Recommendations for construction near routes used by horses

This guidance is intended for those responsible for construction sites (‘the site’) in the vicinity of bridleways, byways, roads, permissive paths and open access areas used by horse riders and horse-drawn carriage drivers (‘equestrians’) adjacent to or crossing the site.

The Health and Safety specification and briefing for all attending the site should include a section covering use of routes or areas by equestrians with the guidance below.

All members of the construction and operational work force and visitors should be aware of the equestrian routes or areas affected by the site.

If a banks man is employed to control vehicle movements and activities he should be fully briefed about the possibility of horses being in the area and the necessary actions to be taken.

Warning notices should be displayed in advance of the site describing the hazards for both equestrians and the construction site staff or visitors and requesting the co-operation of all.

Horses have a natural instinct to run away from the unknown or unusual. Sudden noise and movement are likely triggers and horses can sense, see and hear things which humans may not be aware of or take for granted. Sudden movement or noises of machinery should be avoided. Operators must be advised to and able to shut off machinery, or to stop movement and noise in the vicinity while horses pass. Machinery or activity should not resume until horses are at least twenty metres past. If it is not possible for activity to be halted, staff should be at the location to warn approaching equestrians as appropriate.

If a horse appears distressed (takes flight, spins round or shies away or acts in any way other than a calm forward motion) or an equestrian appears to be struggling for control, or signals for quiet or to stop, all movement and noise should cease immediately to avoid escalating the situation. Activity should not resume unless the equestrian indicates that it is safe to do so or is out of sight or more than one hundred metres away.

Access to any route must be unrestricted. A route must be kept free of obstruction, debris and trip hazards so that it is safe.

The surface of equestrian routes should be maintained in a manner suitable for horses. It must not be slippery or contain sharp stones (see BHS Surfaces guidance). Existing surfaces may need to be protected to avoid poaching or other damage.

If used, any temporary fencing alongside the route must be secured taut and not flapping in the wind.

For wind energy development sites, see the BHS publication Wind Turbines and Horses – Guidance for Planners and Developers.