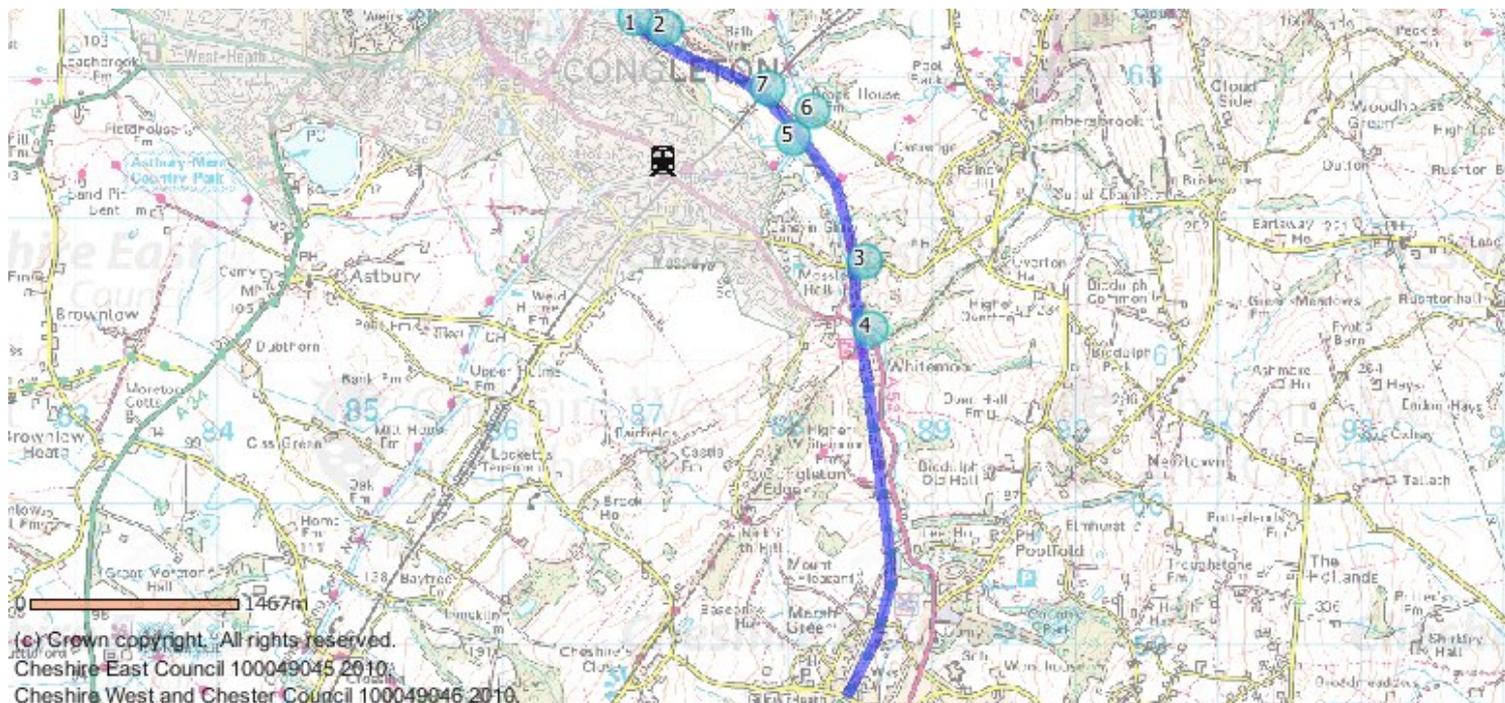


**Biddulph Valley Way\_riding** A multi-user route along a disused railway line, with flat terrain and several access points for horse riders.

Grade	Easy
Distance	3.3km /2.1miles (Cheshire section)
Time	Approx. 45 mins (from end to end)
Start	Brook Street Car Park, Congleton
Map	OS Explorer 268
Terrain	Flat with a firm surface. Parallel soft track for cantering for a stretch.
Barriers	Some gates
Toilets	None on site.
Contact	Astbury Mere Country Park Sandy Lane Congleton CW12 4FR 01260 297237



## Route Details

This is a multi-user route along a disused railway line, with flat terrain and several access points for horse riders.

For over 100 years trains travelled along the Biddulph Valley Way carrying coal from Staffordshire to Congleton. Today walkers, cyclists and horse riders enjoy this tranquil route away from roads.

Bankside trees cast a dappled shade over a variety of wildflowers. As well as the easily recognisable Bluebell and the delicate white Wood Anemone, those with a keen eye may spot the tiny green Moschatel, also known as Town Hall Clock due to its square shaped flower head. Look out too for Enchanter's-nightshade, which the Anglo-Saxons used as protection against spells which they believed were being cast by elves.

Occasionally a fox may be glimpsed trotting along the track, or look skyward and you might notice a buzzard circling and reeling overhead, searching for a rabbit to swoop down on.

The railway line linked Stoke on Trent to Brunswick Wharf in Congleton, with a branch joining the Macclesfield to Stafford main line at the viaduct.

It was built to transport freight, mainly coal, which came from the vast North Staffordshire coal field. To avoid travelling back to Staffordshire with empty wagons, sand was often transported into the Potteries for industrial use, as this mineral was abundant around Congleton.

A date for completion of the line was imposed on the North Staffordshire Railway Company by the government and failure to meet the deadline meant the payment of a heavy fine. To avoid this, the company performed a grand opening ceremony on the 3rd August 1859, although the line was only partially complete. It was a further twelve months before the line was fully open to mineral traffic.

In addition to freight, a passenger service also started running on 1st June 1864, though this was never a financial success and closed on the 11th July 1927. The movement of freight continued for a further 41 years, with the last train leaving Brunswick Wharf in Congleton on the 1st April 1968.

## Directions

Walkers, cyclists and horse riders will enjoy the flat, traffic-free, well-surfaced path of the Biddulph Valley Way. It is ideal for pushchairs and wheelchair users too. Horses are requested to walk and trot only on the main track with an additional track for cantering being provided between the railway viaduct (7) and canal aqueduct (6).

The Way begins just south of Brook Street (A54), Congleton (1). There is a small car park located at the Congleton end of the track off Brook Street, though this is not suitable for horse boxes. The Way is linear, following the former Biddulph Valley Railway line, and runs south-east for approximately 3.3km all the way into Staffordshire, where it continues for another 5.5km to finish south of Biddulph (for details of the Staffordshire section, call the Staffordshire Moorlands Countryside Office on 01538 483579).

In Cheshire, horse riders can also access the Way from Bromley Road (2), Reades Lane (3), and Biddulph Road (4) and Brookhouse Lane (5) as well as Brook Street (1).