



BRITISH EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION

Participation Strategy

First Edition - September 2006

**British Equestrian Federation
Participation Plan**

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BEF PLAN FOR PARTICIPATION

THE BRITISH EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION (BEF)

The BEF is recognised by the Sports Councils and the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI – international governing body of equestrian sport) as the national governing body for equestrian sport and recreation in Great Britain. It represents through its 16 Member Bodies the sports of Show Jumping, Eventing, Dressage, Horse Driving Trials, Endurance Riding, Vaulting, Reining, Mounted Games, Polocrosse and Horseball as well as the British Horse Society (including British Riding Clubs), Pony Club, Association of British Riding Schools, Riding for the Disabled Association, British Equestrian Trade Association and Scottish Equestrian Association. Through leadership and the unity of its component parts the BEF develops, establishes and encourages standards across the equestrian leisure and sporting sectors.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry

A Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales has been drawn up by the British Horse Industry Confederation (BHIC), of which the BEF is a constituent part, in partnership with the British Horse Racing Board (BHB), DEFRA, DCMS and the National Assembly for Wales. One of the stated aims of the strategy is to increase participation in equestrianism and develop the social contribution of the horse industry -

Increase participation in equestrianism - The future of the industry depends on adopting a more inclusive approach and attracting a constant stream of new riders. For most people, the riding school is their introduction to the horse industry, but the quality of this experience can be highly variable. All parts of the industry need to recognise and support the integral role of riding schools as the bedrock for creating and maintaining mass participation. For their part, riding schools need to be professionally-run businesses, offering attractive, efficient and, as far as possible, safe facilities, in order to compete effectively with other leisure activities. To achieve greater participation, and to ensure a high quality riding experience for all, the industry needs to produce a plan for how riding schools can maximise their potential. It also needs to carry out detailed research into the number and location of riders, and into public perceptions of equestrianism in order to identify and address real and perceived barriers.

Work with Government to develop the social, educational and health benefits of association with horses - While it is vital to increase participation for economic reasons, there are other very good reasons for drawing new people into riding, broadening its appeal, and increasing awareness of its potential contribution to wider social issues. These include educational attainment; personal and social development; sport and recreation; physical health and fitness; mental health; disability; social exclusion; and criminal justice. Examples exist of good work being done with equines in all of these areas, but at present these are quite rare and tend to arise from the enthusiasm of a few dedicated practitioners working on a financial shoestring. The horse industry needs to develop its potential in the social, educational and health fields, in order to make a greater contribution in these areas and tap into the significant funding streams associated with them. This will require the industry to engage with the relevant Government departments

to persuade them of the real benefits that it can offer in pursuit of their Public Service Agreement aims and objectives.

To move the industry towards realising this vision the strategy includes a number of specific action points:

- To produce a costed and time limited plan for how riding schools can more effectively maximise their potential (perhaps exploring the possibility for developing riding schools into community riding centres which would act as local 'horse hubs') in both rural and urban locations.
- Research number and location of riders, and public perceptions of equestrianism.
- Initiate discussions with relevant Government Departments and agencies on how the horse industry could help contribute to fulfilling their Public Service Agreements and other social policy targets using evidence from case studies, and further research.

BEF Strategic Plan 2005-09

The vision of the British Equestrian Federation is to develop its concept of 'More People, More Horses, More Places and More Medals'. The BEF Strategic Plan for 2005-09 aims to support the wider industry strategy and states that the Federation will "Maximise the potential of equestrianism by attracting, engaging and retaining participants and members, increasing participation for all age groups in all areas of equestrian sporting and recreational activity for the able bodied and disabled through enhanced partnerships". Furthermore, it states that through promoting to the equestrian and wider public the benefits of equestrian sport and recreation, the BEF feels it will contribute to:

- reductions in crime by keeping young people active and giving them a sense of responsibility
- reductions in levels of obesity
- greater levels of activity for all age groups, not least amongst the aging population either as active sports people or as volunteers and officials

BEF Participation Strategy

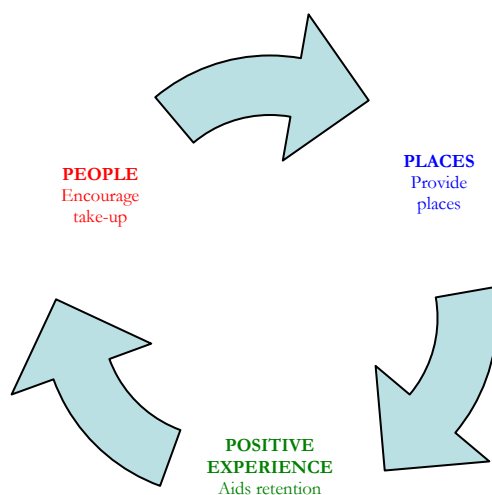
More than 200,000 competitive and recreational riders are members of BEF through its Member Bodies. There is significant potential for this to be increased with an estimated 2.4 million⁽¹⁾ people riding regularly (at least once per month) in Great Britain. The **BEF aims to increase the number in membership to 260,000 by 2009 and to promote an increase in the numbers who ride generally** thereby supporting the participation related aims of the BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry.

This strategy puts forward a number of actions designed to enable the Federation to achieve this stated membership target and to ensure the BEF plays a leading role in the implementation of the wider industry strategy aim of increasing and broadening levels of participation.

⁽¹⁾ BETA National Equestrian Survey 2006

PARTICIPATION – DEVELOPING A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

Increasing participation can be illustrated as a virtuous circle. Increase numbers by actively encouraging people to take up riding, driving and vaulting. Ensure there are a sufficient number of good quality and well-placed facilities in existence for them to take part. Ensure that they enjoy a positive experience and are supported well, thus maximising rates of retention and ultimately sustainability.



This plan takes each part of the cycle in turn and suggests how the BEF, through its Member Bodies, can be effective in developing a positive flow that will engage and recruit new riders, drivers and vaulters, and subsequently retain these and existing participators through ensuring that their experience of the sport and industry is a positive one.

Although the generic term, the BEF, is used throughout the plan, in each case it should be taken to imply all its constituent parts – in other words the Member Bodies.

Additionally it should be noted that although it is primarily the terms ‘riding’ and ‘riders’ that are used throughout this document, that in the majority of cases and where appropriate this should be regarded as including vaulting and driving.

PEOPLE – encouraging take-up

Encouraging new riders into the sport is crucial to secure the future of the equestrian industry and all the jobs that are dependent upon it. The 'People' stage of the cycle is about increasing the number of people riding beyond the current estimate of 2.4 million⁽²⁾ regular riders (once a month or more), drivers and vaulters and increasing the volume of activity amongst existing participants. The BEF will support, encourage, and where appropriate, initiate, coordinate and play an active part in initiatives designed to increase and broaden participation.

Action 1

The BEF will identify the variety of participation pathways, taking in to full consideration the results of the research in to participation initiated by the BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry. It will then initiate marketing activity aimed at:

- **Generally raising awareness of equestrianism**
- **Communicating the participation pathways**
- **Countering the negative perceptions of equestrianism (elitism, cost, risk, working in industry etc)**
- **Communicating the positive benefits of riding, driving and vaulting (physical/mental/emotional health, therapeutic, behavioural etc)**
- **Communicating the spectrum of activity available to participants (many disciplines, don't have to own a horse, don't have to ride, volunteering, spectators, careers in stable management, coaching etc)**

National Riding Festival

The National Riding Festival was established in 2000 and aims to introduce newcomers to riding, particularly children and lapsed riders. It is supported by over 20 equestrian related organisations from across the industry, a number of which are also member organisations of the BEF. Activity has in the past included:

Schools Roadshow – pupils have an opportunity to ride a mechanical horse (Trigger) and take part in associated activities designed to educate and enthuse them about horses and riding

Horsepower Days – linking up with equestrian centres and existing equine or country events to showcase the horse world to a new, non-horsy audience

Celebrity Endorsement – involvement of celebrities who ride to generate media activity

Press Office Activity – intensive and ongoing sell-in of different angles to mass media (youth, health and fitness, what's on columns, feature articles, money off voucher schemes, radio competitions etc)

⁽²⁾ BETA National Equestrian Survey 2006

Even with reduced funding due to lack of a title sponsor in 2005, the campaign achieved 95 pieces of coverage across all media sectors equating to 29 million 'opportunities to see'. Over six years the Festival has achieved:

- 1055 media pieces
- 289 million opportunities to see
- 27,000 sat on a horse (Trigger) for the first time
- 56,700 have visited a Horsepower Day
- 166 primary school visits
- 2,900 teaching packs distributed to primary schools
- 15,000 new people introduced to the sport with a 60% retention rate

Action 2

The BEF acknowledges the significant inroads the National Riding Festival has made in boosting the popularity of the sport and recognises the Festival as a prime vehicle for achieving the BEF's aim of increasing and broadening participation. The BEF will seek to invest in the Festival and, through an active role in its management, will ensure opportunities to achieve these aims are maximised.

Welsh Festival of the Horse

Instigated by the Welsh Equine Council, a partnership of equine and related organisations in Wales, the first Welsh Festival of the Horse will take place in 2006 and aims to promote the variety of equestrian activities available in Wales to a broader audience through demonstrations, displays and static stands. Club and centre open days and associated events will be developed to ensure that the 'Festival' has an impact across the country.

Action 3

The BEF supports The Welsh Festival of the Horse and will encourage the development of a partnership between the National Riding Festival and the Welsh Festival to ensure maximisation of resources, benefits and coordination where appropriate.

Schools

The BEF recognise and promote the benefits of offering riding as an activity through schools. It has the potential to contribute towards reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour by keeping young people active, occupied and giving them a sense of responsibility, and will help towards reducing levels of obesity. It has also been shown to result in increased levels of confidence, improved social and communication skills, and ultimately improvements in academic performance. The BHS has run a number of successful pilot schemes around the country whereby riding has been offered as an activity through the school curriculum. The latest of these have been funded by Sport England through the BEF. A similar scheme has been instigated through SEA in Scotland.

Action 4

The BEF will support and look to extend riding through school schemes and in so doing will investigate how they can be sustained. The opportunity to link these to initial interest generated through the National Riding Festival ‘Schools Roadshow’ will be explored.

Through such schemes significant talent has at times been identified. Unfortunately this can be lost to the sport if it can not be developed due to financial and social constraints. It is a weakness of the sport that there is a lack of structure enabling identified talent to be nurtured

Action 5

The BEF will research the opportunity to pilot a scheme to be based at an appropriate centre where talent can be identified and developed particularly in instances where the individuals would not otherwise have the resource to sustain their participation.

Trekking & Tourism

Trekking offers an ideal environment for many people to enjoy their first experience of riding. The organisations currently overseeing this activity are the Trekking and Riding Society of Scotland (TRSS), the Wales Trekking and Riding Association (WTRA), the BHS and ABRS.

Action 18 of BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry states:

Encourage a cohesive approach to promoting equestrian tourism through local authorities, regional tourism councils and national bodies; publish a national register of riding holidays and equestrian tourism opportunities on the internet; and establish a national descriptive grading system for equestrian tourism.

Action 6 (in line with BEF National Equestrian Facilities Strategy and to maximise opportunities arising from BHIC Strategy Action 18)

The BEF will actively engage with trekking and tourism organisations and agencies with the aim of identifying and implementing opportunities for increasing participation and retention through this activity.

Broadening Access

There are a number of successful projects and schemes being operated around the country with the aim of allowing people to access equestrian sport and activity who would otherwise be unable to for social, economic or physical reasons.

Action 7 (extracted from BEF National Equestrian Facilities Strategy)

The BEF will support and investigate how projects that aim to enable people to access equestrian sport and activity who would otherwise be unable to for social, economic or physical reasons can be expanded and increased in number.

Sport England Everyday Sport Campaign

Everyday Sport was launched in 2004 and tested in the North East of England. The campaign is designed to encourage people to get active and show that it can be fun and easy to fit sport and physical activity into our busy lives. Everyday Sport aims to increase awareness levels of the importance and benefits of physical activity and sport, ultimately, to increase participation levels in physical activity and sport.

International experience gathered from around the world e.g. Germany, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Finland, indicates that the combination of good sporting facilities and campaigning does increase participation in sport and physical activity and improve health.

Sport England launched the campaign nationally in September 2005 and is committed to Everyday Sport for at least four years. There will be a constant programme of events, advertising and activity around the campaign across the country.

Action 8

Sport England aim to support NGBs' work to increase participation through the Everday Sport campaign. A range of initiatives are planned and the BEF will engage in this process.

London 2012 and other Major Championships

The events at Greenwich have the potential to draw a new 'city' audience and will further demonstrate that equestrian sport can be successful and popular in an urban environment. There will be a significant opportunity to use the Equestrian Games to promote participation in and beyond London. Being a sport where Britain has traditionally been successful equestrianism will be seen by the media as a potential 'Gold medal' sport on home soil in 2012. Carefully managed, there is potential for such exposure to be translated in to increased levels of participation. This exposure will be further enhanced by the television images that will be generated from the World famous site with spectacular views across the entire Olympic city.

Action 9

The BEF will coordinate efforts to identify the potential opportunities to increase awareness and participation on the run up to and after the London Games, and will then draw up a plan to take maximum advantage of these opportunities. The plan will be piloted at up to 3 major Equestrian Championships hosted in Britain between 2007 and 2011.

PLACES – providing opportunity

The ‘Places’ stage of the virtuous cycle is about providing good quality, well managed facilities geographically spread across the country thus ensuring that a lack of local facilities is not a barrier to anyone wishing to take up riding, driving or vaulting.

Action 10 (extracted from BEF National Equestrian Facilities Strategy)

Through the implementation of the National Facilities Database the BEF will identify and map existing facilities, thus enabling analysis to identify gaps in provision (volume, quality, accessibility, geographical etc).

Action 11 (extracted from BEF National Equestrian Facilities Strategy)

The BEF will work to determine a comprehensive, consistent and inclusive approach to facility accreditation, and will then work to encourage as many of the National Facilities Database listed facilities as possible to achieve basic standards through this.

Sport England Active Places

Active Places is a web based database including information on a wide range of sports facilities – from sports halls to ski slopes, swimming pools to health and fitness. It currently includes over 50,000 local authority leisure facilities, commercial and club sites. The website allows people to search for sports facilities any where in England by a number of different ways.

Action 12

During development of the National Facilities Database the BEF will engage with Sport England to ensure that information on equestrian facilities can be incorporated on to the Active Places database thus enabling equestrian activity to be promoted alongside other sports.

Access to Off-Road Riding and Driving

Consultation on the BHIC Strategy identified a widespread and strongly held desire to improve access to off-road riding and driving to cater for existing equestrians, potential riders and carriage drivers and equestrian tourists. Many respondents felt that the Government and local authorities had not given access needs of horse owners sufficient consideration, and specifically that they failed to:

- Appreciate the importance of safe, sufficient access for riding
- Provide adequate funding and other resources to deliver it;
- Work effectively towards a proper network of equestrian rights of way

Action 13 (in support of BHIC Strategic Aim 5)

The BEF will work in conjunction with the BHIC Strategy to encourage participation by increasing access to off-road riding and carriage driving.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE – aiding retention

The 'Positive Experience' aspect of the participation cycle is about ensuring people's experience of equestrian activity is a positive one. The role of the organisations comprising the BEF is vital to this. Currently, of the 2.4 million regular (once a month or more) riders, drivers and vaulters in Great Britain, 210,000 are affiliated to the BEF. Many others participate or compete as in the unaffiliated world, receiving coaching and training in isolation. There is an opportunity to enhance the experience of such people by ensuring the BEF provides and markets products that meet the needs of these potential, as well as existing customers.

The BHS and ABRS play a significant part in ensuring the initial learning experience is of a high quality through approval schemes, education programmes and general support for riding establishments. The Pony Club and British Riding Clubs offer support and development opportunities for both the horse and pony owner and non-horse owner, while the competition disciplines, alongside the BHS, Pony Club and Riding Clubs, provide a structured, well regulated and safe environment in which people can progress through competition.

Business Support

Action 6 of the BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry states and intention to produce a costed and time limited plan for how riding schools can more effectively maximise their potential. The BHS and ABRS, both Member Bodies of the BEF, are cited in the action plan as taking the lead on this initiative.

Action 14

The BEF will encourage and support consistent and raised standards of business practice across riding establishments thus developing improvements in client experience and effective business development. Through its Participation Steering Group, the BEF will facilitate effective engagement across the Federation in support of the BHS' and ABRS' responsibility stated through BHIC Strategy Action 6.

BEF Membership

There are an estimated 2.4 million regular (once a month or more) riders in Britain of which 10% are currently members of the BEF through its constituent organisations. As the lead sporting and recreational organisation the BEF needs to review its position in relation to the whole spectrum of recreational riders.

Action 15

The BEF will initiate research aimed at establishing the reasons why many riders are not currently members, and based on this the BEF Member Bodies will work together to develop and promote products aimed at attracting greater levels of participation across the organisation.

Currently those wishing to compete in more than one discipline are required to be a member of a different BEF organisation in each instance.

Action 16

The BEF will initiate research aimed at establishing the demand for cross-discipline membership and based on the findings the BEF Member Bodies will work together to develop and promote such products.

Historically the BEF Member Bodies have operated entirely independently of each other when promoting membership.

Action 17

BEF will develop a coordinated approach to promoting the benefits of membership.

Clubs

Action 18 (extracted from National Facilities Strategy)

The BEF Member Bodies will explore, in conjunction with the existing club structures, the potential for equestrian sports clubs linked to facilities and effective sports development plans. This will include an assessment of how the Sport England Clubmark scheme could be extended across the industry.

Volunteers

All BEF member bodies rely on significant volunteer support in providing opportunities for people to participate – a point further stressed within the BHIC Strategy for the Horse Industry which goes on to suggest:

If the horse industry is successful in its efforts to promote riding and other equestrian activities and events in order to give them a higher public profile and increase participation, it would be easier to attract volunteers to help and those who were involved would in turn feel more valued and gain from the social and personal benefits on offer.

Action 19

Through the BEF Volunteer Strategy the BEF will promote volunteering as a pathway to participation and will develop further programmes to recruit, retain and reward volunteers across the industry, working together where possible and appropriate.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

To ensure that the BEF is able to achieve its strategic aims of **increasing the number in membership to 260,000 by 2009 and promoting an increase in the numbers who ride generally**, it will work through the BEF Participation Steering Group, consisting of representatives from the Member Bodies, to draw up annual operational plans that seek to address, over the period of the current BEF Strategic Plan 2005-09, the implementation of actions put forward through this Participation Strategy.

Each annual operational plan will be divided in to three sections:

- **Increasing general participation**
- **Increasing BEF membership**
- **Increasing volunteers**

The operational plan will be presented to the BEF Board and Council each year by the Director for Participation.

APPENDIX 1 – Sport England Funded Projects

The following is a summary of ‘participation’ projects that have already been supported by the BEF and Sport England, as referred to above.

All address one or more of the three aspects of increasing participation that have been identified (see table below each section). Many of these initiatives are regarded as ‘pilot’ projects and therefore, assuming their success, it is envisaged that they will continue to form a significant part of the Federation wide approach to increasing participation and membership of the BEF.

Encourage Take-Up

Provide Places

Positive Experience

ABRS - increase benefits of membership by attracting a selection of companies to offer discounts to ABRS member schools, and then promote through advertising, editorial and direct mail within equestrian media
 - ‘riding school business development days’ organised to encourage good business practice, improved client experiences and effective business development

ABRS

ABRS

ABRS

BEV - increase participation by offering more opportunities in key areas in the country which at present have no Vaulting Groups by targeting and then supporting Riding Schools to offer Vaulting in areas of the country where provision does not currently exist

BEV

BEV

BHDTA - increase membership at club level through a series of ‘have-a-go’ days run by clubs, supported by BHDTA, around the country.
 - support packs produced to include information on suggested format for the day, promotional video/DVD, standard editorial, promotional leaflets etc

BHDTA

BHS - increase awareness and broaden participation by introducing children who live in the urban environment to horse riding and care - four projects linking schools in urban areas to BHS Approved riding schools.

BHS

BHS

BRC - recruit new members in to clubs through centrally coordinated area level promotion and local level ‘Open Evenings’. Staff time allocated to ensure plans are run effectively and time devoted to marketing with aim of increasing membership/participation

BRC

BR - increase levels of awareness and due course participation and through deployment of BR stand at equestrian and “western” events, promotional literature, advertising, a ranch holiday follow up programme, development of an affiliated club programme and “road shows”.

BR

BR

EGB - increase levels of interest, participation and hence membership of Endurance GB through enhancement of EGB Display Stand at equestrian events, targeted advertising, promotional literature, marketing workshops for EGB Groups, and 'road shows'.

EGB

PC - Centre Membership Development Officer supported by Recruitment Officers employed to develop and promote the PC Centre scheme, identifying areas in the country not served by PC Centres and approaching riding establishments to establish new Centres in these areas

PC PC

RDA - increase the number of riders/drivers at specified RDA Member Groups by developing and monitoring a set of pilot projects to increase volunteer recruitment
- appoint Consultant Volunteer Development Manager (CVDM) to deliver a series of pilot projects designed to increase levels of volunteering at targeted groups.

RDA RDA RDA

APPENDIX 2 – Participation related work in Scotland

In recent years the Scottish Equestrian Association, itself a Member Body of the BEF, have been proactive in the area of participation and are able to demonstrate and promote examples of best practice. This report details their most recent work.

During 2005 the Scottish Equestrian Association (SEA) has taken strides to increase participation at every level of equestrian sport and has catered for all abilities within the range of different equestrian activities it has supported, from vaulting to RDA and introducing the sport to disadvantaged children in schools.

Working in partnership with St. Columbas High School 10 pupils were given the opportunity to participate in a 10-week pilot course of stable management and riding run in conjunction with Easterton stables. This course is due to completed in December.

Over the 10 weeks the children worked towards achieving their ABRS certificates 1 and 2. The course is targeted at those who would not normally have the opportunity to ride or have experience with horses. It is hoped that by giving the children this opportunity that they may look to the equestrian industry in the future as a possible career pathway. There have already been enquiries from some of the children who would like to continue with riding after the course has finished.

Lanark and Renfrewshire pony club over the year has also increased their membership and many more parents are now actively volunteering to support the club. The membership figures have increased by an astounding 135% on last years figures which is a huge achievement and a credit to the work of the club.

The Eagles vaulting group have also made increases in their membership and numbers of groups they have participating on a regular basis. These numbers will continue to increase over the coming year with an application for funding to improve the facilities being sought. The number of affiliated vaulting groups in Scotland has increased by 20%, and affiliated members have increased by 25% since last year. Eagles vaulting group has also made increases over 2005 with membership numbers going up by 30%.

Since the introduction of SEA individual membership in April, SEA now has 415 individual members which will hopefully increase further during 2006. A lot of work has been done in 2005 to increase the profile of the sport and make it more accessible to all groups. This work will continue in to 2006 where further achievements are anticipated.