

# #RealNewForest

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How is the Boxing Day Point-to-Point good for the New Forest?



The annual point to point is the year's most important social gathering for commoning, serving multiple purposes beneficial to the New Forest.

## The Point to Point:

- Is a showcase for the extraordinary abilities of the rare breed New Forest Pony, hence the restricted races and prizes for registered New Forest ponies, and New Forest first-cross and part-bred horses.
- Provides a strong incentive for commoners to help on horseback in the essential autumn round-ups, known as “drifts”. The drifts are vital to the management of the grazing ponies, and volunteer riders are crucial to assist the agisters. Riders build knowledge of the terrain away from their local haunts, and their riding ponies get used to working at speed in company – important attributes for riding the point to point.
- Brings together the commoning community, to chat, to show off their ponies, their commoning skills, and to have fun. This is the only occasion in the year that brings together most commoners. The sense of community, and the focal point, is an important draw for young commoners to remain involved in commoning amidst increasingly busy lives at school, college or work.
- A point to point, testing the Forest knowledge and riding skills of commoners has been run as a formal event for more than 100 years. It is an important and popular demonstration of the unique cultural heritage of the New Forest as a surviving unenclosed landscape.
- Is run by the local charity, the [New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society](#) (Charity No. 1064746). Any proceeds from the event are used to support the important work of the charity.



The extraordinary biodiversity and cultural heritage of the New Forest depend upon the continuation of the vocational system of livestock grazing. It is a vocation that is increasingly demanding, in both time and money.

The event itself is very carefully managed to minimise its impact on the landscape, under terms agreed with Forestry England. It takes place outside the growing and nesting seasons, with careful consideration and months of preparation given to the finish location, for vehicular access and parking. Because of this none of the finish sites have ever experienced any lasting impact from the event.

Commoners care deeply about the New Forest, and are particularly careful not to damage the grazing upon which their animals depend, nor to leave anything behind. The effort put in to the annual point to point ensures that it continues to make a very positive contribution to this very special landscape. The biggest risk of harm to the New Forest is the decline of vocational commoning amidst the pressures of modern life – The Point to Point is of huge value in encouraging local people to maintain their commitment to grazing animals on the landscape, with a real sense of identity and community.

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