

# Forestry Commission Wales & The British Horse Society Cymru

## Concordat

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



**Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru**  
**Forestry Commission Wales**



1<sup>st</sup> Review 16 June 2006  
2<sup>nd</sup> Review 1 June 2008  
3<sup>rd</sup> Review 28 February 2013

The purpose of this Concordat is to strengthen the collaboration between Forestry Commission Wales and its successor body Natural Resources Wales, and The British Horse Society Cymru in promoting responsible equestrian access to the Welsh Government Woodland Estate

## 1. Introduction

Forestry Commission Wales<sup>1</sup> acts as the Welsh Government Forestry Department and reports to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainability. In April 2013, Forestry Commission Wales will become an integral part of the new Government sponsored body, Natural Resources Wales (NRW). NRW will continue to manage the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE) on behalf of the people of Wales, and will continue delivering the aims and objectives of the Welsh Government strategy *Woodlands for Wales*.

*Woodlands for Wales* sets out an agenda for improving public access to the WGWE and the outcomes of particular relevance to this concordat are that:

- more communities benefit from woodlands and trees
- more people enjoy the life-long learning benefits of woodlands and their products
- more people live healthier lives as a result of their use and enjoyment of woodlands
- more people benefit from woodland related enterprises

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

The Society wishes to:

- Increase 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 Forestry Commission Wales will become an integral part of the new Natural Resources Wales (NRW) organisation, an amalgamation of FCW, the Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Agency Wales. Post April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, ownership of this concordat will lie with the BHS and NRW. Where FCW is cited in this concordat, NRW will assume responsibility for any stated action or requirement.

## 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, forest operations, environmental or other issues, for non-commercial horse riders to all of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate managed by Forestry Commission Wales and its successor body. This excludes single use definitive footpaths, cycle routes, walks and all ability trails, but includes forest roads.
- Grant permissions to non-commercial riders for a reasonable fee to allow access to woodlands where management control is required to regulate use and where there are no restrictions arising from title constraints, forest operations, environmental or other issues. Permissions will be applied for in adherence to the Woodlands and You framework <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8J2GJ9>
- Commercial enterprises may be granted permissions through Woodlands and You, where access management is not an issue and where there are no restrictions arising from title constraints, forest operations, environmental or other issues, at an agreed commercial rate according to the level of their business activity
- Consider opportunities, where access management is not an issue and where there are no restrictions arising from title constraints, forest operations, environmental or other issues, for horse riding and pony trekking businesses, particularly in remote rural areas, in support of 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 and where there are no restrictions arising from title constraints, forest operations, environmental or other issues.

### The British Horse Society Cymru will:

- Support the Forestry Commission Wales' policy of providing open and permissive access in the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.

### 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 on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate 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 on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. Where applicable, to include multi-user and designated routes with more detailed information and including diversions, temporary closures and routes re-opening. This will be available via the Forestry Commission Wales website and the smart-phone app Wales ForestXplorer Cymru 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.
- Promote the agreed Code of Practice for Horse Riders in the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
- Provide information on access to woodlands and behaviour management in line with managing biosecurity in woodlands and managing anti-social behaviour in 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 the Welsh Government Woodland Estate by adhering to the agreed Code of Practice for Horse Riders in the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
- Cascade to their members any and all information provided by Forestry Commission Wales concerning access to woodlands and behaviour management in line with managing biosecurity and anti-social behaviour

### **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 relevant publications the code of practice developed with the British Horse Society Cymru.
- Monitor use of trails and woodlands at sensitive sites for environmental impact to assist in the responsible management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.
- Continue to ensure a high level of availability of access on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, recognising the legal responsibility in regard to public rights of way, and to promptly remove obstructions or re-instate any damage caused by Forestry

Commission activities. Should a PRoW be unsustainable follow the due legal process to extinguish/divert/re-create.

- Encourage feedback from users on the suitability of routes.
- In response to local approaches from existing and potential *bona fide* Horse Riding Associations through Woodlands and You, 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 the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.
- 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.
- 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 liaison with Forestry Commission Wales, for the development and extension of access for horse on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and to use Woodlands and You for formal access related proposals.

Both organisations will:

- Facilitate 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 appropriate activities and facilities on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate in line with Health and Safety requirements for public access.

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

Both organisations will:

- Inform each other of developments with potential impact on either organisations' interests., including changes to FCW contact staff and the BHS volunteers
- 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, including meetings with FCW Local Area Teams

- Hold a biennial workshop between relevant equestrian interests to exchange experiences and promote understanding and to raise awareness of the impact of recreation on the natural environment on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.
- Liaise over opportunities for events and commercial use the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
- Working in partnership with local groups, identify potential growth areas on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate

## 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.
- The two organisations will hold a biannual meeting to review progress in the working of the Concordat and will agree a programme of key issues or initiatives to address.
- This concordat will run for five years with annual break points. Break clauses can be initiated by either party and agreement on continuing the concordat will be sought annually.

Signed by:



Trefor Owen  
Director  
Forestry Commission Wales



Mark Weston  
Director of Access, Safety & Welfare  
The British Horse Society

## *FCW and BHS Code of Practice for Horse riders using the Welsh Government Woodland Estate*

### **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.
- Apply for permission using Woodlands and You 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> for permit only areas) and see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-8J2GJ9> for Woodlands and You
- 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
- 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
- Be aware that other users may also have designated trails in the area you are using – check first if in doubt
- Wear appropriate protective clothing and helmet, including high visibility clothing so that you can be seen by others

### **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 on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
- Report to your FCW Local District Office, or use 101 to contact the police, any criminal or anti social behaviour observed
- Wash down your horse box/trailer, vehicle, boots and horses hooves when you get home, and before visiting another woodland, as this helps avoid the spread of tree diseases.

Revised February 2013