

The British Horse Society

Advisory Statement



**The British Horse Society**

Registered Charity No. 210504

# No.20

# Wind Farms

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This note applies to England and Wales.  
For advice on the situation in Scotland,  
Please contact Mrs P Somerville  
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Arow/crdft

1. The Society is conscious of the need for developers and planners to be made aware of the safety implications to horses and their riders or drivers arising from the construction and operation of wind turbines in the vicinity of routes for riding and/or driving horse drawn vehicles (HDV).

2. The natural instinct of a horse when faced with perceived danger is flight so its reaction depends very much on, in that first split second, the horse's perception of the hazard, and equally as important the riders/drivers ability to handle the horse or pony when faced with unexpected circumstances.

3. The horse and rider unfamiliar with the area may react in a potentially dangerous manner to any of the following characteristics which can arise from the operation of a wind turbine:

sudden appearance in the horses' sight line of turning blades,

the low frequency noise emitted by the turbines punctuated by the "whoomph" as the blades pass the nadir point and sometimes said to be felt rather than heard,

shadows sweeping the ground or bushes/trees in sunny weather,

the unexpected starting up of the turbine if the wind builds up as the horse approaches.

4. In addition to these particular characteristics, all of which would be affected by the weather conditions at the time, there could be dangers which arise from equipment failure or from the build up of ice on the blades but no matter the *kind* of danger perceived or faced, the likely risks can be significantly reduced simply by ensuring turbines are installed at a safe distance from equestrian routes.

5. The British Horse Society adopted a policy in December 1995 which recommended a minimum distance between the base of any turbine and the nearest equestrian route, of 200 metres. However that distance was arrived at when the average height of proposed turbines was between 40 and 50 metres. In 1998, there have been applications for turbines of up to 100 metres high and it is therefore seen as essential that a formula is identified which will calculate the minimum safe distance, based on the actual height of the turbine.

6. The Turnpike Act, 1822 specifically prohibited the erection of a windmill within 200 yards of a turnpike road and the Highways Act 1835 specified a minimum distance of 50 yards between the base of a windmill and any part of any carriageway or cartway "*so that the same may not be dangerous to passengers, horses or cattle*". In those days, most members of the community would have been familiar with horses and been fully aware of their flight characteristics. Knowledge of horses is not as widespread these days, hence the need to draw attention to the potential dangers.

7 . The only recent guidance is contained in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance note PPG 22 Renewable Energy which arises in paragraph 37 - *a set back from roads and railways of a least the height of the turbine*. The equivalent document for Wales is PG (W) PP & TA No.8 Wales. However examples already exist where this advice has not been taken and the Society believes that much firmer government guidance is urgently needed to ensure that a minimum safe distance is applied.

8. The British Horse Society advises that - before planning permission is granted for the installation of a wind turbine or turbines - consideration be given to requiring a safety margin between the proposed turbine(s) and the nearest public right of way or other access route available for use by horse riders and/or horse drawn vehicle (HDV) drivers. The Society is urging Government to revise its guidance so as to relate the safe minimum distance to the proposed height of the nearest turbine on the basis of a least three times the height - reflecting the guidance given in earlier times. In the meantime, the Society urges that all developers and planners recognise a 200 metre safety margin as being the absolute minimum for limiting the potential impact on equestrian interests.

9. Developers have been known to wish to use bridleways or byways for access to the wind farm site during the construction phase. The Society is opposed to such use. The Society fears that heavy vehicle use of unsurfaced routes may result in irreversible damage and planning authorities are asked to take this into account. However, if a planning authority is satisfied that no alternative exists to the use of public rights of way as construction routes, any permission should be subjected to specific conditions regarding maintenance and reinstatement and these should be enshrined within the planning consent.

10. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (PPG 7), The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development makes a positive statement about horse riding and gives advice on the need to consider the impact of proposed developments on public rights of way (Para. 3.13). Similar advice is given in the equivalent guidance issued by the Welsh Office. In view of this guidance the Society believes it ought to be consulted on any planning cases which may impact on equestrian use of or condition of a public rights of way.

11. Anyone involved in considering applications for new wind turbines may find it helpful for background information to obtain a copy of the following publications:

*Wind Energy CCP 357 - Countryside Commission*

*Best Practice Guidelines for Wind Energy Development - The British Wind Energy Assoc.*

*Wind Farms of the UK - The British Wind Energy Association*

*Wind Farms - Country Landowners Association*

*Renewable Energy PPG 22 or PG(W)PP&TA No.8 (Wales) - The Stationery Office (TSO)*