

# Planning for the Future

## Help Shape the Future of Epsom RDA

Epsom RDA has a long waiting list of riders.

Adults and children who miss out on the opportunity of riding with us and enjoy the benefits riding can bring to their health and well-being.

To tackle this challenge a proposal for a new indoor school has been developed.

## About Us

It all began in 1969 on a small field in Epsom with four volunteers and a Shetland pony called "Bubbles." We've moved home a few times since then and grown a bit along the way.

We moved into our current home, St Ebba's Farm, in 1978 when it was 16 acres of derelict buildings and overgrown farmland. Over the years we have invested much labour and resource into transforming the site into the beautiful facility enjoyed today by our riders, volunteers and ponies. In 2005, we were offered the opportunity to buy the freehold of St Ebba's Farm, we took the opportunity so securing our home for the future. We continue to look at ways we can improve our facilities to benefit our riders.

That's the moving bit, as for the growing bit; we now have over 200 volunteers and a whole herd of ponies to assist our 300 plus riders. Although we have got bigger our vision remains the same; to provide disabled people with the opportunity to ride to benefit their health and well-being, and to develop each disabled rider to ride to the level of their ability, choice and ambition.



To achieve our vision, we provide riding sessions seven days a week including some evening sessions. Each Session is led by their own experienced and qualified Session Leader, ably assisted by a Deputy, a Group Instructor and a team of volunteers to led the ponies, and support and encourage our riders.

Holding true to our roots all this is delivered by volunteers.

## Our Riders

During the year we provide over 3,000 rides for over 300 disabled adults and children. Our riders have a range of physical and learning disabilities and come to us from a variety of special needs schools, hospitals, other charities, and day centres. At weekends, individual riders are brought to us by their parents and carers.



The medical benefits of riding are well recognised. It helps exercise and strengthen muscles, mobilises joints, and helps riders develop their balance, independence and sensory perception. Riders also gain mentally and emotionally from riding.

The riders' self-esteem is improved, particularly when people important to them cheer them on. They gain from the achievement of each goal, large or small, in passing their grade tests, riding unaided, and in demonstrating their skills in public. They also develop friendships with other members of the Epsom RDA community, as well as building bonds with their favourite ponies. And just as importantly, they have fun!

## Our Volunteers

Our volunteers are an essential part of the Epsom RDA team. Without them we couldn't possibly function. Where do they come from?

Well from all sorts of places and backgrounds. We have volunteers from a diversity of backgrounds and ages who bring their talents and enthusiasm to contribute to our team. We encourage the involvement of anyone in the community who can give us a few hours of their time. It is not a requirement that volunteers have previous experience of horses, riding or working with disabled. We can teach all that: training is provided for all.

We need volunteers with a range of skills not just "horsey" ones. For example, we are looking for people with administration skills, fundraising experience, IT skills, and gardening skills and as we are running farm land and buildings we also we need people with maintenance skills to join our team managing the buildings, fences and pastures.



## Our Ponies

Just like our volunteers our ponies come from diverse backgrounds. Most of our ponies are owned by us with a few who are with us on a permanent or long-term loan, but the one thing they all have in common is the wonderful service they provide to our riders.

We do ask a lot of our ponies as we need them to be of a calm and patient temperament, but at the same time to be forward going and responsive. As well as providing a steady ride to look after our inexperienced riders, some of our ponies are ridden by the more independent and advanced riders in dressage competitions at Regional and National RDA competitions.



Our ponies have their own personal fitness coach in the form of our Horse and Pony Manager who is responsible for their general care and welfare. Our ponies also go to school on a regular basis with a team of volunteers who make up the Pony Schooling team. The team work with the ponies and a qualified coach to ensure the ponies stay fit and supple so they can meet the demands we place on them. We also have a programme of regular hacks to help keep the ponies fit, mentally stimulated and give them some fun too!

## Planning for the Future

### Vision

- Improve the environment for users and helpers to allow them to train safely throughout the year
- Increase the opportunities for more riders
- Provide opportunities for riders to train in a competition size dressage arena.

### Priority Aims

- Increase riding opportunities for existing and new riders
- Create a covered mounting area, seriously reducing cancelled rides.
- Improve viewing facilities / create viewing area
- Improve safety for riders, visitors, volunteers and horses

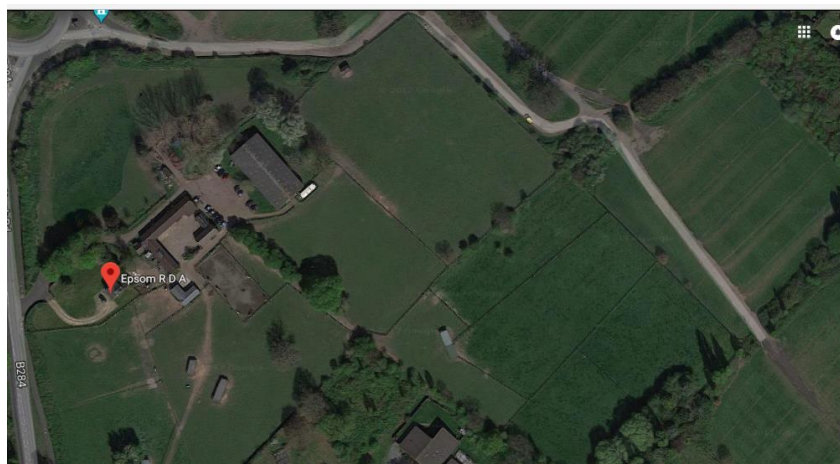


## Options for Design

The Trustees have reviewed and discussed several options to provide extra capacity at the site. However, as the whole of the farm is on Greenbelt land our options for expansion are limited. To carry out any development in the Greenbelt we need to be justified it in terms of benefit for the community.

The proposal to expand and improve the equestrian facilities at Epsom RDA would meet identified needs within the disabled community local to Epsom.

We have worked with an experienced equestrian architect to come up with a design which maximises Epsom RDA's opportunities whilst meeting planning restrictions. The decision to build on the existing car park is intended to minimise the effect of the new building on the openness of the Greenbelt, something the Council will want to see. Pre-planning advice has been sought from the Council and the scheme modified following this advice. Therefore, it is considered that this is the best that can be achieved within the constraints.



## The Scheme

### New Indoor School Layout

- 25m by 45m to allow safe space around the riding area
- Provides an indoor three level mounting block on a soft surface
- Includes a safe public viewing area.
- Allows simultaneous lessons to take place
- Makes best use of the existing school
- Provides equipment storage facilities



### New Outdoor School

- 25m by 60m to allow a competition size riding area to be created
- Mounting block on a soft surface

### Site Safety

- Re-sited car parking area separated from pedestrians and horses
- Pedestrian access to indoor riding school separated from cars and horses





## Financing

Currently Epsom RDA has legacy funds that can be put towards the scheme, but this will not meet the total estimated cost for the project of £350,000. Therefore, we will need to make funding applications to grant awarding bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund

The project is designed so that it can be developed in stages should the funding come in phases.



## This Is Where You Come In

We need two things from you:

1. Your thoughts, queries and questions so that we can make sure we have the best design to take forward for planning permission. You can do this by

- going onto the website at [epsomrda.org.uk](http://epsomrda.org.uk) and completing our [Planning for the Future](#) consultation survey
- emailing us at [epsomrdaconsultation@gmail.com](mailto:epsomrdaconsultation@gmail.com); or
- filling out a comment card.

We will be compiling your questions and the answers on the website for others to read as the consultation takes place.

2. Your support in our planning application to the Council and in seeking fund raising opportunities. Letters, emails or comment cards of support are important to us both in obtaining planning permission and in seeking funding.

**Please let us know what you think and  
give us your support!**