

# BRITISH EQUESTRIAN: OUR FEDERATION ENVIRONMENTAL VISION



# FOREWORD



Equestrianism is a sport, a leisure pursuit, a way of life, an industry and for most, a passion. Those of us who enjoy the special partnership with horses, know that the very foundation on which that relationship is built, is the natural world.

There can be no doubt that those foundations are in crisis both globally and in the UK. It is clear that through both the scientific evidence and the lived experience of riders throughout the country, that climate change is now part of our here and now. Thanks to the work completed independently in 2023 on behalf of British Equestrian (BEF), we are clear about the impact that the changing climate, along with our threatened ecosystem, water availability and resource depletion, is having on equestrian life, and more importantly, the impact it will have in the future.

As proud custodians of our countryside and green urban spaces, it is incumbent on our sector to work collaboratively to ensure that the ownership and use of horses for sport and recreation has a positive impact on the environment, and that we protect our equines and our sports and community, as well as the future generations.

We are at a crucial juncture and this presents us with a huge opportunity which we must seize and action.

Therefore, I am proud that the BEF and our member bodies have come together to agree a united vision for the environmental sustainability of equestrianism. Together, we are ambitious in our commitment to not just minimise our negative impacts, but actually ensure that the world is a more sustainable place with horses and their carers in it.

We will shortly have an overarching strategy for the future of our sport, and environmental sustainability will be a gold thread that runs throughout. This vision represents both a commitment and a shift in mindset, to ensure that as equestrians, we demonstrate our care and stewardship of the land in what will now become the horse, human, planet partnership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Eyre'.

**Jim Eyre**  
CEO, British Equestrian

# OUR VISION

Our vision is to create a biodiverse future, where horses and humans thrive in a healthy ecosystem; where we only take what the earth can sustain, and through responsive stewardship of the land, we lead the way in benefiting the natural world.



In this document, the BEF and our member bodies outline our understanding of the 2023 White Griffin Environmental Sustainability Report and our united response to the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead.

# EQUESTRIANISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT - WHAT WE KNOW

## The global picture

In 2023, the world has experienced record breaking temperatures, floods, droughts and wildfires in every corner of the globe. Our climate is changing even faster than scientists' predictions had forecast and there is international concern that we have drifted away from our goal of limiting global temperatures rising to 1.5 degrees celsius, in order to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. We have lost 69% of biodiversity worldwide since 1970 and approximately half of the global population lack access to safe water. Our resources are depleted and we are dumping over two billion tonnes of waste into our waterways, landfill and through incineration globally each year. The situation is unsustainable and governments, industry, agriculture, business and individuals are working to both reduce the negative impacts and put plans in place to adapt to the inevitable changes and disruption that lie ahead.

## Britain's climate crisis

Since 2022, Britain has experienced the warmest year on record, the highest temperature on record, the warmest near-coast sea temperatures on record, the hottest June, the wettest July and the warmest September on record. Meteorologists are concerned not just by the records broken, but the extent to which they are beating previous records, suggesting a sharp change towards the forecast tipping point.

Britain has experienced significant biodiversity loss, placing it in the bottom 10% in the world and worst of all G7 nations. Despite efforts to plant trees, afforestation is currently significantly behind targets and existing environmental protections are under threat.

The water authorities have warned of a water shortage crisis in the future, with plans already in place to address the increasing demand for water and decreasing supply. Britain is beginning to feel some of the impacts of environmental deterioration that the rest of the world has lived through over the last decade.

## The impact of equestrianism on the environment

Like all industries, equestrianism impacts the environment through our use of vehicles to transport horses, diesel generators at events and competitions, our use of water to maintain our surfaces and for horse welfare, our use of the land and consumption of resources for feed, bedding, equipment, infrastructure and artificial surfaces, all of which generate waste. We therefore have a responsibility to consider all of the impacts and transition to a more sustainable and responsible way of operating.

# THE RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As the sport of the land, equestrians have experienced the changing climate for years through disruptions to the competition calendar and increasingly difficult land management challenges. But the impacts extend beyond climate to legislative risks, reputational risks, operational risks, financial risks, risks to equine welfare and risks from our stakeholders and funders.

## **Risks to equine welfare**

As part of the ecosystem, horses rely on a healthy environment to thrive. This means good quality soil to produce good quality food, shade from trees, a varied diet and predictable weather patterns. The changing climate and damage to biodiversity risks threatening the health and wellbeing of our horses, in addition to significantly increasing the chances of vector borne diseases travelling north due to milder temperatures in Britain. Being a responsible horse owner means taking care of the land, it is a tradition lasting thousands of years, and one that we need to return to, in order to protect the welfare of our horses.

## **The future of sport and funding**

The world we live in is changing at pace and it is imperative that equestrianism not only keeps pace with those changes, but also demonstrates leadership and innovation in the ability to find solutions. Without adapting to change, we risk not having a sport in the future.

British Equestrian receives funding through UK Sport and Sport England, as well as membership, sponsorship, and commercial arrangements. In 2023, our funding partners announced that environmental sustainability is a mandatory part of elite sport. Therefore, it is imperative that equestrianism adopts a robust and well thought through strategy to reduce the negative environmental impacts in the sector, expands on the positive benefits of equestrianism for the environment, and puts robust plans in place to mitigate against the future impacts of climate change.

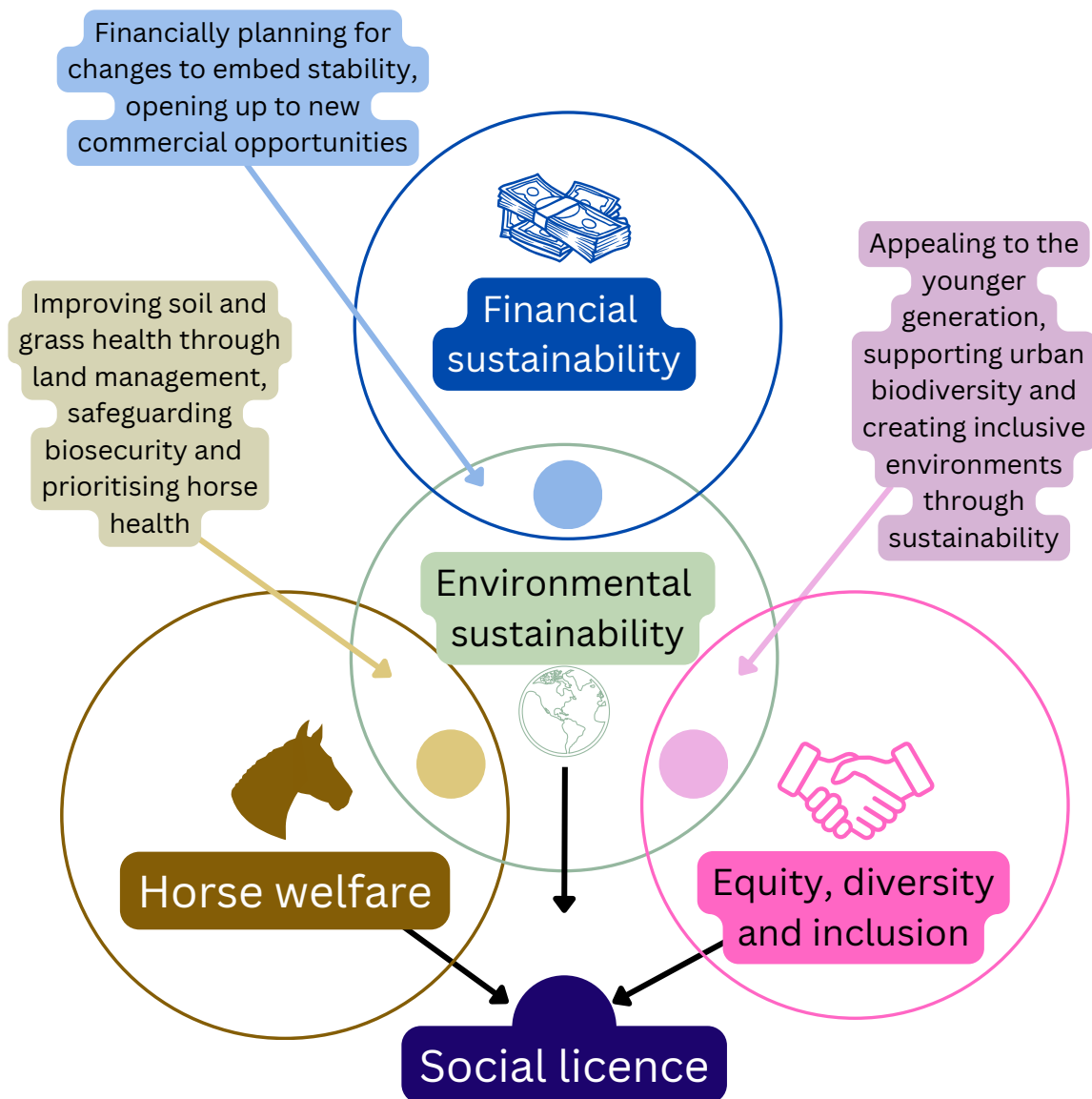
For the British Olympic Association, sustainability is a standard requirement of any Olympic sport now and in the future. The European Equestrian Federation has also requested that all national federations have environmental strategies in place by the end of 2024.

## **Planning for the changes ahead**

Changes in legislation have already begun to come into effect, including the ban on red diesel and the removal of single use plastic at events. Further legislation will impact our transport, land use and operations, including mandatory reporting for many. Therefore, it is important that we financially and operationally prepare for both the environmental changes that come with global warming, and the legislative changes which will impact our sector.

# THE OPPORTUNITIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Responding to the challenge of environmental sustainability is not just an existential imperative for our sport, it also presents a number of opportunities. By taking a holistic approach to the issues that matter most to our industry, we can create a healthier community for our people, our horses and the planet.



In addition, the equestrian community is in a unique position to enhance biodiversity, and in doing so, benefit from financial incentives from responsible land use. New commercial opportunities for the industry open up, from businesses seeking to align with sports with purpose and by planning for the long term, equestrianism can embed financial sustainability into its operations in the face of a volatile future.

# EQUESTRIANISM'S IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Like all industries, equestrianism relies on the availability and use of energy, fuel, water and resources in order to operate. Furthermore, we depend heavily on the land for all of our sport and recreational activity. Therefore our presence has an impact, which unchecked, can be negative.



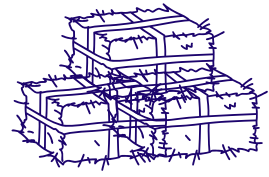
Energy for infrastructure and generator use



Petrol and diesel transport for people and horses



Diesel for equipment and machinery



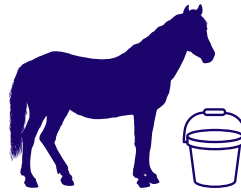
Emissions from our supply chain (scope 3)



Soil degradation and mono cultures



Pollution, due to equine drugs and nitrates



Water for the welfare of horses



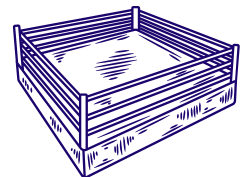
Water to maintain our surfaces



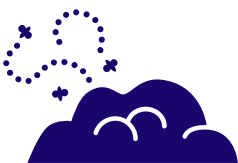
Solid waste and food waste produced from the day to day running of all organisations



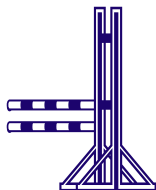
Plastic use and disposal



The creation of waste from our arena surfaces



Muck heap disposal



Waste derived from equipment

Our activities contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, pollution, water shortages and excessive waste. Therefore, it is important to consider alternative solutions to our ways of working, to minimise these impacts and have a positive impact on the environment.

# OUR INDUSTRY AND OUR SHARED IMPACT

Our sector comprises both high performance sport and the millions of leisure riders enjoying riding, driving and reigning across the length and breadth of Britain. Whilst the impacts of high performance sport and recreational riding, driving, reigning and care are different, it is important that the whole community works together to create an environmentally responsible industry. High performance sport potentially creates a larger impact per head, but the volume of equestrians outside of that bracket cumulatively create a significant impact. Therefore, both aspects of the sector, and the organisations which support them, must address their own impact for the good of the sport overall.

	High performance sport	Leisure riding	Other organisations
Transport	✓	✓	✓
Energy for infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
Fuel for generators and machinery	✓	✓	✓
Use of resources and equipment	✓	✓	✓
Use of the land	✓	✓	✓
Use of water	✓	✓	✓
Creation of waste	✓	✓	✓



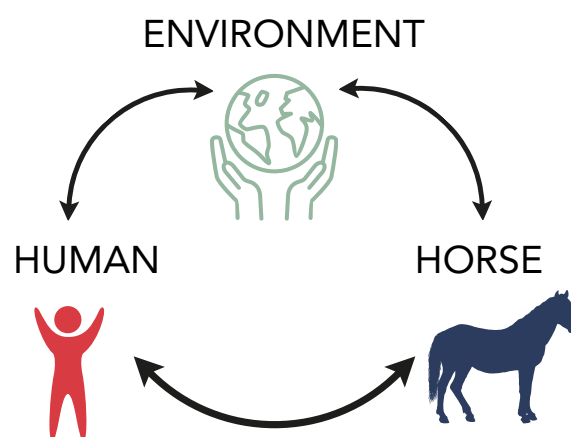


# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

We recognise that like all industries, equestrianism has a negative impact on the environment through our emissions, land and resource use. However rather than simply seeking to minimise our negative impact, we want to **have a net positive impact**, enhancing the natural world and fulfilling our role as responsible custodians of the land.

The horse/human partnership has been a vital part of our society for thousands of years, with the land an ever present silent partner in the relationship. Now, the environment is in crisis and needs our care and attention to move from decline to thriving once more.

We know that a healthy environment supports the health and wellbeing of humans and horses alike, therefore by both **prioritising the environment and embedding it** as a consideration in all of our decisions, we can ensure a more sustainable future for everyone.



In addition to taking care of the environment, we also recognise that the ongoing environmental changes owing to global warming, water shortages, pollution and resource depletion, all present a risk to equestrianism. Therefore, we will ensure that all equestrians are supported with **adapting to the changing climate and mitigating against the risks** that directly impact our activities now and in the future.

Consequently, our vision for the future of sustainable equestrianism is defined in our **six commitments to environmental responsibility**:



We aim to protect horses against the negative consequences of the changing environment



We will support everyone in gaining a good understanding of the inter-relationship between equestrianism and the environment



We will seek to preserve the future of equestrianism, through promoting mitigation and adaptation activities



We will take action to positively impact on national biodiversity and promote the importance of nature



We will show leadership by promoting good environmental practices and driving positive behaviour change throughout the industry



We will proactively monitor, plan for and educate the industry on evolving policy and legislation

# AN INDUSTRYWIDE ROADMAP

In working towards our six commitments, each organisation under the BEF umbrella will support a roadmap of activity, that enables every individual and business to transition to an environmentally responsible future. Collectively we will:

## Lead and inspire



We will ensure that our own operations demonstrate continuous improvement, including reducing emissions and consumption of resources and improving waste management systems. We will report on our progress and share best practice collaboratively.

We will work with our professional riders to support them, both in progressing towards a sustainable future, and inspiring the broader industry to do the same. We will involve all aspects of our federation, including our youth organisations, to ensure their voice and input is valued and heard, and to help them in preparing for the future.

## Educate and inform



BEF will work with our member bodies to create an education programme, which will ensure that all individuals and businesses understand the risks, challenges and opportunities of environmental sustainability in equestrianism. This will take the form of centralised resources including webinars, training courses, information sheets and videos.

We will work with the member bodies to provide tools and resources addressing specific topics and guidance to support action. These will include how to access funding for projects, how to run a sustainable equestrian business, how to incorporate water saving operations and technologies, how to make space for nature and sustainable pasture techniques.

## Focus on the achievable



We will focus on projects that can be achieved at scale and will benefit the lives of equestrians in the short term first. We will ensure that every part of the federation is supported to make small and manageable changes, which will have a big impact when combined.

We will provide equine specific information to support projects that make sense for any size of business, with any budget potential, in order that everyone can benefit from the motivation of successfully achieving small changes.

## Communicate regularly



We will ensure that we communicate our progress throughout the process, providing insights into changes happening both inside and outside of the sector, celebrating achievements and acknowledging work to be done. We will transparently report our impacts and offer insights into projects as they happen.

We will keep equestrians abreast of evolving legislation and risks, to ensure they can adequately and successfully prepare for the changes ahead.

## Create meaningful partnerships



We will work to create partnerships with organisations and businesses that share our vision and can add value to our projects.

We will consider frameworks which support our vision and strategy, with a particular focus on nature and biodiversity targets.

We will reach out to other industries that interconnect with our own, including sport, agriculture and education, to ensure that we are making use of existing knowledge and experience.

## Influence and lobby



We will drive positive change within the sector by recognising individuals and businesses who are adopting responsible environmental practices.

We will create an environmental charter for horse owners, detailing all of the actions that can be taken to protect the natural world.

We will ensure that all parts of the federation are supported from the supply chain to equine vets, riders to charities, tailoring information to each business and individuals' needs.

We will ensure inclusivity of all equestrians, including our young riders, whose future depends on our actions and the support we can give them now in preparing for the future.

We will collaborate with other sectors to lobby for improvements and support to aid equestrianism in the transition to a sustainable future, including the provision of green transport options.

# EQUESTRIANS WORKING TOGETHER

We are dedicated to working progressively on each aspect of our sport and industry, and commitment to protecting the environment lies at the foundation of all of our work moving forward. Through our roadmap, we will work collaboratively and hold one another accountable to continuous progress.

Without a healthy natural world, we cannot continue to enjoy the horse/human partnership in years to come and therefore, united by this vision, we all commit to educating, inspiring, motivating, leading and acting to help everyone who participates in our community to have a positive environmental impact.



**Everything we do is for the love of horses.  
Horses are part of our natural world and British  
Equestrian and our member bodies are  
wholeheartedly committed to protecting our  
shared environment, on which we all depend.**