

## **DEESIDE WAY - Notes on multi-use access**

The Deeside Way is a 41 mile long distance route linking Ballater and Aberdeen. The route follows the line of the old Royal Deeside Railway from Aberdeen to Banchory, through woodland and farmland to Kincardine O'Neil, and then rejoins the old line from Aboyne to Ballater. Nearly all of the route is suitable for multi-use. In most places the offset barriers to restrict illegal vehicular use and slow down cyclists at road junctions (such as pictured below left) allow ample space for horses or mobility scooters to pass. Work is underway to extend the route west to Braemar.

These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to supplement information already available from <http://www.deesideway.org/> and other sources, and to provide information about potential restrictions on use by horse-riders.

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>.

Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and either clear dung off the path or move their horse off the path to dung.

All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves which, if any, sections of the Deeside Way are suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Deeside Way are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

### **Ballater to Aboyne**

The Deeside Way starts at the old railway station at Ballater. At the time of survey (October 2016) the signed route passed through a narrow gap between two buildings, and then down a flight of steps with a 1.05 m wide ramp alongside, both of which are unsuitable for horses. The alternative is to use the minor road to the north to link from the A93 onto the disused railway.



Offset barriers with a minimum 1.5 m gap between have been installed at each road junction to prevent illegal vehicular access and slow down cyclists. Many of these have a much wider gap alongside (e.g. pictured below right).



On the west side of the B9158 crossing at Dinnet, wooden barriers form a chicane, with sufficient space for a horse to pass with care.



### **Aboyne to Banchory**

East of Aboyne, there is a gap in the signed off-road route, with no alternative other than the A93 between the B968 and the Loch of Aboyne, A “private footpath” follows the disused railway through Rosehill Croft, along which new bridlegates have been erected with signs confirming that rights of access apply under the Land Reform Act.



The disused railway runs parallel to the north side of the A93, and for most of the way is firm and dry underfoot, other than at OSGR NJ544002 where two wooden boards have been laid across the ditch, insufficiently strong or stable for horses. The adjacent ford varies in depth according to the weather and appears to have a soft base.



Signs on the newly installed bridlegates at the eastern end of this section of path at OSGR NJ549001 reiterate that this section of disused railway is not the Deeside Way and is a private footpath, although signs alongside confirm that access rights apply, provided path users (including horse riders and cyclists) exercise their rights responsibly. Other than using the disused railway along this section, there is no obvious alternative to the very busy and dangerous A93.



East of the road leading up to Boddomend and Tilphoudie, new bridlegates have been installed to facilitate multi-use, and mounting blocks have been provided on the upgraded path through Dess Wood either side of the new multi-use bridge over

Between Kincardine on Neil and Bridge of Potarch, the Deeside Way runs along the south side of the A93, mainly on a surfaced multi-use path segregated from the road by a wide verge with trees and bushes (pictured below left), but along one stretch on a narrow pavement fenced from the road, where signs suggest horse riders and cyclists to dismount (pictured below right).



Between Bridge of Potarch and Banchory the signed Deeside Way follows wide multi-use paths and forest roads, with bridlegates or gaps alongside any barriers, and no restrictions on multi-use other than the narrow link path on the south side of the Bridge of Dee at OSGR NO657952 which has a 60 cm gap at the bottom end of a steep, narrow path, easily avoided by following the road down to the B974.

### **Banchory to Aberdeen**

Most of this section follows the disused railway, with some sections on quiet lane where the railway has been amalgamated into fields or built across. In most places the offset barriers to restrict illegal vehicular use and slow down cyclists at road junctions (such as pictured below left) allow ample space for horses or mobility scooters to pass. The exceptions where the gap at the side is 1.2 m wide are at Peterculter (OSGR NJ849008 pictured below right)



VWG  
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