

# Minute Item 62

Thank you this opportunity to give a short presentation as to why the proposed Oxford Horse Drawn Carriage Scheme should not be given the go-ahead in this evening's vote.

I'm Dene Stansall, Horse Consultant to Animal Aid. I am a horse owner and I have a British Horse Society qualification. My work has involved lecturing the RSPCA's Scientific, Technical and Academic Committee; Parliament's All-Party Group for Animal Welfare; and Post Graduate Master of Science Degree Students whom are seeking careers in the equine industry.

As an organization Animal Aid's information, research and opinion is used by all major newspapers, radio and television. Indeed our work receives widespread international acknowledgement. For example, this month on the subject of horses we corresponded with Minister of Agriculture in Israel and as a consequence our views were published in the Jerusalem Post.

As an individual I also have a concern for road safety. And last year as part of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership Team we were honored to receive an International Road Safety Award from Prince Michael of Kent, for services that have helped to reduce road deaths in Lincolnshire, particularly that of young drivers.

I have a broad knowledge of horses and road safety issues. I therefore feel it is most appropriate as a representative of Animal Aid to give my views on this proposal.

The areas that I wish to very briefly draw your attention to include: horse welfare, veterinary inspections, the proposed route and public safety.

I looked in depth at the draft Byelaws relating to horse welfare for this proposal and it offers no welfare protection, in fact quite the contrary.

For instance, one of the most important aspects to understand is that of temperature control in working horses – which alarmingly isn't even covered in the Byelaws. We all know about leaving dogs in cars on a hot day – they can very soon die. Well, horses are temperature sensitive too. Horses warm quickly with work and find heat loss difficult. In the Byelaws there is no provision for this. The proposal has the horses working a seven and a half hour day during the height of summer. Initially on Sundays and if financially successful the company would want to operate on Saturdays and then throughout the week. In New York, where they have the most appalling welfare standards for their carriage horses, they have at least a maximum temperature limit after which horse must stop work, that being 89 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures in Oxford will go above this during the summer months, yet there is no such provision for the Oxford horses.

Again with reference to temperature control, or thermoregulation, the provision of a 30-minute break between working hours in the operator's proposal is inadequate. A lay-person I'm sure would think that a standing horse could cool down within a half hour after two hours' work, but this is wrong, especially during hot weather without a

breeze. When a hot or warm horse stands still – they actually get hotter – and this kills horses as it does dogs. Horses need to lose heat via convection and radiation. For convection to happen they would need to be unharnessed and continually walked around and preferably have plenty of water thrown over them. Could this realistically be done amidst Oxford's busy city centre environment?

For heat loss via radiation they require shade. At the pick-up and resting point for the horses on Broad Street there is no provision for shade from the sun or cover from rain.

Add to this there is no mention of record keeping or inspection of the hours worked and length of rest periods for each horse. I'm amazed at this!

But what makes this all the more worrying is that the horses to be used are black coloured Friesians. As you will know, black absorbs heat by gaining radiant heat from the surrounding environment. So, be in no doubt, these horses will suffer heat stress. (An example of this was recently brought to my attention when public protests were taking place in New York after a WHITE carriage horse collapsed and died on the street in full public view.)

The question also arises: is the Friesian a suitable breed to pull large tourist carriages?

No. From their colour you can gather they're bred to pull funeral carriages or light gigs. Landau carriages designed for more than two people are best pulled by stronger breeds such as Cleveland Bays – as used by the Queen.

Moving on from temperature control, unlike cars that have their annual MOT, horses are not machines, their physical condition can change drastically from day to day. Therefore to give a green light of fitness to any horse on the strength of a Veterinary Certificate issued within the preceding twelve months as in Point 13 of the Byelaws is meaningless – and I cannot overstate the seriousness of this.

With reference to the route, large sections of are cobbled. Even a flat road surface is stress enough on any horse's legs but a cobbled surface could easily cause them to go lame, more so if that surface is wet, or as on Merton Street in poor repair. And inclines add further stress.

Friesian's are high stepping horses whom will NOT be expected to walk the route but to trot the whole of the supposedly 30 minute journey. And this is for two or three hours at a time! This breaches the duty-of-care and can cause unnecessary suffering; issues that relate to the Animal Welfare Act of 2006.

Furthermore, the narrowness of Turl Street is just not suitable for two horses and a carriage. Public safety would definitely be at risk. If a wheel sheered off having gone the wrong side of any of the many bollards along that narrow street the horses would panic, the carriage fail and who knows what chaos would ensue?

Something similar happened last year in York and I quote an eyewitness account

from the York Press:

*"I saw the horse galloping down the road towards Monk Bar. People were jumping out of the way and fleeing, almost in a state of panic."*

The proposed route also involves the large and long horse carriage going the entire way around the Plain roundabout at the end of Magdalen Bridge, and back over it again. The Plain has five very busy roads coming off it. It has had a reputation as an accident blackspot, as has the High Street also on the route, and Parks Road. This poses further dangers to pedestrians, cyclists, car drivers and the horses.

I have only just touched on the many problems that this proposal has. Only through a thorough review of all aspects of this proposal can any serious judgment be made as to its worth.

I would therefore urge the Council on the grounds of horse welfare and public safety to reject the proposal to allow a horse drawn carriage operation in Oxford or at least suspend such a decision until more clarity is forthcoming.

Thank you.

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