I joined the British Horse Society in April 2022 as Scotland Access Officer. It’s been a really interesting year getting to grips with the role and working with our members, volunteers and the wider equestrian community to understand their needs and the challenges they face getting out and about with their horses. I’m always very happy to help with access that involves horses, whether it’s advising on horse friendly path infrastructure, helping to resolve issues or encouraging responsible equestrian access. So, if you have a horsey query or a case you think I can help with, please do get in touch.

Horses and Active Travel

One thing I’ve picked up from the riders and carriage drivers I speak to is a strong desire to be included in active travel plans and taken into account when active travel routes are designed. Horses are active travel and many riders (and carriage drivers) use their horses to make short everyday journeys like going to the shop, popping to the post office or collecting the kids from school. Equestrians are vulnerable road users and excluding them from active travel routes and other parts of the path network risks pushing them onto the roads where they are in more danger.

There is a long tradition of using horses for transport, that continues to the day. Horses used to be our only form of transport, aside from our own two feet, but over the years they have gradually been pushed off our roads and paths to the extent that some non-equestrians question their right to be there at all. But horses were the original mode of low carbon, active travel! We think horses should be part of our active travel past, present and future.

A date for your diary

Horses and active travel will be one of many equestrian access topics we will discuss at our upcoming Scottish Equestrian Access Conference, “Let’s Hear It For The Horse – Celebrating 20 years of multiuse access in Scotland”. We’re really excited to be holding this event on 24th November 2023 at our Hub in Stirling. All are welcome but the event will be designed for people working in access and active travel so we hope to see lots of SOAN members there! We want to celebrate what we have achieved since 2003, consider what we have not achieved, challenge the perception that equestrian access takers are difficult to include and share the joy, heritage and needs of equestrian access.

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