

Project Progress

Issue 7: March 2025

This document provides a top-line summary of British racing's progress in equine welfare as defined by the sport's five-year 'Life Well Lived' strategy

The Horse Welfare Board (HWB) is an independently chaired cross-industry [Board](#) in place since 2019 to work in partnership with the industry to ensure British racing has the highest possible welfare levels.

In February 2020, 26 projects were identified to help British racing continuously improve all aspects of racehorse welfare in the sport. These were published in the five-year strategy '[A Life Well Lived](#)'

Priority areas have been identified as **safety, data, traceability, aftercare, and communications**. The HWB's dedicated programme team, in collaboration with stakeholders from across the sport, deliver this work.

HWB	Horse Welfare Board	RVC	Royal Veterinary College
RoR	Retraining Of Racehorses	ACFR	Aftercare Funding Review
NTF	National Trainers Federation	RRM	Racing Risk Model
BHA	British Horseracing Authority	ESSG	Equine Safety Steering Group
TBA	Thoroughbred Breeders Association	HWG	Hurdle Working Group

This summary sets out progress against the projects from each of British racing's core priority areas.

Safety

Project 9: Racing Risk Model (RRM)

Development and application of the RRM, which will identify risk factors linked to falls, injuries, and fatalities in jump racing.

COMPLETE

- The BHA Equine Safety Group (ESG) formed in December 2022 with representatives from across the sport. The ESG monitors all aspects of British racing that concern equine safety, and consider any matters referred to it. It also makes recommendations to the appropriate industry bodies for their consideration. The ESG oversees the Racing Risk Model (RRM).
- The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has been appointed as lead epidemiology partner on a 3-year rolling contract, funded by Racing Foundation, to ensure independence in the evaluation and risk analysis findings. RVC will disseminate findings in scientific literature for public consumption and use across equine disciplines.

IN PROGRESS

- The first RRM report (fatalities) was presented to the ESG in September 2023, the second (fallers and long-term injuries) was presented in January 2024. The ESG agreed that one of the key areas of focus is to reduce the number of falls in jump racing.
- The fallers project commenced in July 2024 and will run for one year with quarterly expert panel reviews of all faller related data. The review panel will make necessary recommendations and share key learnings to assist with the reduction of falls and serious injury.
- The third RRM Report was presented to the ESG in October 2024 and for the first time included flat racing data. The data will now be sub-divided into turf and all-weather to be presented to the ESG in early March 2025 after which the ESG will consider the next steps.

- The ESG has also agreed recommended next steps for jump racing based on the RRM reports, to help reduce the number of falls and fatalities and facilitate deeper investigation into some of the areas that show increased risk in jump racing to equine safety.
- The BHA has developed a number of dashboards which produce easy access and ‘one stop’ data points for information relating to adverse outcomes.

Project 12: Fatality Review (Rider Engagement)

The gathering of rider and close team insights into fatalities to build a fuller understanding of risk factors.

COMPLETE

- The Fatality Review project was set up to explore potential enhancements to current equine fatality processes. It is a “no blame” qualitative process to identify potential learnings that can contribute to the ongoing work to reduce fatalities on British racecourses. A 12-month pilot completed in September 2024.
- The review process includes thorough and holistic reviews with persons involved prior to and during the race, alongside a review of race footage.
- By comparing similar incidents and repeating factors, the panel will, in time, to identify probable contributing factors to fatalities and make recommendations for change.
- The panel engages with stakeholders and share findings that help drive conversation, consideration, and support improvements in welfare understanding and education.
- Fatality review process:
 - Within 5 days - jockey, trainer, vets, racecourse, BHA staff contacted and sent questionnaire
 - By 10 days - all questionnaires received and follow up phone calls underway where necessary
 - By 14 days - all data collated, and race footage viewed by panel
 - End of the month - panel meeting to discuss every case and develop monthly report

IN PROGRESS

- Handover to ‘business as usual’ between September-December 2024. The BHA has taken ownership of this work from January 2025 with confirmed the budget and resource.

Project 14: Suitability to Race

Assessment of perception-related suitability issues to provide further evidence and information.

COMPLETE

- Initial scoping included a thorough data review of the welfare impact of presumed higher risk horses, including pregnant mares, juvenile horses and older horses.
- RRM has provided some data and information to assist this project. This will be used for these focus areas with support and guidance from the ESG.

IN PROGRESS

- Further clarity on the data of presumed higher risk horses will be sought to determine whether these factors should or shouldn’t be addressed under the remit of “suitability to race”.
- The RRM has identified some areas (eg Eligibility to Race, horses returning to racing after a break) which need further work and are dependent on Racing Digital being in place

Project 15: Ground and Going Research, Development & Training

Research into ground and going to build a best practice framework to apply to all racecourses and training surfaces, and development of training programmes for participants and their staff.

COMPLETE

- BHAGI 3.2 (Conditions of the Course, Going and Irrigation) was updated in October 2023 with the latest best practice guidance. This is now a requirement for all courses.

- STRI (Sports Turf Research Institute) developed a new Performance Quality Standard (PQS) for turf racecourses, mirroring those applied in other sports. This framework was delivered in September 2024.
- 18-month Turf Assessment Research Project with Nottingham Trent University & University of Central Lancashire began March 2023 to explore improving consistency of going descriptions and reports. The project report was delivered in September 2024, with proposals put forward which could support additional metrics for the assessment and management of ground. Additional pilot research is being conducted on course.
- Ground and Going workshops took place in February 2025 to enable practical implementation and delivery of the going projects by racecourses.

IN PROGRESS

- A project to explore the potential to extend these pieces of work to support trainers and gather data about gallops is underway.
- Work has been undertaken and is being reviewed to focus on Moisture Management and irrigation on course.
- Scoping it underway to deliver support for synthetic surfaces on racecourses.

Project 16: Obstacle Improvement and Development

Continued, continuous improvement of obstacle design and construction.

COMPLETE

- The Hurdle Working Group (HWG) was formed in 2021.
- Recommendations from the equine vision research project were delivered in 2022. All markers on obstacles in British jump racing have now changed from orange to white.
- A draft Hurdle Performance Technical Specification for British racing was completed in December 2023. It was submitted to the BHA in early 2024 for finalising and once approved, it will become a requirement for any new design of hurdle to conform to this specification.
- An additional supplier of pads for padded hurdles has been sourced. These pads were tested and approved by the BHA for use in racing and are now being used on racecourses.
- Use of different materials for hurdle frames were explored in 2023. Prototypes were produced for consideration by the HWG. The HWG recommended putting any further work on hold due to current costs of materials and weight of the product.
- Every jump course in Britain has been walked by HWB's Equine Safety Advisor with the relevant Inspector of Courses. The core objective was to discuss each course with equine safety in mind and to make recommendations for consideration where appropriate. Recommendations were made to the Inspectors of Courses in November 2023 and the Horse Welfare Board in mid-December 2023. Next steps were agreed with the Inspectors of Courses in early 2024.
- Recommendations made to BHA by the HWG in August 2023 regarding padding of all timber toe boards, the future of traditional birch hurdles, and painting padded hurdles white to the top of the pads.
- BHA confirmed that traditional birch hurdles will be phased out and replaced by padded-style hurdles at all courses by 1st October 2026.

IN PROGRESS

- Recommendations currently under review by BHA:
 - Hurdle Performance Technical Specification – the spec has been approved and should be published by the end of April
 - Padding of all timber toe boards to be completed by the end of 2025
 - Use of brush hurdles (Southwell and Worcester): the Hurdle WG recommended that these be phased out; modifications have been made by ARC with the agreement of the BHA and the data re these obstacles will be reviewed in 12 months (October 2025) ahead of a final decision
 - Painting padded hurdles white to the top of the pads is being adopted

- The HWG is looking at potential improvements to the profiles of existing hurdles. A concept toe board has been trialled and well received. The go-ahead has been given to produce 24 for trialling. These 24 are expected to be ready for trialling by the end of May 2025 with Hurdle Working Group recommendations for consideration to be made in Q3.
- Actions from course walks agreed with BHA Inspectors of Courses, progress to be monitored.

Project 17: Stalls & Starting Review

Review of stalls design, stalls loading procedures and jumps starting procedures.

COMPLETE

- Working Group recommendations completed and made to BHA in July 2022.
- Four main categories of recommendations for implementation: Preventative, Raceday, Starting Stalls, and Data Collection.
- 28 recommendations have been actioned including rules to remove use of whips at the start, enhanced training for starting assistants and restrictions on horse handling when loading.

IN PROGRESS

- 12 are under continuous review, future changes to BHAGIs to be discussed at the Chief Regulatory Officer's (CROC) committee meetings.
- The recommendation to review the design of the front gates of stalls has moved back into HWB project work, with work ongoing with Steriline. This work is looking likely to encompass all stalls changes as recommended by the working group, e.g. back padding length. Work is in progress on a BHAGI specification for starting stalls.

Project 18: Review impact of prize money for lower placed horses

Consideration of any welfare link with prize money availability for lower placed horses.

- Appearance money scheme was reviewed and closed in 2023 which reduced the incentive for jockeys and horses to continue in a race for lower placings. A small fee is paid to every runner on a Sunday, to cover additional costs of racing on this day.
- Ongoing work from the latest Racing Risk Model findings with RVC to look at any welfare impact of lower placed prize money. It is hard to evaluate the welfare impact because the numbers are small and therefore statistically insignificant on which to propose an evidence-based recommendation. What is being looked at now is what the impact is in terms of adverse outcomes of horses running out of handicap.

Traceability

Project 4: Traceability

Ensuring the fullest possible traceability across the lifetime of Thoroughbreds bred for racing, from the point of the 30-day foal notification onwards.

COMPLETE

- Britain's first Thoroughbred Census was completed with Hartpury University in December 2023. It provided comprehensive insights into the post-racing lives of Thoroughbreds in Britain. Through this work 80% of the estimated 33,600 former racehorse population are known to be active and identifiable at present. Recommendations by Hartpury University were made to the industry March 2024.

- HWB has provided recommendations to BHA Racing Digital to improve traceability, including introducing automatic prompts for horses marked in the system as ‘temporary’ status for an extended period.
- Foal crop analysis project implemented and will be ongoing as an annual process led by the TBA. This project assesses outcomes of six-year-old horses (by which point most have entered training) that have not progressed into racing from GB stud farms.
- Weatherbys launched its ePassport in 2019 which now includes details on 206,000+ horses from the GB and IRE stud book, including 238,000+ vaccination touch points.

IN PROGRESS

- Census recommendations are being reviewed, supported by the HWB and BHA Racing Digital enhancements to close the data gaps on horses that have exited or been retired from racing.
- Traceability group set up to pool resources from across the industry and action census recommendations.
- Foal crop analysis for 2018 is complete and will be independently audited by the RVC. Broodmare analysis work has commenced will be independently audited in due course. Funding is being requested to make this an annual process.

Data

Project 10: Racing Fatalities Occurring off the Racecourse

Continued gathering and analysis of data and fatalities linked to racing that occur off the racecourse.

IN PROGRESS

- The BHA’s new Racing Digital system will be improved with new data capture protocols to request and report on reasons for a fatality in training.
- The questions were reviewed with HWB’s epidemiology partner RVC, the National Trainers Federation (NTF) equine welfare panel, and the BHA veterinary panel. Implementation date tbc.

Project 13: Trainer Engagement (including injuries in training)

Collaboration with trainers to build understanding and share trainer expertise and best practice on training regimes that may reduce risk of racehorse injury and fatality.

IN PROGRESS

- The scope of the trainer engagement project has been confirmed as the gathering of data around injuries in training to help identify issues, allow benchmarking, and drive best practice across the community.
- Currently planned to be a year-long study. Project recruitment commenced in 2023 with recommendations likely to be made to the training community by end of 2025.
- Work underway to recruit trainers for the study to be completed Jan/Feb 2025 and identify the most useful data and information to be gathered with support of the RVC and Welfare Data Unit.
- An operational and financial framework for the staging of schooling trials on racecourses/Point to Point tracks has been developed. Three schooling trials days have been successfully run to date, with an additional four scheduled as part of the pilot scheme.

Aftercare

Project 5: Welfare Funding Model

Delivering the sport's Aftercare Funding Review (ACFR) Recommendations on Funding, Focus and Integration and Accreditation.

COMPLETE

- The Aftercare Funding Review was delivered in March 2021, including key recommendations on funding, focus, integration and accreditation.
- HWB agreed the definition of “extent of racing’s responsibility” towards horses in the aftercare sector, leading to an expansion of the sport’s safety net to include first step out of racing.
- Retraining Assessment Programme permanently established in partnership with HEROS, to support horses in need of additional support as they make their first step away from racing.
- A new three-year strategy was published by Retraining of Racehorses (RoR) in January 2024 to deliver on recommendations from racing’s Aftercare Funding Review. The strategy was presented at the RoR Stakeholder Forum on Aftercare in January and welcomed and endorsed by the industry.

IN PROGRESS

- RoR continues to engage with industry stakeholders in relation to the development of a sustainable funding model to support the sector, with increased funding contributions from racecourses, owners, jockeys and trainers. Funding from sales companies secured along with a levy from the vendor and purchaser for each horse sale.

Communications

Project 24: Promotional Welfare Communications Plan

To develop and implement an approach and plan that puts the importance of the horse at the centre of its promotional activity.

COMPLETE

- National Racehorse Week (NRW) was established as a cross-industry experiential communications platform in 2021 and has been delivered for three consecutive years. More than 50k free places have been delivered at studs, training yards, and aftercare facilities over the last three years.
- NRW 2024 took place 7-15th September 2024, offering 14k+ free places at 104 public open days, alongside 55 community events engaging another 4k including schools and diverse communities.
- Phase one of HorsePWR completed, with website hub www.horsepwr.co.uk live and creative assets distributed to racecourses, racing stakeholders, and supporters.

IN PROGRESS

- Phase two of HorsePWR launched in February expanding the visibility of the campaign to target audiences. Activity will run to April 2025.
- Work is underway to secure funding for phase three of the campaign potentially commencing from May 2025

Project 25: Corporate Communications (Welfare)

Development and execution of the corporate communications and issues management plan.

COMPLETE

- Joint Communications Group and Public Affairs Groups established as the primary forums to coordinate welfare communications issues and activities.
- Welfare spokesperson strategy established including external advocates for proactive and reactive media activity
- HWB Key Facts document and newsletter created and circulated quarterly to internal and external stakeholders.
- Regular Racing Post column established with members of the HWB.
- LinkedIn channel established.

IN PROGRESS

- Political engagement opportunities being monitored by the Public Affairs team

Other

Project 2: Training & Education

Training and education programmes to ensure that those responsible for the Thoroughbred understand their responsibilities and commit to continuous learning.

COMPLETE

- Recommendations from Steering Group were delivered on how to implement the work and ensure education was easily accessible, relevant, and engaging. Approved in October 2023.
- Education for trainers and jockeys outlined as priority with delivery online and on demand.
- Modules and content focussed on the needs of the industry, addressing equine welfare matters.
- First modules being developed and ready for launch by Q1 2025 via Racing2Learn include: The importance of water, Heat stress, Effects of travel on racehorses and Natural behaviours.

IN PROGRESS

- Potential to link welfare training to licensing in the future is being explored.
- 21 modules in total to be released by June 2025.
- The purchase of 10 Resquip horse mannequins to support the welfare of horses through the enhanced training of racecourse teams in the safe and timely movement of horses on course. Two mannequins have been delivered to Cheltenham and Haydock with the remaining eight due for delivery by 31 March 2025.

Project 8: Continued Consideration of Breeding Methods

Continuing consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of different breeding methods in the context of welfare and international considerations.

IN PROGRESS

- Ongoing dialogue between the BHA, HWB, TBA and Weatherbys on breeding methods and General Stud Book (GSB) eligibility.
- In June 2022, at the International Thoroughbred Breeders' Federation (ITBF) meeting in Newmarket, the topic of artificial breeding methods was discussed and debated, with a vote taken and unanimous agreement reached on upholding the current international rule (Article 12 of the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering (AIBRW), states that there can be no artificial breeding involved in conception or gestation in the Thoroughbred). In May 2024, at the ITBF conference in Japan, a vote was again taken by members and agreement reached on maintaining the current international agreement.

- In October 2023, presentations and panel sessions on artificial breeding techniques were delivered at the Horseracing Industry Conference in York.
- The TBA will continue to monitor and review the current position alongside the ITBF, particularly in the context of optimum equine health and wellbeing; reducing environmental impact; threats to the National (or Global) Risk Register, such as infectious disease threat to humans and/or horses; and in maintaining the longevity and diversity of the breed.

Complete

Project 23: Communications Strategy and Campaign

A cross-industry communications strategy and plan, to be developed by and for the sport, based on the overarching welfare strategy and alignment with racing's overall communications strategy.

- Cross-industry HorsePWR campaign platform and website hub www.horsepwr.co.uk launched in April 2024.
- Horsepwr.co.uk provides the sport with a central hub for all welfare related data and facts from the sport, including faller and fatality rates, foal crops and post racing traceability.
- The ongoing campaign now integrates into project 24 as part of always-on promotional activity.

Project 20: The Future of the Whip

The development of the resulting consultation, implementation plans and related sub-projects following the HWB's recommendation to the BHA for future action on the whip.

- BHA led project. Extensive consultations took place over 12 months and have been fully implemented.
- New rules introduced designed to foster more considered use, consistency of stewarding and stiffer penalties for misuse.
- Threshold for acceptable use of the whip reduced to six in a flat race and seven in a jumps race.
- Every use of the whip will now count towards the thresholds for use, unless it has been used clearly and unequivocally for safety purposes.
- Introduction of the whip referral committee which evaluates all rides and implements any sanctions or actions, to increase consistency and drive ongoing improvement in riding standards.
- Increased penalties for offences, including doubled suspensions in major races when the whip is used above the permitted level.
- Disqualification introduced for offences in which the whip has been used four times or more above the permitted level in all races.

Project 21: Welfare Data Unit (resourcing a data team)

The establishment of a cross-industry data programme, with the aim of establishing an aligned data strategy and an integrated, cross-cutting data unit for racing.

- The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) appointed in 2023 as the Epidemiology collaboration partner for the Horse Welfare Board on a 3-year rolling contract and funded by Racing Foundation
- Head of data, analysis and insight appointed by the BHA whose role includes oversight of the welfare data flows and data requests.
- Dedicated equine welfare analysis resource recruited to support the data, analysis & insight team.
- RVC and BHA data leads integrated into projects including the Racing Risk Model (RRM), injuries in training and selected Equine Safety Steering Group priority projects.

Project 6: Euthanasia code/policy

Development of a single euthanasia framework for use across the industry, including a clear decision tree.

- Policy guidelines and decision tree completed, shared with industry and available online. Focus is on the ongoing sharing and communication across industry and participants.

Project 22: Thoroughbred Welfare Database

Further development of the BHA-led project to create a single aligned database for the sport.

COMPLETE

- Initial work following the commissioning of a project by the BHA in 2019 was developed in collaboration with the University of Bristol. This focused on the ability to cleanly access data within pre-existing databases.
- With the establishment of the Welfare Data Unit, in addition to the new Racing Digital platform, it was agreed that the provision of a standalone Thoroughbred Welfare Database was not required.
- Rather, an ongoing reporting capability, overseen by the BHA Data Unit, has been developed. This includes several dashboards that provide stakeholders with access to “clean” data around key welfare topics. In addition, the BHA Data Unit continue to work in collaboration with the HWB and external data sources to ensure current and future welfare data needs are fulfilled.

Under Review

Project 23: Welfare Benchmarking Tool

A practical checklist that allows those responsible for Thoroughbreds to self-assess welfare.

- Initial work completed in this area by University of Bristol (2019-2021). Collective agreement by the HWB that this project was not further progressed in this form.

Project Overview

A LIFE WELL LIVED: PROJECTS OVERVIEW		
Project	Project Title	Status
6	Euthanasia code/policy	Complete
20	The Future of the whip	Complete
17	Stalls and starting review	Established & ongoing
21	Welfare data programme/welfare data unit	Complete
18	Review impact of prize money for lower placed horses	Complete
23	Cross-industry communications campaign	Complete
22	Thoroughbred welfare database	Established & ongoing
24	Promotional welfare communications plan	Established & ongoing
16	Obstacle improvement and development	Established & ongoing
25	Corporate communications (welfare plan)	Established & ongoing
4	Traceability	Established & ongoing
9	Jump racing risk model	Established & ongoing
5	Welfare funding model	In progress (RoR delivering)
15	Ground/going research, development, and training	Established & ongoing
10	Racing fatalities occurring off the racecourse	In progress
11	Medication data and clinical records analysis	Established & ongoing
2	Training and CPD	Established & ongoing
14	Suitability to race	In progress
12	Rider engagement	Established & ongoing
3	Education of/support of rehoming and potential rehomers	Established & ongoing (RoR delivering)
19	Fixture timing & allocation	Monitor (linked to RRM)
26	Code of ethics	In progress
8	Continued considering of breeding methods	Monitor (TBA delivering)
13	Trainer engagement	Established & ongoing
7	Review of breeding, pre-training, sales and aftercare	In planning
1	Welfare benchmarking tool	Under Review

Priority: high to low

Funding

The Racing Foundation and Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) are the core funders of the Horse Welfare Board's work. The Racing Foundation has awarded over £3.5 million, including a grant of £3 million over 3 years to progress welfare projects from the sport's 'Life Well Lived' strategy. The HBLB has provided £2.8million funding to the HWB since the Board's inception in 2019

Team

Horse Welfare Board Members

- Barry Johnson: Independent Chair
- Tracey Crouch: Independent member
- James Given: Director of Equine Health and Welfare, British Horseracing Authority
- Sulekha Varma: Head of Racing at Aintree Racecourse (maternity leave). Caroline Davies, Racecourse Services Director, Racecourse Association deputising
- Seamus Mullins: Racehorse trainer and former president of the National Trainers Federation
- Kate Sigsworth: Deputy Chair of the Thoroughbred Breeders Association

- Simon Knapp: Racecourse Association Veterinary Advisor
- Robin Mounsey: Head of Communications, British Horseracing Authority

Horse Welfare Board: Programme Implementation Team

- Helena Flynn, Programme Director
- Katie Boon, Programme Manager
- Mike Etherington-Smith, Equine Safety Advisor
- Sally Lyons, Safety and Welfare Project Lead
- Pip Kirkby, Welfare Project Lead

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