



# Template lobbying speech

Issued February 2026

**We're British Horse Society. As the largest equestrian charity in the UK, we know the amazing feeling that horses and people share. You might call it excitement, joy, grit, or calm. Whatever shape this feeling takes, we're here to help everyone find it.**

## Template purpose

Do you want to advocate for better equestrian access in your area, but need a helping hand to get going? You can use this speech for lobbying at a local level, in meetings and at information events, to raise awareness of the importance of equestrian access.

This template aims to empower you to present your case for equestrian access confidently and with facts to substantiate the importance of including horse riders and carriage drivers in plans, proposals and future developments.

**If you plan to make representation on behalf of BHS, you must seek permission from the Director of Access prior to attending. Please let us know where and when you would like to make representation.**

**If you need support from a member of the team, please let us know.**

## Tips for use

- Personalise the **highlighted** sections so they reflect your local area.
- Check any text shown in **bold purple**, These points require location specific information.
- Practise reading the speech aloud.
- If there is a set time limit, you may need to shorten or streamline sections.
- Numbers help evidence points – contact us for national and regional statistics!

## Contact us

If you need support preparing any information, please let us know and we'll be happy to help.

[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)

02476 840 515

## Template copy

Hello, my name is **NAME**.

I am a resident in **PARISH/AREA**, as well as a **horse rider / carriage driver** and keep my horse in **LOCATION**. I am also a:

- Volunteer Access and Bridleway Officer with British Horse Society; \*
- Member of **Equestrian Access Group**, affiliated to British Horse Society \*

**\* If you plan to make representation on behalf of BHS, you must seek permission from the Director of Access prior to attending. Please let us know where and when you would like to make representation.**

**COUNTY** is home to more than **NUMBER** equines, and in the specific area of **LOCATION**, there are **NUMBER** equines registered.

- Contact [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk) for the specific number of horses registered with DEFRA in a county, town or postcode area.
- **NB: Postcodes are to the first half, i.e. CV8, M8, RG21**
- **Data reference: Defra, December 2024**

That number is significant. Each horse contributes almost £7,000 a year to the local economy, bringing more than **£X million** annually into **LOCATION**.

- **Multiply the number of horses in the location by £6,887\***
- **Data reference: BETA, 2023**

Nationally, equestrianism is the second-largest rural employer after agriculture, and its social value is £1.2 billion. A major new report, *Reconomics 3.0*, shows that outdoor recreation contributes £22 billion a year to the UK economy. Horse-related activity accounts for almost a quarter of that – £5 billion – with 4.3 million people involved. And beyond the financial impact, time outdoors improves physical health, mental wellbeing, and community connection.

For many of us, time with our horses is not just a passion – it supports rural livelihoods, wellbeing, and the future of our countryside. But to do this safely, we rely almost entirely on the public rights-of-way network.

- **Footpaths** are for pedestrians.
- **Cycleways** are designed for cyclists.
- **Bridleways** are multi-user routes for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders.
- **Restricted byways** also allow non-motorised vehicles, including carriage drivers.

Arenas require land, planning permission, and significant cost – and **COUNTY** does not have a single community arena. **(You'll need to check this for your area as there are some counties with this facility.)** So, our access to the countryside matters.

Nationally, 22% of public rights of way are bridleways or higher status. In **COUNTY**, it's just **X%** **(Look at your Rights of Way Improvement Plan to ascertain this)**. Walkers can access 100% of rights of way. In comparison, horse riders can access just 22% of the wider network; and carriage drivers a mere 5%. And these routes are often disconnected, forcing equestrians, a vulnerable road user, onto the busy roads.

And that is where the danger lies.

In 2024, more than 3,000 road incidents involving horses were reported, with over fifty horses killed. Horses are not property – they are sentient beings, companions, partners, and for many of us, they are our mobility aid.

Bridleways do not require more infrastructure than cycleways, and they do not cost more.

Sustainable transport charity Sustrans (now the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust) has signed a memorandum of understanding with BHS, showing that walking, wheeling, cycling, and equestrian users can safely share space. Their barrier-removal programme is already opening more routes to horse riders.

Including equestrians in Active Travel planning is essential for safety and equality. Riding offers physical benefits comparable to walking and cycling, and for many people it is vital for their health and wellbeing.

We are asking you to consider the needs of all residents of **COUNTY** – to ensure fairness and equality – and to design new infrastructure with every non-motorised user in mind. Remember, bridleways are barrier free travel.

I want to emphasize the positive impact that equestrianism has on the local economy. It should be encouraged and incorporated into planning and development.

1. To prevent residents moving away to more ‘horse friendly’ counties.
2. To ensure the safety of horse riders who are recognised in national policy as vulnerable road users.

The industry is under direct threat from land being bought for development and subsequently losing access to grazing, stabling and green spaces for riding. This risk is further emphasised by increased traffic on the roads due to continual development.

**I'm asking the committee to ensure that the Council's plans include explicit recognition of equestrians and rural active travel users.**

With your support we can protect both our economy, heritage and keep future generations riding. Thank you for your time, we look forward to working collaboratively to benefit equestrians and other rights of way user groups.