

Horses the Landscape and You – A Guide to Keeping Horses in Protected Landscapes

A new guide for horse keepers '*Horses the Landscape and You*' has just been launched. It combines information about legal requirements with "top tips" to ensure horses' lives are rich and healthy whilst helping to improve the quality of the landscape where we live and work.

Produced by the South West Protected Landscapes Forum (SWPLF) in partnership with The British Horse Society and The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), the guide is in response to horse owning and riding becoming an increasingly popular activity across the south west of England.

How horses are cared for and the developments associated with keeping a horse have a significant impact on the character and quality of our special landscapes. This is particularly important in the Mendip Hills, one of 14 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the South West recognized along with Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks as being internationally important landscapes.

Over the past year, the Mendip Hills AONB Unit's Planning Liaison Officer has been working with colleagues in the SWPLF to produce the new publication. Jonathan Richards, Planning Liaison Officer says, "*Keeping the Mendip Hills special both now and for future generations is a job for us all. It is hoped the new guide will contribute to an understanding of what makes our protected areas so special and help ensure the landscape we pass on to future generations retains its unique qualities*".

Owners of horses and ponies have an important role to play in safeguarding our rich landscape. Julie Garbutt, Regional Development Officer with The British Horse Society points out that horse owners and keepers "*are not only responsible for the welfare of their animal, but take on a further responsibility to care for the land on which their horses live. Managed in the right way, land can support the welfare needs of the horse, as well as maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character and wildlife of the landscape*".

The new guidance can be downloaded from the Mendip Hills AONB website

<http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/publications.php>

and also from

<http://www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk/CommissionedWorks.asp>

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