

Policy for Bikes and Cycling in the Woods

Culduthel Woods Group

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Policy on Bikes and Cycling in the Woods

The Culduthel Woods Group (CWG) welcomes all cyclists within the woods and will strive to promote positive relations between all users and ensure everyone can have a good time and stay safe.

Mountain bikers and cyclists are asked to follow these guidelines:

- please respect that the woods are owned and managed for the benefit of everyone in the community - always give consideration to other path users
- respect the other users of the woods and leave the site safe and clear of litter - please pick up other peoples' litter if you can
- minimise the area of digging and trail-building ONLY to the area beside the main drive and do not leave steep-sided or deep holes as these can cause a hazard to other users
- never dig into vertical banks along the main drive to avoid creating overhangs and the stones falling down onto the drive which makes access difficult for others
- never build new jumps and trails which cross the main drive
- never build jumps or berms which are over knee height or about 50cm high
- never bring new materials onto the site and do not cut or damage live trees - please use only what is there
- consider contributing time and energy to other volunteer conservation projects that are taking place in the woods.

The CWG will:

- inspect the area with trails at least once a year and remove any structures or materials that are deemed to be hazardous
- remove immediately any obvious hazards
- remove immediately any signs of unauthorised trail building outside the designated area near the main drive
- work to improve stability of the walls and earth banks along the main drive.

1. Introduction to the Organisation

The Culduthel Woods Group is a registered Charity (called a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation or SCIO) and our objectives are:

- **To advance the environmental protection and improvement of Culduthel Woods**, following the principles of sustainable development, by the conservation, management and enhancement of the natural habitats and the plant and animal species therein

- **To promote education within the community** about the history, management and habitats of Culduthel Woods and to enable use of the woods by schools and other organisations for educational purposes
- **To advance citizenship and community development** by encouraging voluntary activity and recreation in, and by promoting civic responsibility for, the Culduthel Woods.

As a charity we have to follow certain rules and procedures and these are laid out in our Constitution which you can find on our website. You can find out more about how SCIOs work at the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The organisation is managed by Charitable Trustees who are all volunteers with an interest in the woods. We aim to be open and transparent about everything that we do and communicate with our members regularly. You can find out more about the woods and our Group at <https://www.culduthelwoods.org/>

2. Cyclists and Bikes are very welcome

Cyclists and Bikes are very welcome in the woods. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which applies to the whole area of the woods and is based on three key principles:

- Respect the interests of others
- Care for the environment
- Take responsibility for your own actions

Further information is at <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/>. The Code says specifically about cycling:

“Access rights extend to cycling. Cycling on hard surfaces, such as wide paths and tracks, causes few problems. On narrow routes, cycling may cause problems for other people, such as walkers and horse riders. If this occurs, dismount and walk until the path becomes suitable again. Do not endanger walkers and horse riders: give other users advance warning of your presence and give way to them on a narrow path. Take care not to alarm farm animals, horses and wildlife.

If you are cycling off-path, particularly in winter, avoid:

- *going onto wet, boggy or soft ground, and*
- *churning up the surface.”*

3. Consultation feedback

In the public consultation exercise that was undertaken by the Culduthel Woods Group in 2019 we proposed that “Kids and other people on bikes should feel welcome in the woods but we would want to keep the area of jumps and digging low-key and contained to one part of the woods.” 87% of people who responded (i.e. over 110 people) said they were in support of this general approach.

4. Unauthorised mountain-bike trail building

In one part of the woods, near to the main drive there has been a custom of small-scale trail building which has gone on for some time (and well before the Culduthel Woods Group took ownership of the land on behalf of the community). This has typically involved the construction of trails, low berms and jumps through the excavation of sand, gravel and rocks and compaction to form the structures mentioned above.

The Trustees of Culduthel Woods Group are very positive about cycling and biking within the woods, but this unauthorised trail building has caused some concerns. In particular, some local people have got in touch to say they are worried about:

- the potential danger from bikes and pedestrian collisions
- the digging activity and the potential for trips and falls caused by steep-sided banks and holes
- the potential damage to soils and wildlife - especially near the main drive where the digging can cause erosion and stones to fall onto the drive, making access difficult for buggies and pushchairs
- the unregulated nature of the activity and uncertainty about who is responsible for managing it
- concerns about the potential spread of unauthorised trail building to other parts of the woods.

The Trustees are aware of their legal responsibilities to take reasonable care to ensure that people will not suffer injury or damage as a result of any dangers, due to the condition of their property. The Culduthel Woods Group has not been approached by any party or group to formalise the arrangement with mountain-bike trails in the woods.

The Trustees also aware that similar issues have arisen elsewhere in Scotland and that Guidance has been produced by the National Access Forum to help land managers and the mountain bike community work well together - see links below:

<https://dmbins.com/trails/unauthorised-mtb-trails-guidance/> and

<https://cdn.dmbins.com/documents/Unauthorised-Mountain-Bike-Trails-a-Guide-for-land-managers-and-riders.pdf?v=1647249072>

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