

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

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The logo for The British Horse Society, featuring the text "The British Horse Society" in white serif font on a dark red square background.

Bringing Horses and People Together

Neighbourhood Planning  
Strategic Planning Team  
South Staffordshire Council  
Wolverhampton Road  
Codsall  
Staffordshire  
WV81PX

23 February 2023

Dear South Staffordshire Council

### Kinver Neighbourhood Plan

The response below is from the British Horse Society however our volunteers in the county may also respond at a local level.

#### Overall

The British Horse Society is the UK's largest equestrian Charity, representing the UK's 3 million horse riders. Nationally equestrians have just 22% of the rights of way network – **only 16.4% in Staffordshire** - and are increasingly forced to use busy roads to access them.

Between 29.02.2020 – 28.02.2021

- 1,010 road incidents involving horses have been reported to The British Horse Society
- 46 horses have died
- 118 horses have been injured
- 130 people have been injured
- 45% of riders were victims to road rage or abuse
- 80% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too closely to the horse
- 43% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too quickly

**In Staffordshire the number of reported incidents has risen from 15 in 2020 to 52 in 2021.**

This illustrates the importance of neighbourhood plans being committed to protect, improve and extend on and off-road access for vulnerable road users including equestrians to prevent these numbers from increasing in the future. ***'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users'*** (NPPF, s100).

DEFRA has recorded a population of 604 horses in the DY7 postcode area (2021) with a population of 7,006 people in the parish (2020) that equates to 8.5% of people owning a horse. The contribution per horse to the economy, according to BETA (2019), is £5,548, therefore in this case a significant contribution of £3,350,992 per

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annum. Equestrian activities (bring your horse on holiday, pleasure rides, competitions) are increasingly popular in addition to established activities such as schooling and hacking. The equine industry provides diverse employment (vets, farriers, feed outlets, saddlers, instructors, venues, liveries, etc). Promoting, nurturing and enabling equestrian access would support the equestrian industry.

Policy KN 1 Economy: opportunities to develop the visitor economy should include equestrian tourism.

Policy KN04 Sustainable design: Plans for cycle lanes or walking and cycling paths, should include equestrians to make these multi-user routes otherwise the scenario is horses become sandwiched between MPV traffic on one side and cyclists on the other. Active travel does include equestrians. Jesse Norman in House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018: "We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders".

Where there are opportunities identified to make existing footpaths useable for cyclists or new paths connecting the network, these should be multi-user routes for all vulnerable road users, including equestrians. Crossings/bridges/underpasses should be designed to include equestrians (eg 'pegasus crossings'). Several categories of public rights of way (bridleways, restricted byways and byways) and minor public roads are already shared by cyclists and other user groups. Thus, as a general principle, we believe that, for maximum public benefit and fairness, the reciprocal approach should be implemented, i.e. that new cycle paths should be shared with other user groups unless there is a specific, unresolvable reason not to do so. The provisions will futureproof the routes and engage a wider range of users in active travel and leisure which in turn will impact positively on health and wellbeing and road safety statistics.

Policy KN05 Climate Change: the consultation document acknowledges the network of PRoW and these include national trails in the vicinity – the North Worcestershire Way and the Staffordshire Way. PRoW and green corridors provide vulnerable road users with safer alternatives and reduce travel to and from desirable locations.

Policy KN06 Infill: commitment to protect PRoW should be included here so that developments do not have a detrimental impact on off-road access.

Policy KN12 Transport: the language here, 'pedestrians and cyclists', excludes equestrians and other vulnerable road users (mobility scooter/wheelchair users). The policy should be inclusive of all vulnerable road users. The Infrastructure Priorities mention potential Sustrans routes; Sustrans have a Path for Everyone commitment therefore equestrians are welcome on their paths.

Equestrian activity contributes to health targets. Research undertaken found that 68% of respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week (University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society). 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. According to BETA two-thirds of equestrians are women and Church et al (2010) found 37% of women who are horse riders are over 45 years of age and over a third would pursue no other physical activity.

The BHS would welcome further dialogue. Information is available from <https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding/leaflets-and-downloads/>

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