

New beginnings

With a new organisation taking over the reins of TREC, there's no better time to get involved say fans of the sport

Enthusiasts of TREC are vowing to give the discipline a new lease of life following a decision by the British Horse Society (BHS) to withdraw its support.

After 16 years organising TREC qualifiers and championships in the UK, the BHS has said it can no longer warrant the "significant" investment of funds.

In a statement, BHS chief executive Lynn Petersen said they had "investigated the viability" of TREC, following a request by the BHS board.

"As a charity, the BHS must ensure its funds support the core aims of education, access, safety and welfare," she said.

The results of a feasibility study were presented to the board, where it was "unanimously agreed" that 2014 would be the last year the BHS would support TREC.

"The financial investment of operating as the governing body of a sport which serves such a relatively discrete number of people was voted an unsustainable and inappropriate use of charity funds," added Lynn.

"We are hopeful that another organisation may continue with the legacy which the BHS has left to the equestrian community, rising to the challenge of supporting TREC and organising the competitions and associated functions."

A fresh start

This "other organisation" is TREC GB, which will take over the reins from the BHS on 1 October.

Those behind the new group hope that TREC will "blossom as a sport for riders who wish to develop a partnership with their horse".

The 3 phases of TREC

There are three elements to a TREC competition:-

- An orienteering phase which tests your map reading skills (main image). Riders follow a set route in unfamiliar countryside, and this can vary in length from 10km to 40km. Points are lost for going the wrong way or being too quick or too slow.



- Control of paces (above) requires getting your horse to canter slowly over a set distance, then walk quickly back.
- A course of obstacles – also known as the PTV phase. Here, you will meet anything you could come across out hacking, such as a gate to open or a bridge to cross. Each obstacle is worth 10 points – there are usually 16 obstacles in a full TREC competition.

down for competitors as they won't have the BHS's overheads.

"I think we can run events more cost effectively," says Joy. "There will be a renewed enthusiasm to really get the sport going at grassroots level, and in my opinion that starts with mini TREC competitions."

While many TREC competitions run over two days – with the orienteering phase on day one and the control of paces and obstacles the next – and involve an overnight stay, mini TRECs fit neatly into one day.

Committee members are currently being elected – from TREC clubs around the UK – and an administrator will be employed to coordinate membership and competitions.

Full details of how the membership will run, and the competition structure for 2015, will be announced over the coming weeks.

TREC enthusiast Joy Taylor is co-ordinator of the South East TREC Group and a competitor, judge and event organiser.

She believes running the sport under TREC GB will offer many benefits, including keeping costs



They involve a short orienteering test and only 10 obstacles.

"They are easier to run than a two-day competition, where you need such a lot of helpers, and they are the perfect taster session for riders," says Joy.

"South East TREC Group organised a mini TREC in Easter and it was very successful."

Don't miss out

Joy says that many riders are "missing out" by not having a go at such a fun discipline.

"TREC is all about basic horsemanship skills, such as welfare and safety. It's also about building up a relationship with your horse and getting out to enjoy the countryside.

"TREC is all about basic horsemanship skills and building a relationship with your horse"

"A lot of people may say they do these things already, but TREC brings it all together in a competition format.

"It's something anyone and everyone can have a go at, no matter what type of horse or pony you have."

She concedes that because two-day competitions take a lot of organising, there are currently not enough events taking place around the country.

"What TREC needs is more competitors and more events," she says. "With the mini TREC format we can achieve that.

"Organisers can make them as big or as small as they want and limit the number of competitors so it's more manageable to run."

● For more on the plans for TREC in the future, visit: www.trecgb.com. To hear from enthusiasts about why they love the sport so much, turn the page.

7 fast facts about TREC

- 1 The sport was developed in France, as a way of testing the skills of trail ride leaders and was originally called Le Trec.
- 2 TREC stands for Technique De Randonne Equestre De Competition – which translates as a trekking technique competition.
- 3 It was brought over to the UK in the late 90s.
- 4 There are four levels of TREC competition, with Level 4 the most challenging for horses and riders.
- 5 There are national and world championships to aim for, which any rider has the chance of qualifying for.
- 6 Riders can enter pairs classes, as well as competitions for individual. These are a great way to learn the ropes with a more experienced 'treccie'.
- 7 Indoor competitions are held over winter which only involve the control of paces and obstacles – there is no map reading involved – so form a perfect introduction to the sport.

Why we love TREC...

TREC fans share why they love the sport and the reasons other readers should have a go



You and your horse will learn lots of new skills

CASE STUDY

"It's a thinking person's sport"

Vanessa Warren drove for six hours from The Quantocks in Somerset to take part in a TREC competition in Surrey.



TREC can improve your dressage, says Vanessa

She competed her six-year-old Lusitano Domino, who she bought from Portugal last November, in the Level two section.

"With my previous horse I competed at a higher level and travelled all over the country doing TREC, even up to Penrith in Cumbria," she says. "If you want to compete at a higher level, you have to do a lot of travelling to get to the events. To be any good, you have to compete regularly."

"It is such a fantastic sport, for both the rider and the horse. It is a thinking person's sport. It is not all about extremes, such as jumping huge fences, it is very much about good judgement and good training."

Vanessa has competed as a member of the British team and has represented her country in Austria, Ireland and Germany.

"I also compete Domino in dressage and I find TREC and dressage go very well together," she continues. "Your TREC improves your dressage and vice versa."

"This weekend, Domino has been brilliant, even though he's only a baby."

"We came second and I'm so pleased with how he has gone."

TREC competitions are a family weekend away as her husband, Richard Curtis, is an international judge.

"It is a sport that rewards people that do the right training and make the right decisions for their horse," adds Vanessa.

"I would recommend it to anyone – it's a lovely way of spending time with your horse."

CASE STUDY

"TREC is an adventure"



Daniel enjoys exploring new terrain

Daniel Nolan of Rugby rides Tornado in Level 4 classes and has competed on the British team.

"I started doing TREC in 2005 – a friend told me about it and as I like going hacking I had a go," says Daniel.

"I like the adventure side of the sport – going out exploring. You get to enjoy all these lovely parts of the country, often where you wouldn't be able to ride."

"From a competitive point of view, it is multi-disciplined and I love the challenge of having to be strong in a number of phases, rather than just having one skill."

CASE STUDY

"Anyone who has a horse can enjoy TREC"

Vicki (left) and Amanda share the fun in pairs classes



New Zealander Vicki Glynn (far left) has returned to Surrey from her home country to do a season of TREC on board her own Red.

She partners Amanda Marfleet and Sal and they won their last competition, at Level 2.

The feat was all the more impressive because, unbeknown to Vicki at the time, she had a broken leg – she thought she was suffering from a torn ligament.

"I got into TREC 18 months ago and absolutely love it," says Vicki.

"I was previously living in Surrey, but went home to New Zealand for seven months."

"I have come back back for three months to do 10 TREC competitions, including the British championships, which take place in August in Oxfordshire."

"Last year, I competed in the Welsh National Championships and went over to Ireland for its championships, where we rode borrowed horses."

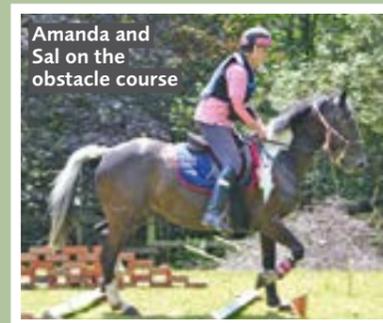
"I recommend having a go at TREC because it really is for anyone. Anyone that has a horse can do TREC."

Vicki's horse, Red, is the typical all-rounder and the previous week was second in a lightweight cob class at Surrey County Show, qualifying for the Royal International Horse Show.

"People think it's handy pony, but there's so much more to TREC"

Amanda Marfleet, who pairs up with Vicki, fell in love with her horse, Sal, when she hired him for the Irish TREC championships – she loved him so much, she spent the next three months persuading his owner to part with him.

She says her favourite aspect of TREC is that you have to use your brain.



Amanda and Sal on the obstacle course

"It is a mind sport as well as a riding sport and it's the first discipline I've done where the horse isn't central," she states. "Being successful in the map reading is down to you, for example, not how well the horse performs."

"It's also a sport where you can choose to go out and have a nice ride or you can be majorly competitive. People think it's handy pony, but there's so much more to TREC."

"Like any sport you can't turn up and expect to win – training is essential. To get your horse obedient in the control of paces phase requires dressage schooling."

"TREC is popular because of the social aspect, too. At two-day competitions there is usually a get together – it is a friendly sport."

Testing obedience in the Control of Paces



"I love going out exploring – you get to enjoy lovely parts of the country, often where you wouldn't usually be able to ride"