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# **THE POWER OF HORSES: SECURING A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR EQUESTRIANISM IN THE UK**

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**January 2026**



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## **Project summary**

British Equestrian (BEF) has developed this Invitation to Tender (ITT) to support our advocacy work aimed at protecting and sustaining riding schools and equestrian facilities in the UK through ensuring equestrian activity is recognised for its social value benefits.

This project builds on the previous research phases of our social value work, which gathered substantial evidence on the personal and societal health and wellbeing benefits of participation in equestrian activity and calculated a WELLBY based social value figure. The next phase of our work is to translate this evidence into policy influence and change.

We are looking to appoint a suitably experienced individual or organisation to deliver the first phase of our advocacy work to work collaboratively with the BEF, our member bodies and relevant stakeholders to:

- Consolidate existing research into high-quality policy-relevant insights
- Formulate clear, actionable policy asks for national and local level
- Identify investment opportunities and alignment with existing public policy priorities
- Horizon scanning to ensure we stay relevant for future government changes
- Produce an actionable policy and advocacy framework, including a stakeholder and lobbying roadmap.

This work would enable us to engage with the identified stakeholders and implement the lobbying roadmap. There is a potential that the chosen individual or organisation is offered an extension to assist us with the initial activation of the framework if we see necessary.

It is important that this next phase is delivered in a timely manner, ensuring momentum is maintained from the research. It is anticipated at the contract for this stage is to begin in February 2026 and conclude in May 2026.

## **Background**

British Equestrian (BEF) is the National Governing Body for horse sports in the UK and is affiliated to the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the international governing body of equestrian sport. We provide leadership and strategic direction for equestrianism in Britain and represent the interests of 20 independent member bodies.

BEF represents the sector to key national bodies such as the British Olympic Association, British Paralympic Association, SportsAid, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, DCMS and DEFRA. We also distribute government funding from UK Sport and Sport England to support both high-performance programmes and grassroots participation.

The equestrian sector is diverse across several demographic areas, including gender, socioeconomic background, age and disability, and participation levels remain significant. Growth is also evident particularly in non-ridden equestrian activities such as equine-assisted learning and equine-assisted therapy, demonstrating the sector's wider contribution to health, personal development and social connection.

Riding schools and equestrian facilities form the foundation of equestrianism in Britain, offering access, participation opportunities, employment and wide-ranging community benefits. However, many are now at risk of closure due to rising operating costs, inconsistent licensing approaches, business rate pressures and limited access to the public investment and protections afforded to other sports and rural sectors.

Building on the findings of [The Power of Horses: Equestrianism's Social Value](#), this advocacy project seeks to move from evidence to action by translating research into clear policy asks and investment priorities. The overarching outcome is to secure greater recognition and funding from key public bodies such as, Sport England, UK Sport, and local authorities, while influencing national and local policy to protect and sustain facilities. This work will also refine the narrative that positions equestrianism as an inclusive, socially valuable activity.

Despite delivering an estimated £1.2 billion in social value annually and contributing significantly to employment, wellbeing and rural vitality, the sector remains under-recognised in public funding frameworks and is often perceived as exclusive. Equestrianism sits uniquely between the sport and agriculture sectors, with strong connections to both—yet does not consistently benefit from the advantages of either.

With government agendas increasingly focused on health, education, rural growth and levelling up, there is a critical opportunity to align equestrian outcomes with these priorities.

Without coordinated and strategic action:

- riding school and facility closures are likely to continue or accelerate, reducing participation
- the equestrian sector risks losing credibility and critical investment
- policymakers may continue to overlook equestrianism in future policy and funding decisions.

To respond effectively to this tender, applicants must demonstrate a strong understanding of the wider sport policy environment and, ideally, the agricultural and rural development landscape, enabling them to identify priority areas and advocate for improved protection and recognition of equestrian facilities.

## Previous research

The Power of Horses research is a landmark social value study which provides the foundations but doesn't yet translate social value into funder specific investment cases, define precise policy asks for business rates, licensing or tax, present segmented evidence tailored to Health, Education and Local Authority decision-makers.

We now need to convert this evidence into a practical action plan that identifies and maps where equestrianism aligns with key funder outcomes, defines policy changes required to safeguard riding schools for use across the BEF and member bodies.

There has been extensive research over the past two decades on the benefits and value of sport and physical activity. Key findings include:

- [Sport England's social value](#) work estimated a social value of £122.9 billion for sport and physical activity in England for 2023/24, showing a four-fold return on investment.
- [Sport Wales' 2023 SROI study](#) revealed a £5.89 billion contribution, with a £4.44 return for every £1 invested in sport in Wales.
- [UK Active has highlighted the social benefits of physical activity in leisure facilities.](#)
- [State of Life](#) has contributed through projects like parkrun, grassroots football, and the value of parks and green spaces.
- Sheffield Hallam University has also worked on numerous studies, including [the societal benefits of outdoor sport.](#)

Other notable projects defining social value per sport include:

- [The Value of Swimming \(2023\)](#) – England
- [The Social Value of Movement and Dance \(2023\)](#) – England

- [Impact of EFL Clubs in the Community \(2023\)](#) – England and Wales.

Other external sources that can support this work:

- [Health of Riding Establishments](#) survey outlining the challenges faced by riding schools in the UK and the areas they would like support on
- Other sector reports like World Horse Welfare [citizen attitudes to support perception-change](#) and BETA National Equestrian survey outlining the economic contributions of the equestrian sector
- Sport England investment priorities and Movement Fund guidance (to align project outcomes and monitor metrics). [Sport England](#)
- UK Sport investment model and four-year award cycle - [UK Sport](#)

## Strategic rationale

The findings from this work will help us deliver on three of our core priorities outlined in our 2025-2030 Strategy:

- **Enabling and supporting a vibrant and healthy equestrian sector**

This work will strengthen our call for investment in infrastructure, safety, accessibility and security for these riding schools.

- **Advocating and representing the sector**

We want to be recognised not just in the sport and physical activity sector but across government, health, education and beyond. This work will give us the opportunity to speak with decision-makers, framing equestrian not just as a sport but as a solution that contributes to national priorities.

- **Supporting sustainable and inclusive growth**

We already reach many groups that are underrepresented in other sports – women, older adults, rural communities and people with a disability or a long-term health condition. This work could unlock more opportunities for us to engage new communities and partners, setting a baseline for sustainable and inclusive development.

## Project objectives

By the end of the project, BEF will have:

- A policy and advocacy framework and toolkit with clear asks regarding the changes we wish to bring about, this may include but not limited to:
  - o Licensing reform and consistency across local authorities

- o Business rates relief for community riding schools
- o Tax and investment parity with other sports and rural sectors
- o Recognition of equestrian facilities as community sports assets.
- An investment alignment map demonstrating how equestrian activity supports funder priorities including but not limited to; Sport England inclusion and place based, health, and environment missions, DEFRA's rural development priorities, DfE wellbeing and education agendas.
- A lobbying roadmap consisting of a strategic long-term plan (12 months+) detailing how and when to land key policy asks, including stakeholder targets, relevant events (parliamentary or sector wide), pilot opportunities and impact measures.
- An advocacy toolkit with materials to enable us to move into phase two the activation of the framework. This may include materials required for lobbying, influencing and communications such as policy briefs, case studies and infographics.

## Methodology

It is recommended that responding individuals /organisations propose the most appropriate methodological approach to meet the objectives of this tender.

- In your proposals, organisations are invited to include a detailed explanation of why their approach is suitable and their track record in utilising similar approaches in gathering and translating evidence of the benefits of equestrian activity into relevant policy focused insights.
- In responding to this tender opportunity, please identify the skills and experience you have aligned to the tender requirements shown below.

Below is some guidance around some methods/stages you may wish to include:

- **Evidence consolidation** – extract key findings from The Power of Horses and related reports into policy-relevant insights.
- **Policy analysis** – identify current regulations, rates, and tax frameworks impacting riding schools and develop recommended reforms and case examples.
- **Horizon scanning** – to anticipate and shape our needs around potential future trends
- **Member body engagement** – facilitate a workshop with our member bodies to map, plan, test and refine policy asks and investment alignment.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – potential engagement with funders, and policymakers to test and align policy asks and investment.

- **Investment mapping** – cross-reference equestrian outcomes with Sport England, UK Sport, DEFRA, Education, Health and local authority funding priorities.
- **A lobby roadmap** - a strategic long-term plan (12 months+) mapping how best to land the policy asks with key milestones and impact tracking.
- **Advocacy toolkit development** – produce the materials needed for lobbying, influencing, and communications - Policy briefs, case studies, infographics.

## Partnership working

This project is expected to receive a lot of attention from other partners involved in the delivery of equestrian experiences across the UK, who would also benefit from contributing to this work. As such, a workshop approach to formulate the policy framework is crucial with not only our member bodies but also other equestrian stakeholders which the BEF can facilitate.

As this work will have an external target audience it would be good to have some partnership and connections that could be involved in this initial policy framework phase or at least demonstrate how the following stakeholders could be incorporated or engaged; Sport England, UK Sport, British Horse Council, Sport and Recreation Alliance, DEFRA, DCMS, Education, NHS and Local Government Association.

## Deliverables

The main deliverables for this project are:

- **Weekly project/progress updates** – virtual weekly meetings with the project lead at BEF
- **Half-day workshop** – with BEF, member bodies and equestrian stakeholders to identify the policy asks
- **Interim project update** – to BEF including emerging trends to demonstrate the direction of the work
- **Policy & advocacy framework** – a final detailed document outlining policy asks, justification, and supporting evidence.
- **Investment alignment map** – visual summary showing how equestrian outcomes align with Sport England, UK Sport, DCMS, DEFRA, DfE, and NHS priorities.
- **A lobby roadmap** - a strategic long-term plan (12 months+) mapping how best to land the policy asks with key milestones and impact tracking.
- **An advocacy toolkit** - produce some materials needed for phase two – the activation, lobbying, influencing, and communications, such as policy briefs, case studies, infographics.

- **A summary presentation** – including key themes, learnings and recommendations to BEF, member bodies and equestrian stakeholders.

## Timescales

The timescales for this project are as follows:

• <b>Invitation to Tender process begins</b>	<b>19 January 2026</b>
• Deadline for questions of clarification	28 January 2026
• Deadline for proposals to BEF	13 February
• Shortlisting	By 19 February
• Shortlisted organisations: virtual presentations	w/c 23 February
• Appointment of winning organisation	27 February
• Kick off meeting to finalise approach	w/c 2 March
• March – May	
• <b>Presentation with BEF and partners</b>	<b>w/c 18 May</b>

## Tender requirements

In responding to this tender opportunity please identify the skills and experience you have aligned to the tender requirements outlined in this brief. The written tender proposal should include the components outlined below:

- Approach to project delivery - detail your methodology for delivering the project, including a clear and structured approach. Provide a detailed project timeline, with key milestones and deadlines, explaining how each phase contributes to meeting the overall objectives.
- Why BEF should select you for this project - highlight why you are the ideal choice for this project, focusing on your relevant experience, capabilities, and alignment with BEF's strategic goals.
- Experience in influencing/changing policy – outline your experience in influencing and changing policy for the sport/physical activity and/or rural sector.
- Familiarity with sport/physical activity and/or rural sector policies - detail your experience with policies. Please focus on the application of policy frameworks in the context of sport/physical activity, or rural sector.
- Quality and insightful deliverables - explain how you deliver high-quality, insightful outputs that maximise the benefits of the project. Demonstrate how your deliverables will help BEF influence the wider sector.
- Past reports and case studies - provide examples of previous reports or deliverables. Ideally, include projects related to sport or physical activity,

and/or rural sector along with case studies showcasing your expertise and relevant project team credentials.

- Risk management - submit a clear risk register, including:
  - A list of risks that may affect your ability to deliver the project.
  - Scores for the likelihood and impact of each risk.
  - Mitigation strategies for each risk, and a contingency plan outlining actions if those strategies fail.
- Cost breakdown - provide a detailed breakdown and explanation of all costs associated with delivering the project.

## Budget

The budget available for this first phase of the work is £13,000, which includes VAT and project costs, e.g. travel expenses.

- Proposals should not go above this amount, but if they do, then a clear rationale for a slight overspend against this budget is required.
- Proposals should include a full break down of their costs, to show how resource is being allocated across the project.

## Proposal selection criteria

For this project, proposals will be scored against the following criteria:

Criteria	Weighting
Understanding of the BEF's landscape and project requirements, including strategic importance	10%
Proposed approach	25%
Project team skills, experience and expertise	15%
Demonstrable expertise in public affairs, policy development and/or lobbying for the sport and/or rural sector	20%
Risk register and mitigating actions	5%
Added value	5%
Value for money	20%

- Proposals will be reviewed by a balanced panel of BEF stakeholders and members of staff

- o If shortlisted, the potential supplier will be invited to attend a virtual interview w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.
- o The interview will comprise a 30-minute presentation, covering the main elements of the potential supplier's response to this ITT, and 20 minutes for questions from the panel, with interviews lasting no more than one hour.
- o Potential suppliers should indicate in their tender response whether they are available to attend on this date. If unavailable, an alternative date may be agreed with BEF.
- o On appointment, the successful organisation will be expected to attend a kick off meeting with the project team w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026.
- o The BEF reserves the right to change the tender process including the timetable, to reject any or all the proposals received, not to invite any tenderer to proceed further and not to provide any tenderer with additional information. Each potential supplier should identify any conflict of interest that would affect their submission.

## Contact Details

The project will be managed for the BEF by Abbie Bevan, the Research and Insight Manager. Please direct any enquiries and questions on this tender and process to Abbie, whose contact details are: [abigail.bevan@bef.co.uk](mailto:abigail.bevan@bef.co.uk)