The main barrier to Equestrian sport is that we don’t have any Local Authority owned or run facilities in Scotland. This therefore means for our sport to be delivered we are relying on private small businesses.

These can be sporadic across the country and are usually family run was the hours are long so businesses struggle to hold onto qualified staff, as it’s not as glamorous as it would seem. However some of these riding schools/ trekking centres work exceptional hard to meet the equine body approval schemes and do deliver a great service to cater for our entry level participation into Equestrian sport.

One of the main barriers for these small businesses are they hit hard with business rates, especially around indoor riding arenas where our sport is delivered. This can also vary across the country from Local Authority to Local Authority, these rates are a really pressure on these small businesses and cause many of our fully equine body approved centres to close. If these indoor arenas could be seen more favourably it would really help our riding schools which we require to continue to develop our sport.

For most of our equestrian sporting events to run safely we rely heavily on volunteers, usually at our equestrian events there are more volunteers than competitors. This is also the same at the Riding for the Disabled centres around the country, for disabled riders to across riding we sometime require up to four volunteers per rider. We are lucky that as a community equestrian participants help across discipline to support each other’s events.

Moving forward we need to look at ways to work closer with the Education schools and community sports hubs, we need support to put the links in place with our Equine body approved riding schools and training centres. To then develop and implement a schools programme. This programme would educate around the equine, including the sporting opportunities, careers and skill development around volunteering. We would run this programme in conjunction with all our member body disciplines so the participants receive the opportunity to train in a number of volunteering roles across the different equestrian disciplines.

This would help secure our volunteers for the future, as well as develop our sport.

While developing this programme we will also need to continue to support our volunteer training via the Member bodies, recruit and retain as per our volunteering policy and reward via our Volunteer award both horsescotland and sportscotland.