

Email from Charlotte Ditchburn, British Horse Society to David Chenery, Highways Safety and Speed Management on 03/03/2021

Road Safety is a particular concern to equestrians, who are among the most vulnerable road users. Between November 2010 and March 2019, the BHS received reports of 3,737 road incidents, in which **315 horses and 43 people were killed**. Research indicates however that only 1 in 10 incidents are being reported to the BHS; in 2016-17 alone, **3,863** horse riders and carriage drivers in England and Wales were admitted to hospital after being injured in transport accidents. (NHS Hospital Episodes Statistics).

The BHS actively campaigns to improve road safety by making motorists aware of what to do when they encounter horses on the road (see <https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/dead-slow> – *we recommend taking a few minutes to watch the 'Dead Slow' virtual reality film for an impression of how vulnerable equestrians are in proximity to cars and lorries*).

Because of the difficulties that equestrians encounter on roads, they avoid using them wherever possible. Road use is often unavoidable, however it is simply because people have nowhere else to exercise their horses. The main off-road access available to them is the network of Rights of Way (RoW). England and Wales have over 140,000 miles of RoW, but only 22% of this network is available for horse riders (who may only use routes designated as Bridleways and Byways) and a mere 5% to carriage drivers (who only have access to Byways). In Suffolk, they have just 18% of the rights of way network, increasingly disjointed by roads which were once quiet and are now heavily used by traffic resulting from development within the County. An additional factor is that the network is fragmented, and roads are often the only available links between one RoW and the next.

The British Horse Society supports the erection of warning signs. We do not believe that mounting blocks to allow riders to dismount to cross the bridge would be suitable in this particular situation.

I'm afraid the BHS does not have any specific guidance on crash barriers. We would support the installation of the barriers for safety of all road users but these should also accommodate equestrians as vulnerable road users. There are many places throughout the UK where equestrians must ride alongside crash barriers so horses can be familiarised with such structures although in particular situations like this the position of the barrier should be amended to accommodate vulnerable road users including equestrians. For the route to continue to be safe for riders over the bridge The BHS would suggest setting the barriers back further than the 'desirable minimum set-back value' specified in CD127 to at least 2m preferably 3m to allow riders a place of refuge from the metalled highway if vehicles were to be coming over the bridge this would also allow a safe space for horses if they were to be spooked by a train going past whilst other road users are present. If this cannot be accommodated for the full 100m stretch then a waiting area/place of refuge should be allowed either side of the bridge, the absolute minimum space required is a diameter of 3 metres on clear, flat ground with no protrusions or overhanging vegetation.

The Highways Act 1980 section 71(1) says, "It is the duty of a highway authority to provide in or by the side of a highway maintainable at the public expense by them which consists of or comprises a made-up carriageway adequate grass or other margins as part of the highway in any case where they consider the provision of margins necessary or desirable for the safety or accommodation of ridden horses and driven livestock ...". The Highways Act 1980 section 130 subsections (1) says: "It is the duty of the highway authority to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the highway authority, including any roadside waste which forms part of it". I don't know if the Highways Records Team can identify the full extent of the highway in this particular case? If this was to include the full verge then The BHS would suggest the barriers are set far enough back to allow equestrians to exercise their rights on the margin. That duty may include ensuring that the surface is free from vegetation that may impede passage of

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riders, in this particular situation The BHS would suggest this is a key verge for regular vegetation clearance to provide a safe margin for equestrians either side of the bridge.

I hope this helps please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any further advice.

Kind regards
Charlotte

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