



TO:

MP

House of Commons
London
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Please reply to:

Name:

Address:

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Please help us end the Forestry Commission's discrimination against equestrians.

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Horse riders have access to only 22 percent of the public rights of way network whilst carriage drivers have access to only five percent. These are unevenly distributed meaning that many equestrians have no off road access.

The Forestry Commission England's public forest estate extends to about 258,000 hectares of land which could provide miles of safe off road riding which is badly needed for all sections of the equestrian community.

While many forests allow equestrians free informal access, an increasing number discriminate against equestrians, requiring them to purchase a permit, whilst walkers and cyclists are allowed free access.

The Forestry Commission (FC) should not make equestrians buy a permit to ride in forests when walkers and cyclists are not required to. Informal access on horseback, by horse drawn carriage, on foot and on bicycle should be free in forests where access is permitted. The FC should not seek contributions from equestrians for maintenance of forest routes when these are not sought from walkers and cyclists.

Three quarters of horse riders are female, 31 percent are aged under 16, and 18 percent are aged 16 to 24. Like all riders, these groups particularly need safe places to ride. Many equestrians cannot afford to pay a permit fee, as 25 percent of horse owners earn less than £10,000 per annum. Paying for access particularly discriminates against lower socio-economic groups.

Equestrians who cannot purchase permits are then forced to ride on the roads which is inherently less safe than off-road riding.

Please add your support to our campaign to end the FC's unfair discrimination against equestrians when allowing access to the Forestry Commission England's Estate.

Yours sincerely,