

## **Local Access Forum Multi-User Subgroup**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update members about progress with the permissive bridleway access at Thriftwood (extension to Ockwells Park).

### **2. BACKGROUND**

As a result of consultation with stakeholders in February 2022, it was decided to hold a site meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March to try and find a way forward for the permissive horse-riding access at Thrift wood.

During discussions at the site meeting, a summer trial of the permissive horse-riding access was agreed as shown on the plan.

A webpage has been created about the trial including FAQs and other guidance. This can be viewed at <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/horse-riding-at-thriftwood>

Information has been supplied about research done into conflict and perceived conflict between users along with a list of areas (inc. West Berks) where there has been little problem with multi-use paths.

Suitable signage and waymarking has been placed around the route to show riders where they can and cannot go and to let people know where to expect to see horses with a robust message to all users that considerate behaviour is key. This will help to raise awareness that horse riders are permitted in specific areas and to encourage acceptance.

Minor modifications to the footbridge comprising a ramp and anti-slip surfacing have been arranged.

Monitoring of the ground condition, signs and behaviour will be incorporated during the trial to help decide whether this permissive access is evidenced to be workable. Then a decision can be made about whether to make it permanent.

Photos taken on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022



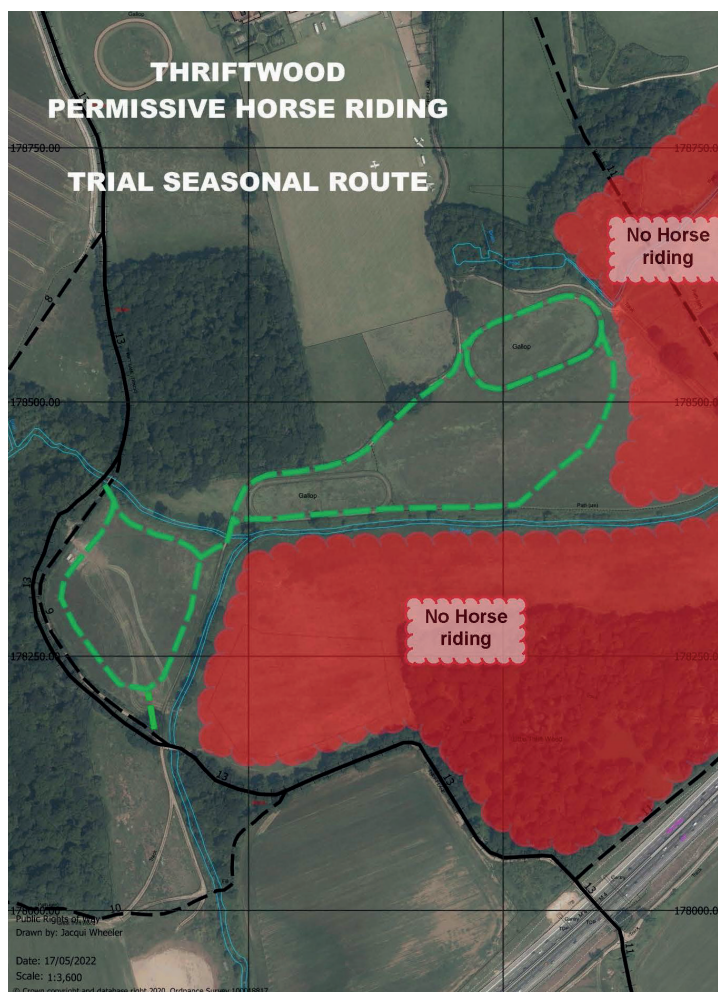


# Summer horse riding trial at Thriftwood

www.rbwm.gov.uk



We are trialling permissive access for horse riding on a defined route to help increase the amount of safe off-road routes for local equestrians. Riders must keep to this route (shown in green on this map) and marked with blue-topped waymarker posts.



All visitors to the park are reminded to show courtesy and consideration to all other users.

**Equestrians** – For safety, please dismount to cross the bridge, mounting blocks are provided on end of the bridge. No riding faster than an in-hand canter where it is safe to do so. Slow down when you see dogs off leads.

**Dog owners** – Please ensure your dog is kept under control – on a lead if necessary.

For more information, visit  
[www.rbwm.gov.uk/horse-riding-at-thriftwood](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/horse-riding-at-thriftwood)



## **FAQs for the permissive equestrian access at Thriftwood**

### ***Why are you allowing horse riding on Ockwells?***

- Allowing horse riders to access land at the Thriftwood area of Ockwells Park is reasonable as the land is council owned and it would be unfair to disallow one specific group of residents (horse riders) from using it.
- The council would like to support vulnerable road users. Allowing horse riding on the Thriftwood area of Ockwells Park will improve safety for horse riders as vulnerable road users by giving them increased opportunity to ride off road and away from vehicles in their local area.
- Allowing horse riding at the Thriftwood area of Ockwells Park will support local livery stables and equestrian businesses to stay in the area.
- Increasing off-road provision for horse riding will set a good example to other private landowners who might then allow it on their own land.

### ***How will you make sure they don't damage the land?***

Horses are expensive to keep so riders take care of them and won't risk injury to themselves, the horse, or other people by going too fast especially on wet or uneven ground. There is space available so that horses can ride alongside the trodden track used by walkers.

We will monitor the ground during the trial to see if there is any adverse impact and take any remedial action necessary.

### ***How will you make people aware that they might meet horses?***

We will erect signage to let people know they might meet horses and there will be local engagement through social media and local Councillors.

### ***Whose fault is it if there's an incident between a horse and a dog?***

It is important to note that all Park users have a responsibility to act with consideration and courtesy to each other.

A dog owner has a legal responsibility to make sure their dog is always under control and supervision when in a public place even when they are off lead. This means they must be able to call their dog back and place on a lead if necessary.

There is good visibility at the Thriftwood area of Ockwells Park where horses will be allowed which is important so that dog walkers, walkers and riders are able to see each other from a distance and take appropriate action to minimise potential conflict. This has been seen and attested to by users of the National Trust area at Pinkney's Green where horse riders and dog walkers use the area side by side with no incidents.

### ***Will they be allowed there all year round?***

No, the route will be closed over winter due to wet ground conditions.

The horse-riding access will be seasonal and is likely to be dictated by the ground conditions at any given time. Wet conditions mean horse riders won't want to ride.

***Can they go wherever they like?***

No, there will be way marker posts to show horse riders the route. These will be posts painted blue at the top, so they are visible from a distance. There will be a map showing the route at the entrances on Thrift Lane (Cox Green BR13) and this will also be highlighted to local livery stables.

There will be signs saying “No Horses Beyond This Point” showing riders where not to go.

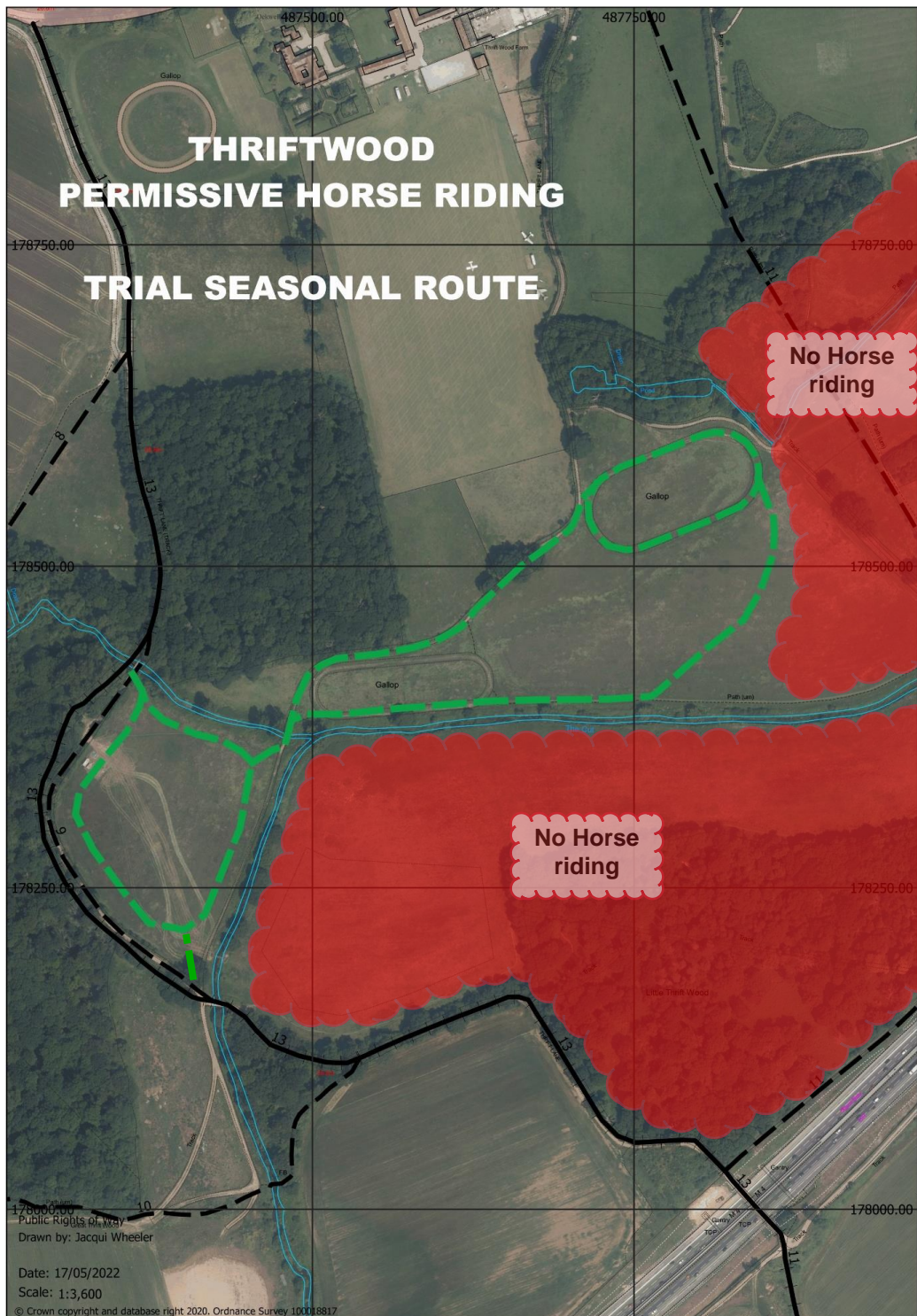
***Will the horse riders be permitted to ride in the recreational fields nearest to the cafe and car park?***

No, there will be no horse riding allowed in the recreational fields nearest to the café and car park.

**GUIDANCE FOR HORSE RIDERS using the permissive equestrian access at Thriftwood**

**Please stick to the green route as far as possible.**

**See map below showing the “no go” areas shaded red.**



**NB: Horse riders who ride in this area do so at their own risk and should have their own insurance for public liability.**

Horse access route is marked with blue topped way marker posts.

For safety, please dismount to cross the bridge, mounting blocks are provided on either end of the bridge.

Signs are erected saying "No Horses beyond this point" at No Go areas.

No riding faster than an in-hand canter where it is safe to do so.

Please show courtesy to other park users and slow down when you see dogs off lead to allow them to be brought under control

The route is only open during the dry summer months and will be closed to horses in winter due to the ground conditions and when there has been heavy rain as the area is a flood plain and not suitable to ride upon.

Please note: **All** users of Ockwell's Park have a responsibility to treat other users with courtesy and consideration.