringes of urban areas where the local roads and lanes carry a great deal and ever increasing amount of motorised traffic.

The British Horse Society is also involved in trying to improve the situation on roads by running its 'Dead Slow Campaign' and also trying to educate drivers in how to pass horses safely on the roads BUT obviously the provision of an adequate bridleway system which would keep horses off the road completely is preferable.

I hope that you will consider the points I have made and please do feel that you can consult us and involve us in the future.