



Strategic plan

2025 to 2027



Introduction

We imagine you're reading this strategy because, like all of us at BHS, you're passionate about making sure horses are respected, protected and enjoyed by knowledgeable, caring people. As we are, you may also be aware that the sector is changing and that brings new challenges.

At BHS, our purpose is to tackle these challenges and to help horses and everyone who cares for them enjoy the best possible life together. Or put simply: For Horses. For People. For Life.

Our exciting and inclusive three-year strategic plan will allow us to deliver ambitious, meaningful outcomes across all areas of the Society, so that we can continue to drive forward this long-term commitment.

At the start of 2025, BHS was made up of more than 125,000 members, 23,000 riding club members, 600 approved riding schools and livery yards, 1,700 accredited professional coaches and 1,300 volunteers.

Together we've helped more than 4,000 young people through our Changing Lives through Horses programme, raised over £182,000 to improve and create new off-road equestrian access, and helped almost 23,000 horses to have a better life.

We've also been able to launch initiatives such as our Challenge Awards, as well as Pony Stars, with both playing a critical role in helping young people discover and develop their love for ponies. Not forgetting the achievements of our successful Dead Slow road safety campaign, as well as persuading the Department of Transport to update the Highway Code to incorporate more of our key safety recommendations.

Looking to the future, we want to continue to grow this collective impact, measure our progress and lead the way forward. Our strategy is a commitment to all horses and horse lovers across the UK and we're very excited to see what we can all achieve going forward together.

James Hick and the Board of Trustees



Foreword

While there's a lot to celebrate in the equestrian world, there's also a great deal of work still to be done and much to fight for. The world of horses is changing and our industry is under growing scrutiny from the wider public.

We know that people are more supportive of the industry if they've had first-hand involvement with horses, yet we also know that 24% of people in the UK have never interacted with a horse. We know that safety on the road is one of the main concerns for our community and this is compounded by limited off-road access. Additionally, we're greatly aware that our riding centres are facing numerous obstacles which can often impact their ability to support equestrian participation.

We have a role to play to overcome all the above, balance public perceptions and, importantly, provide

opportunities for more people to experience the special feeling horses and humans share together. We need to reach beyond our existing memberships and partnerships so that more horses and the people who care for them feel connected to BHS and make use of all the support we offer. It's about uniting, as one team, with the right resources and support behind us to really make a difference.

To this end, BHS's three-year strategy is our compass in achieving five priority outcomes. We've taken on board what we've heard from our stakeholders and partners to identify these outcomes, so that we can make sure that the people who care so greatly for horses feel connected to BHS and that we continue to make a difference to horses' lives.

Our Vision and Purpose remain unchanged

Our vision is that every horse is respected, protected, and enjoyed by knowledgeable, caring people. We are here to help horses and everyone who cares for them to enjoy the best possible life together

For Horses. For People. For Life.

We're working together to deliver impact across:

Horse Care and Welfare, Access,
Safety, Education, and Participation



Outcomes

Over this next period, 2025-2027, we are focussing on delivering the following outcomes

Outcome one

Protecting the future of horses in society

- Our collective voice will shape national policies, ensuring horses remain valued in society.
- By uniting our BHS team and partners, we aim to influence decision-makers towards positive change.

Outcome two

We're here to help

- Everyone involved with horses will know BHS is their go-to organisation for support and resources.
- We want to expand our reach, ensuring everyone knows about the help we can offer.

Outcome three

Safer roads and better off-road routes

- A more connected network of off-road access will be available and road safety will be enhanced.
- We all know (and our research confirms this) that riding on the road is a major source of anxiety for equestrians. We will continue to create and protect a more connected off-road network and campaign for safety improvements.

Outcome four

Everyone is welcome

- Horses and riding will be more accessible for everyone.
- It's vital to make horses and riding more accessible. Our community welcomes everyone. We want more people to experience the unique bond between horses and people.

Outcome five

One team working together

- Our BHS team, including volunteers, centres, APCs and employees, will form an inclusive community offering growth and development opportunities.
- Our Everyone Welcome outcome is about how we will provide a more welcoming community externally. This outcome is about our organisation and those closest to us, and how we want to develop together.

Commitments:

We've made some commitments to help us effectively deliver these outcomes:

- Embracing new technology
- Protecting our planet
- Learning from horse lovers to stay relevant
- Growing our impact with our incredible volunteers
- Making our 'Everyone Welcome' initiative a reality across the UK



Protecting the future of horses in society

Outcome one

As the largest equestrian community in the UK, we'll safeguard the horse's place in society, for the benefit of horse welfare, safety, rights of way and the industry as a whole. We'll do this by harnessing the strength of our collective voice and network to influence national policy-making and lobby for change. This includes working with policy-makers to shift perspectives on equestrian issues and requesting support from our members and stakeholders to influence local politicians.

Additionally, we'll work together to engage more people in equestrianism and improve public attitudes towards horses in sport and recreation.

We all know that BHS is built on strong, ethical standards and we need to ensure that everyone else understands this too.

Building partnerships to unite our efforts

We've joined forces with the equestrian sector to really understand the way people view our industry and how we can use this insight to drive positive change. Alongside British Equestrian, as well as other membership bodies and equestrian charities, we commissioned a major study into public attitudes on equine welfare and the drivers of trust in UK horse sport.

This research piece provided us all with some actions we can take forward to share positive stories. BHS used this study to develop initiatives such as the introduction of a BHS welfare 'Guiding Principles' document for volunteers, centres and coaches. These principles are also now included in our volunteer, stewards and official training.

This work continues, however, as we reflect on this research, both as an individual organisation and collectively with other key stakeholders, to continue to share a positive narrative across the equestrian industry.



We're here to help

Outcome two

We want to share our knowledge with even more horse owners, carers and equestrian business owners, to make sure everyone involved in horses is equipped with the information and advice they need to give these animals the best life possible. Through both practical support and trusted advice, we want to prevent problems before they happen.

Critical to this approach is a commitment to working with ambassadors and volunteers who can visit local non-approved yards and share the resources available

from BHS. It's about reaching out to horse lovers who may not know about the resources, help and guidance available from BHS.

This sits alongside the support and information we promote through our campaigns and in-person horse health days, as well as our horse care and welfare helpline and resources on our website. These initiatives have a huge and lasting impact on horse wellbeing, so we're looking at ways in which we can deliver more of them.

We're here to provide a friend at the end

Our Friends at the End scheme is invaluable when it comes to supporting people through the difficult choice to euthanise their horses. It relies predominantly on the wonderful work of volunteers, with BHS having trained 79 'BHS Friends' to support owners through the process and the inevitable grief that comes with it. Together, we've helped over 960 people through the loss of their beloved companions.

Joanne, the owner of 36-year-old Walter Raleigh, shares how she was supported: "This initiative was an invaluable support on the day I had to euthanise my beloved horse.

Friends at the End made it much easier, and I was able to be the best I could be when my horse peacefully passed as I held his head. [The BHS Friend] was kind, intuitive, and non-judgemental: a perfect companion at a heartbreaking time when my emotions were everywhere".

Taking a collaborative approach to horse welfare and care with BHS

We recently celebrated a milestone achievement by reaching our 50th Healthcare and Education Clinic. Through our clinics, which offer health checks by a vet, castration, passporting, and microchipping, among other services, to those who may not have received these opportunities otherwise, we've been able to support over 2,200 horses. On average, 45 horses attend each one.

Young volunteer, Olivia has seen first-hand how these clinics benefit horses and their owners. Olivia has contributed to several of these important days, taking on both practical and routine tasks. She's also had the opportunity to mentor new Horse Care and Welfare Advisers, providing guidance and support to many others. "It feels great to be part of a community who are all working very hard towards making sure all horses live happy and healthy lives."

Safer roads and better off-road routes

Outcome three

We'll continue to create and protect a more connected network of off-road access. Additionally, we'll double down on our efforts to improve road safety and, ultimately, reduce the number of equestrians and horses who are killed or seriously injured.

Working with our volunteers, both current and new, to continue the great work that is being done is integral to this. Their commitment and dedication to local access and safety work remains the backbone of BHS.

Together, we'll actively engage even more equestrians and the wider public to download our Horse i app, collecting the data needed so that we can influence highways and police authorities to drive greater change. As well as encourage more people to take the Ride Safe Challenge Award.

This collective support will also be key when it comes to delivering fundraising events that will allow us to continue our work. Not forgetting Project 2026, for which an increased level of support and funding will help us to protect further unrecorded access rights.

While we can't directly prevent incidents on the road, we want to do everything we can to reduce the risks and improve rider confidence by working with the police and highway authorities to prioritise improvements in accident and near-miss hotspots.



Restoring a national landscape in the Shropshire Hills

In the Shropshire Hills, we set out to create safer, smoother access for horse riders, cyclists and walkers. With the support of local partners, a once eroded 'V' shaped gulley has been levelled and drained to restore a section of the 150km Jack Mytton Way through this unique landscape. The project included fencing and vegetation clearance to reconnect users with Wenlock Edge and the wider rights of way network.

It was a team effort, delivered by regional BHS groups, and was funded by BHS along with other key organisations. Rider feedback since completion of the work has been incredibly positive, with one rider saying: "Your work is genuinely life changing for riders in the area who can access routes without frustration and risk to themselves, and more importantly their horses!"

Shining a light on the everyday challenges equestrians face

Working alongside others involved in road safety, such as the police and highways authorities, is a way we can have even more impact. Most recently, we collaborated with Operation Snap which is a programme used by police forces to allow the public to submit digital footage of dangerous or careless driving. We funded and produced a training film which is now being used by all the Operation Snap teams who review journey camera footage across the country.

The short film was developed following a Road Safety Trust report on camera footage submissions from vulnerable road users and shines a light on the everyday challenges faced by horse riders and carriage drivers. By educating enforcement teams about these risks, we can help to make sure that road offences involving horses are better understood and acted upon.

Our involvement doesn't stop there — thanks to the film's positive reception, we've been invited to attend and contribute to Operation Snap training days, further strengthening our influence in making roads safer for all equestrians.

Everyone is welcome

Outcome four

We recognise just how important it is for the future of equestrianism to make sure riding and horses are more accessible for everyone. Whatever a person's ability, background, culture or identity, we'll take steps to help even more people feel welcome to be part of, and engage with, our horsey community.

To be successful, this approach needs to run through everything we do, both nationally and locally. We're changing the language and imagery we use and working with Approved Centres to provide greater opportunities for new audiences. A core part of this will be exploring new ways to expand Changing Lives through Horses so that more young people can benefit from the special feeling we share with horses.

What's more, we've established a group of young people to help us make sure BHS is relevant to a younger demographic.

We'll also continue to roll out significant initiatives such as the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme, as well as holding online competitions for those who are unable to transport their horses, to improve accessibility across British Riding Clubs.

Another important factor is making sure that we have enough coaches and centres to meet demand. We will be working to increase the number of people completing Stage 2 and 3 coaching qualifications to address the staffing challenges in the industry.





Changing Lives through the power of horses

Our Changing Lives Through Horses (CLTH) programme, uses the power of horses to inspire, educate and empower young people. By building essential life skills such as confidence, teamwork and responsibility, CLTH supports those who may be struggling in traditional settings while nurturing a lifelong connection with horses. Through the dedication of over 150 BHS Approved Riding Centres, CLTH has helped over 4,400 participants – shaping a new generation of equestrians that understand the value of care, communication and the incredible bond between horse and human.

One participant said, “It always brings a smile to my face. I love it [at this BHS riding centre]: I sleep better when I’ve been here. Life is stressful but when I’ve been here it’s easier to go back to. It clears my mind, so I don’t have to overthink everything.”

Creating an industry in which everyone is welcome

We’ve initiated and supported 12 pilot projects across our BHS Approved Centres to test different ways of improving diversity, equity and inclusivity in the horse world. This approach has enabled us to get as much valuable input and feedback as possible.

Thompson House is one of thirteen Pilot Centres which is actioning sustainable initiatives to increase diversity within an equestrian setting. BHS set up a collaboration between Thompson House and Krimmz Youth Project to support 24 Muslim girls, aged 8-16 years old, with ten riding and horse care sessions. This has been partially funded by BHS, with Krimmz group gaining a lot from the experience.

Krimmz director and lead volunteer Khadija Patel has said: “They all say they value the importance of looking after the horses; it’s not just the riding, it’s everything that comes with it.”

Outcome five

While outcome four was about how we’ll provide a more welcoming community externally, this outcome is about our organisation, those closest to us, and how we’ll develop together.

We’ll continue to place a growing emphasis on making sure our volunteers feel valued, as a vital part of our team. We’ve looked at our model for volunteering and have used the insight we’ve gathered from pilot projects to create a more appealing offer that will attract new volunteers to join us, as well as make sure we’re providing better support for this network. We will be embedding this new model during 2026.

We’ll also be providing opportunities for our employees and volunteers to gain new skills through online learning resources and making sure our recruitment is inclusive for everyone. Additionally, we’re investing in promoting the BHS Coaching4All qualification to support our coaches with the skills they need to engage a more diverse group of customers.

One team
working
together

How volunteering is helping Andrea to make a difference

Andrea’s personal experience of feeling unsafe while riding out on our roads has played a huge role in what drives her passion for being a British Horse Society volunteer. She joined us in October 2013, but it wasn’t until she was nearly hit by a driver in 2022 that she began volunteering with the BHS Safety Team. “This role has opened up more doors with the West Yorkshire Police. I’ve been able to reduce the number of speeding drivers for all riders in my area by submitting footage to Operation Snap.”

Andrea has also actively promoted the Dead Slow message at numerous events, initially with her model horse Mario and now also with her model dog Luigi. “With BHS resources to hand, I’ve spoken to many people about safe interactions between vehicles, horses and dogs. It’s great going out with Mario too, who’s very popular and gets people to stop and talk.

I’ve spoken to students at a local college and pony club about the importance of hi-vis and trailer maintenance. It’s about raising awareness and working collaboratively with BHS to make a change.”

Getting stuck in with BHS

Liam was the worthy recipient of our first ever Young Volunteer of the Year Award, in recognition of the time, effort and significant contribution he has given through volunteering with BHS. He started his journey with British Horse Society as an Accredited Professional Coach but wanted to do more to share his passion and experiences with others. He decided to become a volunteer in the Grampian area. “I’ve loved every minute of my BHS volunteer role and would say to anyone thinking about becoming one, to 100% do it.

I’d definitely say being young isn’t a barrier at all at BHS. It’s great to get stuck in and involved, especially as a young person; everyone is really friendly and approachable.”



Our commitments

We've made a number of commitments to help us effectively deliver our strategy:

Embracing new technology

We will:



Provide digital tools that make it easier for people to engage with BHS, and find help and support.



Use data and insight to understand and grow the impact of our work.

Protecting our planet

We will:



Work alongside British Equestrian to reduce our negative impact on the environment.



Provide supportive resources to horse lovers who want to reduce their own carbon footprint.

Learning from horse lovers to stay relevant

We will:



Refresh our look and feel to reach more people, sharing our story in a simple, clear way.



Invite people to join us to safeguard the future of our horses, highlighting the special nature of the horse-human bond.



Growing our impact with our incredible volunteers

We will:



Listen and learn from our volunteers to make sure they continue to be the beating heart of BHS and play a key role in delivering all our charitable work.



Use this input to implement our Volunteer Strategy.

Making our 'Everyone Welcome' initiative a reality across the UK

We will:



Integrate this initiative through everything we do, to make sure everyone feels welcome to be part of the equestrian community.



Create an inclusive and equitable culture across the Society and the sector.



Ways you can support our work

Many of you are already doing so much to help us deliver our charitable objectives and we're incredibly grateful for all this brilliant support. But there is still a lot of important work to be done.

If you'd like to help us grow our collective impact, please reach out. There are many ways you can get involved, from joining as a volunteer to making a donation. Every bit of help will contribute to us delivering all this vital work.

Or you could help us to simply spread the word! We'd love you to let your horse-loving friends, family and colleagues know about all the ways they can become part of our campaigns, activities and initiatives.

**You can find lots more information on our website,
or please do send your questions, comments and feedback to**

ceo@bhs.org.uk

It'd be great to hear from you!