

# Forestry Commission Wales & The British Horse Society Cymru

## Concordat

A joint concordat  
between Forestry Commission Wales  
and The British Horse Society Cymru



1<sup>st</sup> Review 16 June 2006  
2<sup>nd</sup> Review 1 June 2008

The purpose of this Concordat is to strengthen the collaboration between Forestry Commission Wales and The British Horse Society Cymru in promoting responsible equestrian access to Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

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## 1. Introduction

Forestry Commission Wales acts as the Welsh Assembly Government's Forestry Department and reports to the Minister for Rural Affairs. The aims of Forestry Commission Wales include management of the Assembly Woodlands to achieve the social, environmental and financial outcomes sought by Ministers to help achieve the objectives of **Woodlands for Wales**, the Assembly's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees.

The British Horse Society Cymru is the Welsh arm of The British Horse Society which is the leading equestrian membership organisation in the United Kingdom and caters largely for the leisure riding public. It is also the governing body for professional qualifications for those wishing to teach in the horse industry. The Society wishes to:

- Improve access to safer off road riding routes in the countryside and urban green space for the riding and carriage driving public;
- Make riding a safer activity, including riding on the roads;
- Improve awareness of the needs of the horse and its rider.

The British Horse Society leads centrally across a wide range of issues, particularly on access and rights of way.

## 2. Providing Access

Forestry Commission Wales will:

- Allow open access, where management control is not required to regulate access and there are no restrictions arising from title constraints, operations, environmental or other issues, for non-commercial horse riders to all Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands, managed by Forestry Commission Wales. This excludes single use definitive footpaths, cycle routes, walks and all ability trails.
- Grant permissions to non-commercial riders for a reasonable fee to allow access to woodlands where management control is required to regulate use.
- Commercial enterprises will be granted permissions, where access management is not an issue, at an agreed commercial rate according to the level of their business activity.

- Provide opportunities, where access management is not an issue, for horse riding and pony trekking businesses, particularly in remote rural areas, in support of the Visit Wales (formerly the Wales Tourist Board) Horse Riding Tourism Strategy “Saddling up for Success”, and in conjunction with other recreational and commercial developments and tourism strategies.
- By granting permissive access, co-operate in linking public bridleways and permissive routes where the proposed route is part of a through route, running over land owned by neighbours, and where this does not conflict with other recreational and commercial developments.

The British Horse Society Cymru will:

- Support the Forestry Commission Wales’ policy of providing open and permissive access in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

Both organisations will:

- Support Aim 5 (Increase access to off-road riding and carriage driving) of the British Horse Industry Confederation ‘Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales’.
- Work together to resolve issues with illegal motorised access in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands which are designated as open access areas for horse riders.

### **3. Promoting the Use and Enjoyment of Woodlands**

Forestry Commission Wales will:

- Prepare, in conjunction with other user groups, information showing where horse riding access is available in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands. Where applicable, to include multi-user and designated routes with more detailed information and temporary diversions and the re-opening of original routes. This will be available via the Forestry Commission Wales Website and will include links into related sites including the Countryside Council for Wales interactive access map site covering closures as determined by the CROW 2000 Act.
- Advertise and promote the agreed Code of Practice for Horse Riders in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

The British Horse Society Cymru will:

- Publicise the Forestry Commission Wales open access scheme to its members through newsletters, Websites and other publicity as available, with links into the Forestry Commission Wales Website.
- Encourage their members and other horse riders to respect the interests of other users of Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands by adhering to the agreed Code of Practice for Horse Riders in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

**4. Managing Use of Woodlands and Trails**

Forestry Commission Wales will:

- Encourage a responsible and safe approach to riding in the forest by including in any of their publications the code of practice developed with the British Horse Society Cymru.
- Monitor use of trails and woodlands for environmental impact to assist in the responsible management of the Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.
- Continue to ensure a high level of availability of access to bridleways in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands, and to promptly remove obstructions or re-instate any damage caused by Forestry Commission activities.
- Encourage feedback from users on the suitability of routes.
- Encourage the development of bona fide local Horse Riding Associations to assist in managing and developing horse riding trails and related facilities.

The British Horse Society Cymru will:

- Recognise and respect the needs of Forestry Commission Wales managers to regulate and implement multiple use of Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.
- Liaise through The British Horse Society Cymru County Access & Bridleways Officers with local Forestry Commission Wales staff on relevant issues. Where matters cannot be resolved locally they will be referred through The British Horse Society Cymru County Access & Bridleways Officer to the relevant Forestry Commission Forest District Manager for further action.
- Provide information to Forestry Commission Wales on the use of open access areas, multi-user and designated routes through surveys carried out by The British Horse Society Cymru County Access & Bridleways Officers and Horse Riding Associations.
- Encourage its members to report hazards on trails and accidents/incidents to local Forestry Commission Wales staff.

- Encourage bona fide horse riding associations to source funds, in conjunction with Forestry Commission Wales, for the development and extension of access for horse riding in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

Both organisations will:

- Develop pilot local Horse Riding Associations to assist in the management of riding in areas where management control is required to regulate use.
- Liaise over safety issues and ensure that there are risk assessments in place for all horse riding events, multi-user routes and designated facilities in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

## **5. Developing Mutual Understanding and Partnerships**

Both organisations will:

- Consult each other over developments with potential impact on either organisations' interests.
- Make and maintain close working relationships at all levels but particularly between local Forestry Commission Wales staff and The British Horse Society Cymru County Access & Bridleways Officers and Horse Riding Associations members.
- Hold a biennial workshop between all interested parties to exchange experiences and promote understanding and to raise awareness of the impact of recreation on the natural environment in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.
- Promote community participation and explore opportunities for greater communication and joint action.
- Liaise over opportunities for events and commercial use of Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.
- Working in partnership with local groups, look for ways to promote "Saddling up for Success" – the Wales Horse Tourism Strategy by identifying potential growth areas within Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands.

## **6. Implementation**

- No action arising from this Concordat will override the statutory duties and responsibilities of either organisation.
- British Horse Society Cymru will provide a list of local contact officers to be updated regularly.

- The contents of this Concordat will be communicated to Forestry Commission Wales staff and British Horse Society Cymru members and other interested parties and will be placed on the Forestry Commission Wales Website.
- Partnerships will be encouraged which facilitate sharing ideas and resources and co-operation in order to enhance joint objectives and to provide feedback to both parties.
- The two organisations will hold a biennial meeting to review progress in the working of the Concordat and will agree a programme of key issues or initiatives to address.
- The Concordat will be reviewed every five years, the third review to have taken place by 30 June 2013.

Signed by:

Trefor Owen  
Director  
Forestry Commission Wales

Graham Cory  
Chief Executive  
The British Horse Society

1 June 2008

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HORSE RIDERS IN  
WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT WOODLANDS  
PREPARED BY FORESTRY COMMISSION WALES AND  
THE BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY CYMRU

## INSTRUCTION

- Keep off exclusive use definitive footpaths, cycle routes, walks and all ability trails. Make sure that the routes you want to ride are safe and make sure that the area you want to visit is open by either logging on to the Countryside Council for Wales Website <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/interactive-maps/countryside-access-map.aspx?lang=en> for current and future closures, as determined by the CROW 2000 Act, or contact the Forest District Office or Local Area Manager.
- Apply for permission from the Forest District Office or Local Area Manager if you want to use an area where there is permit only access (see map on FC Wales Website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-62lh2s>)
- Remember that there are some areas where the only access is on Designated Routes – if in doubt check with the Forest District Office or Local Area Manager
- Respect other users in the forest and always be friendly
- Remember vehicles use forest roads as well as you
- Don't build jumps and hurdles or attempt to jump stacked timber
- Follow the Countryside Code
- Report accidents or near misses to the Forest District Office or the Local Area Manager on whose patch the incident occurred
- Pay attention to all warning signs and adhere to their instructions
- Ride at a walk or trot unless you are on one of the few waymarked 'canter' or 'gallop' tracks
- Do not ride on picnic sites or designated footpaths
- Leave parking areas and gateways clean and tidy.
- Park in designated horse box parking areas where available and park sensibly to allow maximum space for other users
- Report obstructions to the Forest District Office or Local Area Manager
- Be aware that other users may also have designated trails in the area you are using – check first if in doubt

## GUIDANCE

- If you are riding alone tell someone where you are going and how long you intend to be gone for
- Carry a mobile phone in case of emergencies (remember that there is limited or no reception coverage in some areas)
- Check the FC Wales Website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-626jjm> for up to date information on what facilities are available. If you are in any doubt as to where you can ride, please contact the Forest District Office or Local Area Manager
- Horse riders are encouraged to carry their own third party liability insurance whilst riding in Welsh Assembly Government Woodlands
- Wear high visibility clothing so that you can be seen by others

1<sup>st</sup> issued January 2005

Revised June 2006

Revised June 2008