

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Good Practice Guidelines for Mountain Bike Tour Operators,
Guides, Instructors and Coaches operating in Scotland



Introduction

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS) is a project, hosted within Scottish Cycling, which is delivering the world's first national strategy for mountain biking.

Wild Scotland is the Scottish Wildlife and Adventure Tourism Operators Association. Wild Scotland represent adventure tourism companies across Scotland, all of whom care about and respect Scotland's natural beauty and are committed to delivering an outstanding level of service to their clients.

These guidelines have been developed in partnership between DMBinS, Wild Scotland and Scottish mountain biking businesses to support the delivery of good practice towards our customers, the land managers and other visitors with whom we need to interact responsibly, and the fantastic landscapes in which we operate.

Scotland is one of the best destinations in the world for mountain biking. We hope these guidelines will help our customers understand the quality of service and experience which they can expect when they engage with a Scottish mountain biking business.

This document follows on from the guidance on responsible mountain biking developed by DMBinS – [Do The Ride Thing](#) – which supports the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#).

More details about other guidelines in the Wild Scotland Best Practice Guideline Series can be found at: www.wild-scotland.org.uk.

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01 The Fundamentals



Mountain biking in Scotland is unique across the world due to the varied landscapes across relatively short distances, some of the best and most innovative purpose built mountain bike trails in the world and our progressive access legislation.

By working within these guidelines, Scottish mountain biking businesses can help enhance our international reputation as an amazing place to ride and a nation whose businesses are recognised for their responsible and professional approach, as well as providing high quality, safe and fun experiences.

The following are the fundamentals which every Scottish mountain biking business should have in place:

- Respect for the natural environment and a recognition of the need for sustainable use.
- An awareness of access rights and adherence to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, in particular guidance on groups in the environment (see Section 2A) and the DMBinS guidance – Do The Ride Thing.
- Dependent on their type of business (see section 3), compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations, and associated requirements relating to licences, insurances, policy statements (e.g. Health and Safety, Child Protection, Disability), risk assessment, financial protection, staff disclosures and qualifications.
- The ability to perform basic first aid and contact the appropriate authorities in the unlikely event of an emergency occurring.
- All regulations relating to vehicles and bikes should be adhered to and vehicles and equipment should be well-maintained and regularly checked.

- Work with land owners and managers where appropriate to ensure the common goal of sustainable access and business continuity is possible within rural Scotland. Especially where areas are commonly used for access.
- Contact with the land manager to obtain necessary permissions, for example for vehicular access, and for advice on minimising your impact on land management activities, the environment and other people.
- Clients should be encouraged to provide written feedback on their tour. This feedback should be used to make improvements.
- Businesses will have a robust induction programme for new staff which will include customer service training, working in natural environments and these good practice guidelines.
- All leaders, instructors and coaches will have an appropriate qualification for the activity and will not deliver outside the qualifications remit.
- Operators are encouraged to join Wild Scotland, VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Scheme and the Green Tourism Business Scheme.
- Businesses, if members, should display their Wild Scotland logo and other relevant logos on tour vehicles.

02 Responsible Mountain Biking

All guides, instructors and coaches should have a working knowledge of, and promote to clients, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and DMBinS's guide to responsible mountain biking – 'Do The Ride Thing'. This will help to promote awareness of individual riders' responsibilities as mountain bikers in Scotland.

2(a) Managing Groups

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code makes specific mention of working with groups, both in a commercial and non-commercial setting, and its potential for greater impacts -

"...the larger a group or event, or the more regularly use is made of a particular place, the greater is the risk of causing unreasonable interference with the rights and needs of land managers and other people, and of causing impacts on the environment. Therefore, if you are responsible for organising a group or an event, or for running a recreational or educational business requiring access to the outdoors, you need to show extra care."

In terms of responsible mountain biking, it is important when organising groups of mountain bikers to be especially aware of the following good practice:

- Follow good practice around group management, safety and route selection which is covered in your leadership or coaching qualification.
- Make sure you are aware of any land management requirements, sensitive areas or protected species and potential hazards on your chosen route.
- Consider other users of the area and their needs.
- Check the 'Heading for the Scottish Hills' website to find out if and where deer stalking may be taking place on your route.
- Take particular care in parking vehicles so they do not block gates or entrances to buildings.

2(b) Trail Etiquette

Your presence as a group can have an impact on the trail(s) which you are mountain biking on. Even if your business doesn't use a particular route frequently, be aware of potential cumulative impacts.

The following good practice should be adhered to:

- Take particular care when mountain biking on trails which are not on built paths with good drainage, particularly after periods of wet weather and in winter conditions, to avoid churning up the surface.

- Inform your group about their impact on the path or trail and how they can adjust their riding style dependent on the condition of the trail and the environment you are riding through. If in any doubt, don't hesitate to walk a particular section of trail, explaining to clients the reasons for doing so.
- Ensure people in your group use appropriate speed dependant on sight lines, trail conditions, rider's ability and other trail users.
- When approaching walkers - slow down & become less spread out; make your presence known (ring your bell or give a friendly hello); be ready to dismount or give way, and if the walker has stepped aside, thank them for doing so and let them know how many other riders are passing through.
- If your group's route passes through a field with crops, grass, hay and/or silage you should ride single file and use the field margins and, if possible, use a path or trail.

2(c) Responsible Businesses

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code also provides guidance on running a business which utilises access rights and all mountain biking businesses should be aware of this. The Code (paragraph 3.62) says -

"If you instruct, guide or lead people in recreational or educational activities, either commercially or for profit, take extra care to minimise any adverse effects that you might have on the interest of other businesses such as a farm, or an estate, and on the environment"

You should consider, for example, undertaking a risk assessment of your activities; liaising with relevant land managers and / or the local access officer to discuss access management issues; or assisting with the care of the places used by your business, either by volunteering time to repair or upgrade trails, or making a financial contribution to help with path repairs.

Following an assessment of a range of issues relating to commercial access, including their possible contribution to cumulative impacts on a particular route or area, the National Access Forum published further guidance to encourage businesses and land managers to work together.

03 Types of Mountain Biking Business

In Scotland we take pride in offering an exceptional level of quality experiences delivered by professionals. Mountain biking activities are offered in different ways in Scotland - each will deliver a different experience and have different responsibilities. The same business may deliver more than one category.

3(a) Tour Operators

For the purposes of these guidelines, a tour operator is a business which puts together a package for mountain bikers comprising of any 2 of the following elements – accommodation, travel and service delivery (such as delivering mountain biking).

Failure to comply with some of the following may be bad practice and other areas may be against the law. The following good practice should be adhered to be classified as a Scottish mountain bike tour operator in promotional material by DMBinS or Wild Scotland:

Legal Framework

Aware of and complying with the current law around travel regulations.

Must possess up to date travel bonding, insurance or financial compensation agreements. Please see EU travel package regulations: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/3288/contents/made

We would highly recommend contacting trading standards if in any doubt.

All relevant policy documents, as appropriate, these might include health and safety, child protection, working with clients with additional needs, equity and staff disclosures.

All the above should be up-to-date and available for inspection. Failure to have developed these documents may result in a business breaking the law and subject to criminal conviction. We would also remove the tour operator from all DMBinS and Wild Scotland marketing opportunities, as there is a reputational risk to Scotland if the law is not adhered to.

Qualifications

We would recommend all tour operators should (as a minimum standard) have the same qualifications as the single-day guides, instructors or coaches dependent on which category they are delivering.

In addition to qualified guides, it is recommended that each operator has an independent technical advisor to provide guidance on safety issues, best practice and other related matters.

We also recommend that all guides have attended a Leave No Trace ("LNT") Awareness or higher LNT course.

All operators are encouraged to be members of Wild Scotland and VisitScotland Quality Assurance or another assessed quality assurance scheme.

3(b) Single-day Guides or Instructors

For the purposes of these guidelines, a single day guide or instructor is a business which offers a day of mountain bike guiding or instruction in Scotland.

This differs from the role of a coach because a guide or instructor will only offer basic advice on bike skills. The purpose of a guide or instructor is not to develop athletic performance but only to improve a rider's skills so they can enjoy their mountain biking experience. The focus should not be on performance – this is the role of a coach.

A single day guide or instructor differs from a tour operator as the business will not arrange or offer any of the following elements - other activities, accommodation or travel.

We would recommend the following are adhered to be classified as a Scottish mountain bike single-day guide in promotional material by DMBinS or Wild Scotland:

Legal Framework

Possess up to date insurance. This may be through British Cycling or CTC - dependent on business turnover and level of qualification – or through a private insurance provider.

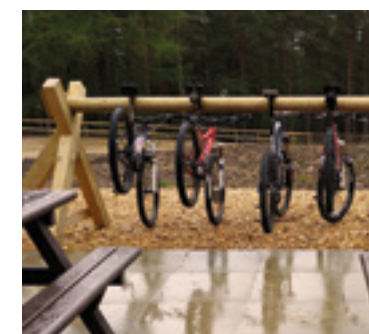
All relevant policy documents, as appropriate, these might include - health and safety, child protection, disability, equity and staff disclosures.

All the above should be up-to-date and available for inspection. Failure to have developed these documents may result in a business being removed from marketing or other opportunities.

Qualifications

All companies offering single day guiding or instruction experiences in Scotland should be led by a suitably qualified member of staff who will not deliver outside their remit.

Suggested qualifications could be a MBLA Mountain Bike Leader (MBL) or British Cycling Mountain Bike Level 3 Leader or CTC Advanced Leader qualification. We also recommend that all guides and instructors have attended a Leave No Trace ("LNT") Awareness or higher LNT course.



3(c) Coaches

For the purposes of this guidance a coach is a business which offers coaching to develop a rider's sporting performance in Scotland.

The business will not arrange or offer any of the following other elements of a holiday, such as other activities, accommodation & travel.

We would recommend the following are adhered to be classified as a Scottish mountain bike coach in promotional material by DMBinS or Wild Scotland:

Legal Framework

Possess up to date insurance. This may be through British Cycling or CTC - dependent on business turnover and level of qualification – or through a private insurance provider.

All relevant policy documents, as appropriate, these might include - health and safety, child protection, disability, equity and staff disclosures.

All the above should be up-to-date and available for inspection. Failure to have developed these documents may result in a business being removed from coaching marketing opportunities.

Qualifications

All coaching companies offering performance coaching sessions in Scotland should be delivered by a suitably qualified coach who will not deliver outside their remit.

Suggested qualifications could be a British Cycling UKCC Level 2 Coach (recommended Level 2 MTB DSU) or a CTC Skills Instructor qualification.

Further Information

Scottish Outdoor Access Code
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Commercial Access to the Outdoors:
guidance on local management
www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A846423.pdf

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS)
www.DMBinS.com

Do The Ride Thing –
Guidance on responsible mountain biking
www.DMBinS.com/dotheridething

Wild Scotland
www.wild-scotland.org.uk

Wild Scotland - best practice guidelines
www.wild-scotland.org.uk/about-us/wild-scotland-best-practice-guidelines

Heading for the Scottish Hills
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/hftsh

EU package travel information
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/3288/contents/made

Leave No Trace
www.wildernessfoundation.org.uk/leave-no-trace-training

UK Mountain Bike Leadership Awards
www.britishcycling.org.uk/mtbleadership

British Cycling Mountain Bike Coaching Qualifications
www.britishcycling.org.uk/coaching



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