



Chairman's Six-Month Update to Members

28th August 2026

Dear Members,

Having been in post as Interim Chair for six months, I wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the work taking place across Sport Horse Breeding of Great Britain and, importantly, the direction in which your Society is moving.

The past six months have been busy and productive. Alongside our visible activities, considerable work has taken place behind the scenes to strengthen the Society, improve services and build a stronger foundation for the future.

Everything we are doing is guided by our Vision, Mission and Values, with one principle above all others:

Welfare First.

Our vision is:

“A respected and inclusive equine society where breeding for today's and tomorrow's changing needs is championed, equine welfare is upheld, excellence in all activities thrives, and members are proud to belong.”

Our guiding principle is:

“Educated breeding for all future equine activities.”

Our values are:

Welfare First • Excellence • Integrity • Education • Stewardship • Public Benefit

These are not simply statements; they provide the framework for how we are developing the Society.

Welfare First.

Must be the heart of everything we do

As an equine organisation, we have a responsibility to the horses involved in our activities and to promote responsible breeding, ownership and participation in equestrian sport.

The exceptionally high temperatures during this year's Championship Show presented challenges for horses, competitors, officials and volunteers. Welfare was kept under constant review, with decisions taken with conditions and the wellbeing of horses and people firmly in mind.

Our Values

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Extreme temperatures and other challenging weather conditions are becoming increasingly important. We need to prepare for a changing climate, recognising that higher temperatures and less predictable conditions may affect how we keep, breed and compete horses.

As a Society, we can help by sharing information, encouraging good practice and raising awareness of how best to care for horses in changing conditions.

Equine influenza has similarly reinforced the importance of responsible vaccination and biosecurity. With horses travelling extensively for breeding, competition and other activities, good biosecurity has never been more important.

Where appropriate, SHB(GB) can share information, promote good practice and signpost members to organisations with specialist expertise.

Welfare is not simply about responding when something goes wrong. It means anticipating risks, educating ourselves and others, preparing properly and adapting as circumstances change.

The welfare of the horse and the welfare of the people caring for them must always come first.

Excellence

Our aim is for excellence in all our activities, with breeding and grading work remaining central.

During the first half of the year, we successfully held both stallion and mare gradings, giving breeders opportunities to have their horses assessed against appropriate standards.

We also delivered our Championship Show, providing a platform to showcase the quality and diversity of British sport horse breeding.

My thanks to everyone who contributed – our judges, officials, volunteers, breeders, owners, competitors, sponsors and supporters.

Developing Our Judges

Excellence also means investing in the people who deliver our activities.

We are reviewing our approach to probationary and developing judges, with greater support, guidance, mentoring and constructive feedback.

We want a clearer pathway for those developing their judging experience, helping them build knowledge and confidence while maintaining the standards expected when representing SHB(GB).

Integrity

A modern charity and membership Society must operate with transparency, accountability and integrity.

Considerable work has therefore taken place to strengthen governance arrangements, policies, procedures and financial controls.

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Modernising Our Articles

Our Articles of Association were written many years ago. We are updating and modernising them, so they are appropriate for a modern membership charity and provide a sound framework for SHB(GB) into the future.

The intention is not to lose what makes SHB(GB) unique, but to ensure our governance arrangements are fit for modern use and the future.

Strengthening Financial Management

We have reviewed our accounting arrangements and appointed new accountants, giving the Society appropriate professional support as we strengthen financial management.

Our accounting systems and financial controls are also being strengthened to provide better information, clearer accountability and a sounder basis for decision-making.

Education

Education is central to our mission.

We want SHB(GB) to be more than an organisation that assesses horses and runs events. We want to be a source of knowledge and support, helping members make informed decisions about breeding and the future needs of equestrian sport.

There is a tremendous depth of experience within our membership and wider breeding community. Experienced breeders, producers, owners, judges and practitioners have knowledge that can be a valuable resource. We want to make better use of that knowledge, encouraging those with experience to share it and creating more opportunities for members to learn from one another.

Education also has an important role in supporting the future of the equine industry. If we are to retain the skilled workforce the industry depends upon and encourage new people into it, we need to create an environment where people are valued, supported and able to learn and develop.

During the Championship Show, we welcomed three senior Pony Club members interested in careers with horses to help with the event. Their enthusiasm, willingness to learn and keenness to be involved were particularly encouraging.

Our review of the judges' development programme is one example of this approach. We are reviewing our approach to probationary and developing judges, with the aim of providing greater support, guidance, mentoring and constructive feedback. We want to create a clearer pathway for those developing their judging experience, helping them build their knowledge and confidence while maintaining the standards expected when representing SHB(GB).

We are also looking at greater collaboration with other key stakeholders across the equine community, allowing us to share knowledge and expertise and, where appropriate, signpost members to organisations and services that can provide specialist support. This will enable us to add value for members without unnecessarily duplicating the work of others.

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Stewardship

Stewardship is central to securing our future.

Significant work has taken place behind the scenes to make the Society more efficient and ensure members' money, information and assets are properly managed.

We are clearing and reorganising the office, dealing with legacy paperwork and reviewing working practices to reduce administration and improve efficiency.

We have invested in new IT and telephone systems, providing a stronger foundation for day-to-day operations.

We have also strengthened accounting systems and financial controls and reviewed expenditure and supplier arrangements.

Modernising Our Data

One of the most significant developments is our move to Grassroots, which will manage our equine and membership information.

This will improve on our previous databases by bringing together information from breed passports and show registrations with membership information.

The new system will provide a more secure and robust foundation and allow information to be accessed and used more effectively.

Most importantly for members, it should improve services, make them timelier and more efficient, and reduce duplication and unnecessary administration. This important investment in the Society's future is ongoing and is expected to continue into the middle of next year as we develop and embed the new systems.

Public Benefit – The Wider Value of Equines

As a charity, public benefit must extend beyond those who already understand and appreciate horses.

We know the contribution horses and equines make to people's lives and should also demonstrate these benefits to people with little or no connection to horses. Horses contribute to physical and mental wellbeing, companionship, personal development, social connection and inclusion.

Working with horses can build confidence, responsibility, communication and practical skills, particularly among young people. Equestrian activity also supports employment, businesses, tourism and rural communities. British Equestrian research puts the economic value of the sector at approximately £5 billion, with wider social value estimated at around £1.2 billion each year. These figures demonstrate that horses contribute far beyond leisure, supporting employment, businesses, tourism, sport, recreation and rural life.

We should challenge misconceptions about the horse community by demonstrating its diversity, contribution to society and commitment to responsible ownership and welfare.

Our challenge is to communicate these benefits beyond those who already understand horses.

For SHB(GB), this reinforces why educated and responsible breeding matters. The horses we breed today must be capable of fulfilling tomorrow's changing roles and needs.

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Better Communication and Reaching a Wider Audience

The way people communicate, and access information has changed significantly.

We need to ensure SHB(GB) engages with members and the wider public through the channels they use.

We are developing a PR, marketing and digital plan for 2027, covering our website, social media and other appropriate channels. We want information to reach members and the wider community through the channels they use, rather than expecting everyone to engage in the same way.

The aim is not simply to communicate more, but to communicate better – providing members with useful and relevant information, celebrating our breeders and members, promoting our activities, and helping people better understand SHB(GB), what we do and the contribution we make to British sport horse breeding.

We are planning a new SHB(GB) website for 2027, providing a more modern, accessible and informative online presence that makes it easier for members and others to find the information they need.

Working Together

We are reaching out to other organisations across the equine community to establish stronger, collaborative relationships. Sharing knowledge, experience and opportunities can benefit everyone.

We want SHB(GB) to be an active and constructive member of the wider equestrian community and help raise the profile of British sport horse breeding.

We firmly believe: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

By working together and sharing expertise, we can achieve considerably more than any organisation could achieve alone.

Membership – Being Proud to Belong

Our vision specifically says that we want members to be proud to belong.

Membership must provide a clear and worthwhile benefit. We are therefore reviewing our membership structure, categories, fees and benefits.

This is not simply about increasing membership numbers. It is about understanding what members need and ensuring SHB(GB) provides meaningful opportunities for breeders, owners, competitors and supporters to engage.

We want members to feel that SHB(GB) is their Society – representing their interests, supporting their ambitions and contributing to British sport horse breeding. Your views and experiences are important in shaping its future, and we want to provide better opportunities for members to tell us what they value and what they would like to see developed

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Looking Ahead

We all know that the world around us is changing. The equine industry is changing, as are technology, expectations around welfare and governance, the climate, how we communicate and treat each other, and the way people engage with organisations.

SHB(GB) needs to recognise these changes, understand them and be prepared to respond. This includes developing more empathetic and constructive approaches, looking beyond immediate issues to find longer-term solutions that strengthen the Society and its relationships with members and the wider equine community.

That does not mean abandoning our history or losing our identity. Quite the opposite. Our history, knowledge and experience are important assets and provide the foundations on which we can build.

Our history, knowledge and experience are important assets. They provide the foundations on which we can build. But we cannot allow our history to prevent us from preparing for the future.

Our aim is to ensure SHB(GB) is prepared for the opportunities and challenges ahead and able to support members through change rather than constantly reacting after the event.

Over the remainder of the year and into 2027, our priorities will include:

- continuing to put welfare first in everything we do;
- strengthening our breeding and grading activities;
- developing our judges and educational opportunities;
- modernising our Articles and governance framework;
- continuing the move to more secure and effective equine and membership data systems;
- improving membership benefits and engagement;
- developing our PR, marketing and digital strategy;
- progressing plans for a new website in 2027;
- building stronger collaborative relationships across the equine community; and
- ensuring that the Society's resources are managed responsibly and effectively.

We want SHB(GB) to be respected and inclusive, to champion breeding for today's and tomorrow's changing needs, to uphold equine welfare, to see excellence thrive, and to create a Society of which members are proud to belong.

We have a proud history, but our responsibility is to ensure that SHB(GB) is equally relevant to the future.

There is much still to do, but I believe there is also much to be positive about.

Thank you to all our members, volunteers, judges, breeders, owners, competitors, sponsors, supporters and staff for your contribution and support to SHB(GB).

Chris Hewlett
Interim Chairman
Sport Horse Breeding of Great Britain

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