

# Foundation First Equestrian Centre



## Background

Growing up on a farm in Ruan Minor on the stunning Lizard peninsula in Cornwall, Sophie and Holly Bennetts started riding as young girls, inspired by their mum who has a passion for horses.

After leaving school the sisters both chose to work in the equine industry, in Cornwall and across Europe, training and building up their skills.

Holly teaches and trains horses and Sophie also trains, and specialises in horse health, advising owners on diet and health and rehabilitating horses after illness or injury, working alongside vets.

Drawn back to Cornwall, where they are the 4th generation to live and work on the family farm, the sisters started pursuing their dream of building their own equestrian centre on land owned by the farm.

Their vision was to create a base where they could both work, combining their skills, and to provide a facility where people could ride in all weathers. The vision also included offering horse riding holidays to attract more tourism to the area.

The dream became a reality thanks to a grant from the LEADER programme, secured through the West Cornwall local action group.

After getting the necessary planning permission to build the centre, Sophie and Holly applied to the LEADER programme for funding and were delighted to be successful.

Named Foundation First Equestrian Centre, it is now up and running thanks to the grant which enabled them to build a barn with an indoor training arena, an outdoor school and all the infrastructure needed for access and car parking.

“We wanted to offer something to the local community in the area where we grew up, that was the initial idea,” Sophie says.

“We are so grateful to have received LEADER grant funding, it has enabled us to achieve a long-term ambition to set up a facility on our family farm,” Holly adds.

The centre predominantly caters for leisure riders but some professionals from the local area and from wider Cornwall also use the centre for training their horses.



# Riding and training in all weathers on the stunning Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall



## Economy and sustainability

Having just completed their first year of operation, Sophie and Holly are looking forward to offering horse riding holidays next year. Visitors can bring their own horses or ride on one provided, and camp on site or stay in accommodation nearby.

In the winter the centre provides a much-appreciated hub for local riders to continue with their riding in the all-weather arena. There has been a lot of positive feedback from the community who really welcome the centre as a safe place to meet and ride whatever the weather.

Located in an area of outstanding natural beauty surrounded by hundreds of acres of farm land, the centre provides a safe haven for riding in an area rich in moorland, woodland and beaches; a perfect environment for enjoying nature from horseback.

“Our passion is to empower students to help them achieve their goals, whether that is through horse training, rehabilitation, or teaching, we want to set them up on a pathway to success. Hence the naming the facility Foundation First, we wanted to help all areas of the horse community,” Sophie says.

With enquiries coming in for 2018 bookings, the future is looking bright. The sisters have many contacts built up over the years in the equine community and are using social media campaigns to spread the word, especially as this is the time people are thinking about their holiday plans for next year.

“The facility has not only provided us with a base where we can teach people and train horses all year round, but also a facility that can be used by the local community. Without the LEADER grant funding none of this would have been possible,” Holly says.

Sophie and Holly have big plans and are determined to build a thriving, profitable business that provides vital facilities to the community, creates local jobs and attracts more tourists to their picturesque corner of Cornwall on the Lizard peninsula.

To find out more look for Foundation First Equestrian Centre on Facebook or at [www.foundationfirst.co.uk](http://www.foundationfirst.co.uk)

**Local Action Group Funding: £35,352**

If you are interested in applying for LEADER funding visit [www.localactioncornwall.co.uk](http://www.localactioncornwall.co.uk)

