

P-05-774 Pass Wide and Slow – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 15.11.17

David John Rowlands AM

Chair – Petitions committee

14 November 2017

P-05-774 Pass Wide and Slow Wales (PWASW)

Dear David Rowlands,

Thank you for allowing us to respond to the communications you have received from both The British Horse Society (BHS) and Ken Skates Cabinet Minister for Economy and Transport.

PWASW endorses, supports and promotes the good work that has and is being done by the BHS, to change driver's attitudes and behaviour when passing horses on the roads. In particular we would welcome any moves towards:

- 1) Reducing the speed limit from 60mph to 40mph on rural roads that horses use;
- 2) Increasing the provision of off road riding and carriage driving;
- 3) Increasing driver awareness around horses, delivered through an annual education campaign that targets all ages;
- 4) Strengthen and amend section 215 of the Highway Code.

Even whilst all this good work has been taking place another, horse and rider, were hit by a car. Thankfully the rider (Bethan Williams aged 15) was unharmed but the same cannot be said for her horse. Bethan, tells her story below:

"I was returning from a ride on 22nd Oct, and whilst on Wick Road, Ewenny, I had stopped to talk to a friend who was walking. A car came down the hill very fast (but not speeding as the lane is national speed limit) and hit the rear end of my horse. I was thrown off and my friend had to jump in to a hedge to avoid being hit. The impact ultimately killed my horse due to severe tissue damage sustained. The driver stated that she did not see us due to the sun restricting her vision. The road where the incident happened is popular with horses, cyclists and walkers so my family and I feel that she simply should not have been going at such speed if her vision was impaired. I am constantly reminded of how lucky I am to be alive. Because, had I, fallen off the horse on to the road, I would have been struck by the car. This is a mental trauma that no one should have to suffer especially a child like myself"

Everybody has a right to use the public highways and when doing so to be safe whether that be, on foot, on horseback, driving a horse and carriage or cycling. Equally, we (vulnerable road users) have a responsibility to make ourselves as visible as possible to other road users. We do not believe that what has been done to date has had enough coverage to make a real difference, and we still believe that Welsh Government have a pivotal role to play in ensuring our safety.

Therefore we are calling on Welsh Government to utilise (or enable appropriate bodies, by making available the resources) the Dead Slow campaign materials, make them appropriate to Wales (bilingual) and run on an annual basis. Including; more mainstream media channels including TV primetime.

We maintain what we set out in the petition (supported by the BHS response) its about educating drivers. The BHS cannot do this alone, so we need to see more resources made available to ensure the message reaches audiences of all ages and at appropriate viewing times.

We are really encouraged by the work of the South and North Wales police forces and the GoSafe partnership in creating Operation SNAP making it easier for people to submit video footage of road incidents, and following its launch we will be promoting it to the riding community via social media.

Horse riding has so many positive benefits including:

- 1) Improving peoples mental, and physical health and wellbeing
- 2) Encourages people to spend more time outdoors and in the countryside
- 3) Contributes to the Welsh economy – the estimated annual cost of keeping a horse is £3,105.

The Welsh Governments own act ‘The Wellbeing of Future Generations’ (2015) sets out the need for public bodies to think in a more sustainable way; think about the long term, work better with people, communities and each other, to prevent problems, take a more joined-up approach. It will expect public bodies to take action to try and stop problems getting worse – or even stop them happening in the first place.

Unfortunately when it comes to horse rider and carriage driver safety the roads seem to be getting worse. Sian Vesey talks below about an incident involving her daughter and horse in 2011.

'My daughter and her friend were making their way back from pony club (accompanied by an adult) when a young inexperienced driver in a heavy goods type vehicle drove past too closely. The events that unfolded were horrific and resulted in the tragic loss of a much-loved pony. The aftermath was devastating for all involved and the pony suffered whilst the vet struggled to make her way through heavy traffic to get to the scene of the incident. Thankfully my daughter was uninjured, but the events of that day will stay with us and others involved forever'

PWASW believe that horse riding supports the following three aims of the act:

A healthier Wales – A society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood;

A more equal Wales – A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances);

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

Therefore are calling for a joined up approach between public, private and third sector bodies to make the roads in Wales a safer place for horses and riders (along with other vulnerable road users).

Yours sincerely

Jocelle Lovell

Rachel Francis

Ulrike Smalley

Angela Baker