Preparing Routes for Ridemaps

The primary purpose of Ridemaps is to present routes with enough information and directions to encourage people to venture somewhere new with their horse with confidence.

Standard of Routes

The routes shown are not of a prescribed quality or standard and they vary in the extent of information and detail given, some include advice on parking, accommodation, precise directions and so on, others are the line of the route only, and every variation between depending on their origin.

As a minimum, any route should have its date added, creator, length and start/end points.

It is not a requirement that every route entirely follows definitive paths or has formal permission. Many routes use ways of different status and may possibly use permissive paths and open access (e.g. a common with equestrian rights) but because using formally recognised equestrian access assists in ensuring the availability of a route, the guidelines for routes to be shown are:

1. Using primarily paths with definitive[1] equestrian or *de facto* access[2] or commons with equestrian rights, or

2. Paths or access land with long term recognised[3] access for equestrians provided by a public body or charity (e.g. local authority owned rail trail, National Trust, some Forestry Commission land, foreshore).

N.B. Short-term permissive routes, toll rides or where permission is required for individuals should only be used with a clear statement of the restrictions, including the end of the term, and how to gain permission if required. A time-limited route should only be added if someone will be responsible for ensuring its removal at the end of its term.

Where any route has sections which are *not* recorded public bridleway, byway or road, these must be noted.

There is no guarantee that any route is in appropriate condition at any particular time as obstructions or changes can occur without notice and routes do not have a formal inspection regime. If a route is recommended for use only in certain seasons, this should be made clear in its description, e.g. Beckwith Hill (long term dry periods only).

Each route online has a Report a Problem facility. Routes should be suspended temporarily or permanently from Ridemaps if problems cannot be quickly resolved.

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[1] Bridleways, restricted byways, byways open to all traffic recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement and all-purpose highways or routes in Scotland for which equestrian access is unhindered
[2] Where access is accepted through long use but is unrecorded
[3] Documented in some way available to the BHS or the public

Creating or Editing Routes

Any volunteer (Mapper) or group can create a Ridemaps route then completed routes are uploaded by a Regional Coordinator. The process is:

1. Mappers are allocated a personal username and online workspace in Dobbin where their routes can be seen and perfected before making them public.

2. The map of a route with any associated markers, descriptions and photographs is created on the Mapper's own computer using Memory Map or similar software which can output a gpx file.

3. The resulting file is uploaded to the Mapper's online workspace to check for display accuracy, allocate a title and complete.

4. When satisfied, the Mapper contacts the regional Coordinator and advises which route is ready to be published.

5. The Coordinator can check the route and copy it to the public directory.

Routes to be made public on Ridemaps should include as a minimum:

1. Date added

2. By whom/creator

3. Start/finish points

4. Length (miles)

5. Marking of sections which are not recorded as bridleway, byway or road.

Ideally, routes should differentiate between on and off-road, where 'road' means an all-purpose tarmac highway with frequent motor vehicular movements.

Standard of Information

Individual routes may differ in the standard of information given.

- At the lowest standard, only the line of the route may be shown. It must use only paths or land with legally defined equestrian access (bridleway, restricted byway, byway open to all traffic, road or access land with equestrian rights).

- At the highest level, the route will comprise a number of sections each with indication of length, status, possibly surface or gradient and any limitations (e.g. summer only, permission from xx, before 9 a.m.). Waypoint markers will give directions and information.

Status need not be recorded where bridleways and byways can be determined from the OS base map but is recommended for equestrian access land, permissive routes and any length where there is doubt whether equestrian access is allowed or where there the OS map is out of date.

To enable the base information to be visible a Fade button is provided which increases transparency of the route line so that the OS map can be seen as well as the route.

Colour

Routes will be shown blue (as this displays most clearly) except for:

- A route which uses the same line in part as another route can be another colour, e.g. green or cyan, for clarity in distinguishing them where there is a cluster of circuits using sections of path common to others.

- Red is reserved for routes which cannot or should not be used and is part of another project which is in development. Such paths will only be marked where confusion may otherwise arise e.g. where a navigation mistake can easily be made or for a formal deviation.

Title

The route title gives its name, e.g. Tockholes, which is commonly related to its dominant feature, and the approximate distance in miles.

Distances

Total distances are given in miles as this is the most commonly recognised measurement in UK. For section distances, yards or metres may be used as both are commonly understood and providing alternatives can make descriptions unwieldy.

Description

The description appears in the first window when the route is selected. If the route has limitations, such as seasonal or permissive, this should be stated in the first line of the description text and also identified on the map of the route using waypoint markers or track sections. Limitations may relate to ground conditions which discourage use at certain times, permissions, time constraints (e.g. using the beach before 9.30 in July and August) etc.

Information

Route information may be specified on each track section. Further information, navigation and navigation aids may be given on flagged waypoints or markers. (See Memory Map How to guide).