

Riding on Cleeve Common



Cleeve Common is a wonderful place to ride. It offers wide open grassland, good going all year round, numerous and varied tracks and, of course, magnificent views. You should however be aware that the fragile habitats of the Common are protected by law as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Common is privately owned land that is managed and regulated by a Registered Charity, the Board of Conservators, which was established by Act of Parliament in 1890.

What right of access is there for horse riders on Cleeve Common?

Any horse and rider may use the bridleways and restricted byways (see Ordnance Survey maps for the routes). Detailed, coloured A3 maps are sent with hacking licences.

The 1890 Act of Parliament and latterly the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) gives the 'right to roam' anywhere on the Common, but only on foot. Aside from the bridleways/byways, there is **no statutory access** for horse riders on the Common; however provision to license horse riding is given in the 1890 bylaws of the Common and licensing of horse riding has been in force since.

To ride off the Rights of Way on the Common you must have a hacking licence; you are breaching the bylaws if you do not hold a valid licence. The Board of Conservators is obliged to uphold the bylaws in order to protect the Common for future generations. Unlicensed horse riders using the Common off the byways and bridleways are doing so without landowner permission.

Why do horse riders have to pay for a licence?

The purpose of licensing is to regulate the extent of use in order to balance the various recreational uses of the Common with its agricultural use and with its conservation. We continue to charge a small fee for licences for the following reasons:

- Local horse riders use the Common much more frequently than most other visitors such as mountain bikers or kite boarders, cover a much greater area and cause more damage to the grassland.
- We provide 7 day a week Ranger cover. On a per person basis, horse riders are around 100 times more likely to need Ranger assistance than walkers, and are more likely to require help including the use of vehicles, horse boxes etc. The Board of Conservators incurs a cost for these call-outs. Over the course of the year, the largest category of 'emergency' calls to the Rangers is from horse riders.
- There is direct expenditure in providing and maintaining bridle gates (as opposed to much cheaper and more robust stiles, for instance) and repair of tracks eroded by horses.
- Overall, it is a small contribution towards effective grassland management. Without this, the Common would not have the open grassy spaces that make it so good for riding: it would be covered with rough tussocky grass, gorse and hawthorn.
- We are following the normal practice of the National Trust and Forestry Commission in levying a charge for horse riding; we are significantly cheaper than either of these.

How does the Board of Conservators regulate other activities on the Common?

There is no provision in the bylaws of the Common to enforce the licensing of other activities such as cycling or kite boarding. Instead, we engage with ALL interest groups in a cooperative fashion, producing 'Codes' for each of the main activities undertaken on the Common. Within the 'Codes' we specify how other user groups should behave around horses. We receive funding from other groups who recognise the Conservators' valuable work from which they benefit.

Is there anything else that I need to know?

- In signing your licence application form, you are signing to abide by the "Cleeve Common Horse Riders' Code" (see below).
- Please note that licences are intended for people who keep their horses locally and therefore we do NOT offer parking for trailers or boxes.
- You should also be aware that there are random spot checks to ensure that riders are licensed.
- You ride on the Common entirely at your own risk. The Board does not accept liability for any damage or injury caused to any person, animal or property, including the rider and her/his horse or pony, whether the riding is authorised by licence or not.
- Please keep us informed if you see something untoward while out riding. conservators@cleevecommon.org.uk / www.cleevecommon.org.uk / 07756 828 458.

Horse Riders' Code

- **Display your hacking licence tag** whenever you ride on the Common, either on the nearside of the bridle or nearside D-ring on the saddle.
- **Avoid 'no-go zones':**
 - the Golf Course greens, tees and fairways.
 - the Hill Fort above Nutterswood; this is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which we are legally obliged to protect.
 - ecologically fragile area (a map will be sent to you with licence) , where many of our rarest plants and animals live on the thin soils. Please ride slowly, in single file on the centre of firm, established tracks only.
 - the cattle enclosures, except where main tracks pass through large field gates. Note that some enclosures will have pedestrian gates but these are narrow and not intended for horse access.
- **Minimize impact:** in wet conditions avoid fast work and keep to the middle of established tracks to reduce damage or erosion. Do not make new tracks. Do not ride through rough grassland.
- **Take care near livestock:** grazing sheep and cattle are essential to maintain the natural limestone grassland. Ride past slowly to avoid disturbance. **Always close the gates** behind you to avoid livestock escaping.
- **Respect other users of the Common:** Ride with courtesy and consideration for other visitors. Please **politely alert kite flyers as you approach**, to allow them time to rest their kite.
- **Follow the rules:** licence holders must obey any signs or requests from Rangers.
- **Adders:** most encounters are from March to October. To avoid, keep to the tracks. Adders are legally protected, timid and rare creatures; they only bite if threatened.
- **Emergencies:** Call 999 or 112 first, then the Ranger: **07756 828 458**