

Mapping Britain on Horseback – the BHS needs you!

The British Horse Society (BHS) has invited equestrians throughout the UK to help them take their mapping strategy to the next level. The aim is to record every equestrian route in the UK on the Society's EMAGIN system.

EMAGIN® (Equine Mapping and Geographical Information Network) is a GIS-based tool for collecting equestrian data, such as where to ride or carriage drive, or where to find approved BHS riding centres. The British Horse Society hopes to collate enough information to map every equestrian route in the UK, including routes that may have unrecorded or under-recorded rights.

The BHS's Access Department is asking members of the public to sign up as Mapping Volunteers and provide information on the routes they use.

The British Horse Society's Head of Access, Heather Holmes, said: "This is a great opportunity for people who like to ride off-road to work with us on digitising the routes in their area. If you've ever thought about volunteering for the BHS, but weren't quite sure what to do, this is a perfect opportunity to test the water, and help other riders by mapping your area. If you like it, you may wish to explore the possibility of becoming an Access and Bridleways Officer for the BHS, and so make a difference in your community now and for future generations."

When signing up as a Mapping Volunteer, the BHS can provide printout maps of an area for the volunteer to mark up and return. Options are available for those who have their own mapping software, though this is not essential to participating in the project. The project aims to recruit at least 500 mapping volunteers spread throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The BHS is working with sponsors to provide GPS equipment and training for those who wish to become involved at a more serious level.

GIS Officer for the BHS, Sarah Shackleton, said: "Becoming a mapping volunteer requires as little or as much effort as you want – whether you've only ever ridden one route, have a full-time job and one afternoon a month you can spare us, or you're retired, with plenty of local riding knowledge and time that you would like to invest in the project. You don't even need a horse – your feet or a bicycle are fine to use too! Every bit of help will expand our EMAGIN system, providing information that will defend, extend and promote the equestrian rights of way network."

If you are interested in becoming a mapping volunteer, contact Sarah Shackleton by email on emagin@bhs.org.uk, stating which part of the UK you are interested in mapping.

For further information, please contact BHS Press Officer Alison Coleman, on 01926 707737, or communications@bhs.org.uk