

Evidence of Community Support

This document provides evidence of the support for the project that has been generated since August 2025.

Aberdeenshire Mountain Biking Community

Mountain biking is a popular sport in Aberdeenshire, with a strong community of riders, racers, coaches, clubs, festivals and volunteers and community-led venues. The shire was voted Scottish mountain biking destination of year in 2024. The Scottish Award for Trail Advocate of the Year has been won by an Aberdeenshire-based volunteer every year since 2022, and the European award in 2022. All three nominations in 2025 were from Aberdeenshire; two are Gravitare North East Members (including the 2024 winner).

There is bike coaching centre, 30 mins from Monymusk, that provides coaching for local people and visitors. There are 12 locations in Aberdeenshire that host local people and visitors. Up to 40,000 people, mostly Aberdeenshire residents, visit the Tarland Trail centres (built 2021 and 2023) each year.

There are active clubs in the area that take youth groups on rides from ages 11 to 17. These clubs train-up coaches, and support teenagers to regional and national races. Deeside Thistle, the largest club, host a youth race event annually. Some of these teenagers race at Scottish and National levels. This includes the one competitor that was a Scottish Champion 2021, 2022, 2024; he is a Gravitare North East member.

All these people work across a range of groups that underpin the whole mountain biking network; shops, trail maintenance, marshalling at races, securing access, and indeed different CATS applications and others.

Gravitare North East Membership

The Gravitare North East Charity of established in 2015 to build a bike park in Aberdeenshire. The design concept at that time, in line with the national trend, was for a large multi-million pound, multi-sport centre. The complexity of the proposal, changes in the prosperity of Aberdeen, and a trend to more local, community-led mountain biking meant that the project did not proceed. This lack of progress, off the back of an aggressive fundraising campaign, left some Gravitare Members (210 at its peak) and followers disillusioned with the charity. As a result, the trustees reduced members numbers pending investigation of other opportunities.

In 2025 Gravitare North East was asked, by the Developing Mountain biking in Scotland Regional Coordinator to represent the biking community in Aberdeenshire, because it is a charity, to formalise the facilities at Pitfichie Hill. The trustees decided to recruit a

limited membership of local people that could support their decision-making in the Pitfichie area. The membership was focused to address the proposal at Pitfichie Hill, and so as not to raise false hopes in the wider Aberdeenshire mountain biking community before the feasibility of the project was established.

The current membership is made up of local residents, local residents that organise mountain activities on the hill (coaching, races, trail maintenance) and those that have insight to users' preferences such as shops and businesses. This does not include members that are trustees; one trustee lives in Monymusk, coaches at the local club and is a biking parent of active racers; one is a mountain bike guide, coached a local club and former secretary of the ATA; the third trustee is a long serving Gravitare North East and ATA volunteer.

Membership List

Member #	First Name	Community Place/Interest	Ordinary/Junior/Associate	Role/interest
1	Kieron	Place	Ordinary	Resident/Races
2	Nicky	Place	Ordinary	Resident/horse-riding
3	Stuart	Place	Ordinary	Resident
4	Gavin	Interest	Ordinary	Coach
5	Mark	Place	Ordinary	Resident/Forestry
6	Gael	interest	Ordinary	ATA Pitfichie Lead
7	Brian	Interest	Ordinary	ATA Pitfichie Lead
8	Mike	Interest	Ordinary	Bike Shop Owner/Race Sponsor
9	Steve	Interest	Ordinary	Bike Shop Owner
10	Lewis	Interest	Ordinary	Bike Shop Owner/Racer/ATA
11	Calum	Interest	Ordinary	Tour Operator/Hospitality
12	Neil	Interest	Associate	Clubs/Guide/Adaptive Biking
13	Calum	Interest	Ordinary	Racer/Coach/Construction
14	Jim	interest	Ordinary	Business Owner
15	Finlay	Interest	Junior	Racer/Youth Rider
16	John	Place	Ordinary	Resident/Fleet Management
17	Kiara	Place	Ordinary	Resident/Administration
18	Ally	Interest	Ordinary	Rider/local Business Owner
19	Michael	Place	Ordinary	Resident/Business Owner
20	leon	Interest	Junior	Racer/Youth Rider
21	Zeno	Interest	Ordinary	ATA/website

8 members and trustees live in Monymusk, 6 within the 10 miles and all but one, our adaptive biking representative, are Aberdeenshire residents.

Members and Trustees volunteer in activities in the village school and community projects in the village.

Community Activities in and around Pitfichie

Aberdeenshire Trail Association Digs

The trail association, working with FLS, maintains many of the trails on Pitfichie Hill, and clears multi-user paths. This includes preparation for races, training youth groups (the trail academy) and national schemes (Take Care of Your Trails Week).

Recently, a “dig” was held in the Pitfichie Downhill track in preparation for a youth race (organised by Gravitate North East members). The dig was attended by members of the Deeside Thistle Youth mountain biking club and other young volunteers. Monymusk Community Councillors also attended.

Photos from the ATA dig in May,



Scottish Enduro and Dialed-in Downhill Races

Local and regional volunteers organised and volunteered (Gravitate North East Members) at 3 races over the last 9 months.

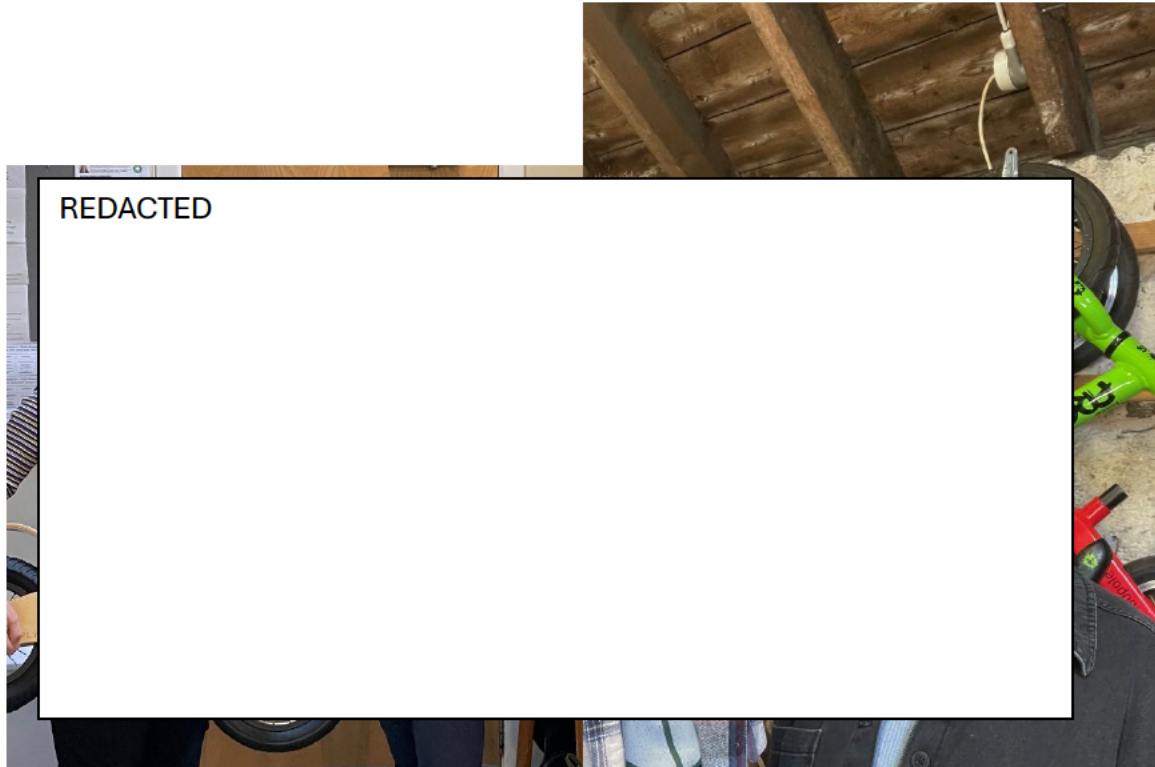
The races were well received by riders and parents and supporters had great fun. Some residents objected to the event citing noise, littering, damage to property and wildlife.

Photos from recent races (featuring Gravitate North East members and Monymusk locals).



Activities in the surrounding area

Gravitate North East focused its work on increasing participation in cycling in the Pitfichie Area when the proposal was first raised. We have recently donated balance bikes to local nurseries schools and maintained their existing bikes.



Gravitate North East has created a Biodiversity Plan for the Pitfichie Hill proposal and has identified a number activities to support biodiversity in the area. To date this includes recent visits to the forest with volunteers from the RSPB and Forestry and Land Planners.



See note of support. From David Leslie, Chairman of the local RSPB volunteer group



David Leslie

Sun, Jun 28,
5:36 PM (20
hours ago)

to me

Hi Mike

Yes, happy for you to use the photo in the document. I've done a quick letter of support below, which will hopefully be of some use.

Any issues, let me know

Best wishes

David

As a keen mountain biker, and also as a birdwatcher and nature enthusiast, I'm very excited to hear about the proposed plans for mountain bike trails at Pitfichie. Having recently walked round the site, and seen the variety of birdlife in particular, I feel that the mountain bike trails, and the land around them provide a great opportunity to increase biodiversity in the location. Monoculture plantations are normally fairly limited in their biodiversity, so any opportunity to increase the diversity of plantlife and therefore the different habitats for a wider variety of species should be applauded.

With the potential to use heavy machinery to sculpt areas of the hillside, including possibly creating some wetland areas, this would be a terrific opportunity to improve upon the normal habitats associated with commercial monoculture plantation.

Gravitate North East Trustee Catlin Bell

Hosted one of the first ever British Cycling Courses for Downhill Mountain Bike Coaches in the UK at the Sir Arthur Grant Outdoor Centre near Monymusk, and using the Monymusk trails.



Opinion Survey of Cluny, Monymusk and Midmar Community Council Area

Following the advice of the community council, Gravitate North East conducted an online survey of community residents, prior to presenting initial plans for the proposal. The aim was to assess support for the proposal and to raise any concerns that should be considered in the design. The raw survey results are in Appendix 1 attached.

The survey received 82 responses. An automatically generated summary of the feedback is as follows

Overall Sentiment Split

- **Strong Supporters (~45–50%):** Many respondents see the project as beneficial for youth, outdoor activity, wellbeing, and local businesses.

Example quotes:

- 'Great idea... the hill has far more potential than what's currently being used.'
- 'Fantastic opportunity for young riders — much needed.'
- 'Would bring people, energy and life back to the village.'

- **Cautious/Neutral (~25–30%):** Not opposed but want more detail, especially around access, traffic, and environmental impact.

Example quotes:

- 'Not opposed, but the road access is a major concern.'
- 'Concept needs more work, not completely sold yet.'
- 'Unclear on benefits for non-bikers.'

- **Strong Objectors (~20–25%):** Concerned about tranquillity, wildlife disturbance, and commercialisation.

Example quotes:

- 'GO AWAY. NOT WANTED HERE.'
- 'This will destroy the tranquillity and wildlife of the area.'
- 'Absolutely not — the roads and the hill cannot cope.'

Key Positive Trends

- Outdoor activity enhancement.
- Youth development and coaching.
- Community identity and pride.
- Potential benefits for local businesses.
- Proper parking and safer visitor management.

Key Negative Trends

- Traffic and access concerns (largest issue).

- Environmental and wildlife concerns.
- Loss of tranquillity.
- Waste, behaviour, and misuse concerns.
- Doubts about economic impact.
- Mistrust due to previous project history.

Letters of Support from Local Residents

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Date: Wed, 10 Jun 2026 at 20:53
Subject: Pitfichie Mountain Biking
To: <secretarycmmcc@gmail.com>

Dear Community Council,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for mountain biking in the Monymusk, Midmar, and Cluny area. I know the Council sometimes receives negative feedback regarding the trails, so I wanted to reach out to ensure you also hear a positive perspective from someone living locally who deeply values this resource and sees the tangible benefits it brings to our village.

Having an established trail network like this is a massive asset to the village. It brings valuable footfall to the area, which supports local businesses and promotes an active, outdoor lifestyle for people of all ages. There is also huge potential for the future; facilities like the Sir Arthur Grant Outdoor Centre could be effectively utilised for kids' mountain bike camps and visiting riders. Attracting this kind of positive influx of visitors directly supports locals who run Airbnbs and other accommodations in the area.

Furthermore, access to outdoor sports is a major draw for families looking to settle in Monymusk. Providing engaging activities for young people is absolutely crucial; if there is nothing for teenagers to do, we are much more likely to see issues like boredom-driven vandalism. The trails give the youth a constructive, healthy outlet and a community to be a part of.

The mountain biking community has also shown immense dedication to the area; a great example of this is the bike shop that previously operated in the village, which provided crucial help and support to the community on many occasions during Storm Arwen.

It is also important to recognise the long-standing history and prestige of the sport here. Since the 1990s, the area has hosted major events like the Scottish Enduro Series and the Scottish Downhill Association races, bringing Pitfichie to the absolute forefront of the sport. At one point, this hill was widely known as *the* place to

mountain bike, and iconic features like the Devil's Staircase have been on the hill since 2004. Mountain biking is not a new fad, but something that has been deeply integrated into the fabric of the area for decades.

Mountain biking is actually the main reason I chose to buy a house in Monymusk. Pitfichie, in particular, holds a very special closeness in my heart. Being able to leave directly from my doorstep to get straight into the woods and have fun is a massive part of my lifestyle. Honestly, having such immediate access to the outdoors has saved my mental health on many occasions. Additionally, I have made wonderful new friends in the village due to the sport, which has created a genuinely great support network for me.

For me, the experience is about much more than just riding; I always make a point to stop and appreciate the wildlife on the hill while I am up there, taking in the beautiful natural environment we are so lucky to have access to.

I want to emphasise that there is significant support for the trails and the positive contribution they make to our community. I fully support the ongoing maintenance and responsible development of the trail network, as well as potential improvements to existing infrastructure, such as parking and visitor facilities, which would naturally help alleviate some of the current concerns and make the area even better for everyone.

Thank you for your time, your hard work, and for ensuring a balanced view of mountain biking in our community.

Best regards,

Caitlin Wilkinson

pitfichie

Inbox

N

Thu, Jun 18,
8:11 PM (7
days ago)

to me

Good Evening,

I wanted to send a short email to the community council to explain why I feel that the development of Pitfichie car park is desperately needed, We have lived local to Pitfichie now for over 12 years, Over the years I mainly used to hike and hack horses round the forest there, but my husband was always a budding mountain bike rider and slowly his passion wore off on me. When our two young girls were learning to ride bikes we often would all

ride round the beautiful tracks round Pitfichie and enjoy this as a family. Once Covid hit I seriously took up mountain biking as it was a quick way to escape the pressure of home schooling and clear my head up the hills while on a time schedule, this started to become a weekly routine for me and was much needed. I also have an Auto immune disease which effect multi joints in my body and one of the best forms of exercise for it is cycling so currently I find myself ridding at Pitfichie three times per week if not more. Through my love and need to cycle I have met many amazing local like minded mountain bikers who are also ladies and we often meet up socially to ride which is amazing to have this on our door step. I also attended many of the local trails association organised digs at Pitfichie and have been put forward to attend one of the (DIRTT) courses which is a volunteer Trail Dig leader Course to support sustainable development of trails in Scotland. The one thing missing at Pitfichie is a proper car park and toilet facilities. My eldest daughter gets the rural bus each day to Alford Academy and gets picked up and dropped off in a layby close to pitfichie trails but also a popular layby used by mountain bikers to park as there isn't enough parking at the trails, on several occasion in the afternoon later in the week the layby is often full of people who have gone out biking and hiking and it makes it very dangerous for the bus to stop and my daughter getting off her bus. We often also use trails to ride our horse round but it has become increasing difficult to park now and to able to hack with my two daughters which is such a shame as they love to ride there, A purpose built car park would solve these issue and make things also safer.

Kind Regards [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 18 June 2026 19:44
To: secretarycmmcc@gmail.com <secretarycmmcc@gmail.com>
Subject: Biking at Pitfichie

Hello I am [REDACTED] I am ten years old, and biking over here at Pitfichie means a lot to me. When I'm older, I'm going to be a professional mountain biker. Ive won my very first race, and most of my training for that was riding at Pitfichie. I'm totally on board and in love with the idea of some new tracks and some uplift every weekend and holidays to get me up the hill for more runs for the limited time that I have there. Ive been biking since I was one and a half, going round the dam at Monymusk and popping of rocks and roots and anything that made fun, and I have always had the dream and the passion and the belief to make it the professionals one day. And I think Pitfichie will for sure help me get there.

Thanks for reading!

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 June 2026 18:33
To: secretarycmmcc@gmail.com <secretarycmmcc@gmail.com>
Subject: Mountain biking at Pitfichie Hill.

Dear Community Council,

With the Gravitare project in mind, I just wanted to share how much mountain biking means to me, not only as a sport that supports my health and fitness, but as something that contributes hugely to my overall wellbeing and quality of life.

For me, mountain biking is more than a hobby, it has become a way of life. I have encouraged and inspired both of my children to take up mountain biking too. It gets them outdoors, active, and spending quality time together as a family. It gives them opportunities to make friends in a different environment, sharing experiences, supporting one another, and enjoying being outdoors together. At the same time, they are learning to appreciate and respect nature. I also volunteer as a fully qualified mountain bike coach with a children's mountain bike club for ages 6–16, where we visit trail venues across Aberdeenshire. We regularly use Pitfichie for developing skills, building confidence, supporting one another, and training for races.

One of the things I value most about mountain biking, particularly in this day and age, is the way it encourages children away from screens and a sedentary lifestyle and into healthy, social outdoor activity. As a parent, helping children maintain that connection with the outdoors has become increasingly important. I also take my children hill walking, and while we enjoy that too, mountain biking is what truly excites them and motivates them to be active outdoors.

We live in Monymusk, and we love Pitfichie Hill, it is genuinely one of the reasons why my husband and I chose to live here. I enjoy cycling from my house to Pitfichie early in the morning before the day begins and it is one of my favourite places to be. Not only this, but I regularly coach mountain biking on Pitfichie hill, as do many other coaches, it is such a fantastic place to help clients progress their riding. I believe there would be real value in having well-maintained trails and designated coaching areas that support structured coaching and rider development. This would benefit not only myself professionally, but also the children and young riders I support through volunteering, giving them better opportunities to progress their riding in a safe, managed, and accessible environment.

I would also like to highlight that mountain biking at Pitfichie is not something new. Pitfichie Hill is already a well-established place for mountain biking, with people travelling from across Aberdeenshire and beyond to ride there. Trails have developed and evolved over time as part of the existing use of the hill. What I support is not unrestricted expansion, but a managed and responsible approach. I believe having designated parking and monitored, protected trails create a safer and more sustainable environment for everyone, while helping to reduce environmental impact and manage trail use appropriately. I feel the Gravitare project strongly reflects this approach. By creating a controlled and contained parking area and supporting responsible trail management, it helps address existing pressures while benefiting not only mountain bikers but walkers too. In my experience, walkers and mountain bikers already coexist well on the hill. I regularly meet walkers while out riding, and we stop to chat about the hill, and life in general. I view Pitfichie hill as a shared outdoor space that brings people together

Thank you for all the work that you do for the community, and for taking the time to read.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2026 10:24

To: secretarycmmcc@gmail.com <secretarycmmcc@gmail.com>

Subject: Pitfichie Mountain Biking

Dear Community Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of myself and my partner, who both live in Monymusk.

We would like to express our support for mountain biking in the local area. We are aware you probably receive some negative views about local cycling events and trail rides, but we feel it is important to also show the positive views in support of it as well, as we feel it is often not shared enough.

My partner first bought a house in Monymusk over 3 years ago as he was drawn to the quiet village lifestyle. I moved in with him shortly after and have fallen in love with the village as well. We enjoy the small community that rallies together in times of need, such as during the extreme weather conditions we had this winter. We enjoy supporting local businesses such as the Grant Arms for a Sunday roast or wee coffee trip out. However since we have moved here, we have noticed at least 2 of the few local businesses have closed, the bike shop in the church and the Post Office. We are so relieved that the charity shop is still able to continue to remain open and provide coffee mornings for those that may rely on it for social gatherings with friends.

However we feel that there is a slight gap in businesses/areas aimed towards the younger generations, especially teenagers. We are aware of some of the shocking behaviour such as fire starting and vandalism that has occurred over the past few months. Perhaps if there were more local activities for the younger generation to

participate in, such as cycling on improved tracks and trails at Pitfichie, it would help provide more activities to keep them occupied and dissuade them from partaking in this negative behaviour?

The Sir Arther Grant Centre has many great activities for families with young children. With the addition of improved cycling trails, this could help provide more entertainment for children and teenagers and keep them busy with healthy, productive activities whilst spending time outside instead of inside with technology.

We believe that outdoor activities such as cycling, walking the trails and other activities would provide many benefits to the local community, especially young families and young people in the area who have to rely on the few public transport links that come through/past Monymusk. Having so much natural beauty surrounding us, we feel it is important to embrace it and take advantage of living in such a beautiful part of Aberdeenshire. By improving the existing tracks at Pitfichie, we believe that it can increase footfall to local businesses such as the Grant Arms and Double Dot Art, as well as promoting the benefits of spending time outdoors and taking part in activities such as hillwalking and cycling.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and working hard for the benefit of the community, we greatly appreciate it.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sat, Jun 27,
5:14 PM (2
days ago)

to secretarycmmcc, me

Pitfichie has been an important riding area for many years now. As Head MTB Coach at Deeside Thistle Cycling Club, I have organised youth MTB coaching sessions at both the Monymusk (DH) side, as well as the Whitehills end for over 10 years, with many of those young riders going on to stand on podiums at SDA, SES, SXC and BDS races across the UK. The range of challenging trails that the area has is an ideal training ground for riders looking to develop skills and fitness. As a father with two sons, who both race at national level at both Downhill and Enduro, the lack of an uplift facility has limited the area though, and in order to get the

required volume of riding needed, we have been forced to drive to Innerleithen, Glencoe or Fort William in order to take advantage of the facilities there. This is both costly and time consuming.

The improvements to the trail network there, made possible through the collaborative efforts of FLS and ATA have raised the level of the tracks, encouraging multiple races to use the area for very successful races, and brought riders in from around the UK to experience the unique trails.

I would unreservedly support the work being done by Gravitare North East as they look to further develop the trail network and improve the facilities at Pitfichie.

Yours,

[REDACTED]

F

[REDACTED]

Fri, Jun 26,
6:01 PM (3
days ago)

to secretarycmmcc, me

Hi I'm [REDACTED] I'm 15 years old and I ride at Pitfichie a ton, it's the main place I use for practising for British downhill, I believe more facilities and some uplift would make it easier for me and many others to improve and get faster, while it can also be a place for families to come for a weekend away, with an uplift the Scottish downhill association would almost definitely run a Scottish level race which would be great for supporting mountain biking in Aberdeenshire and showing what great mountain biking Aberdeenshire has.

[REDACTED] < [REDACTED]

Jun 27, 2026, 3:01 PM (2 days ago)

to secretarycmmcc

Good Afternoon,

I have long been meaning to write some correspondence to express my support for the planned development of the mountain bike trails at Pitfichie.

I have been a Monymusk resident for over 5 years now and was drawn to this location by the rural setting, sense of community, the history of the village and access into local forests to walk, cycle, mountain bike or just spend a bit of time appreciating nature.

I work in forestry, I've held roles managing forests for the private and public sectors, as well as working for the Scottish Government and understand the importance of making forests sustainable. Pitfichie has struggled significantly in recent years, with the devastation caused by storm Arwen and subsequent storm events, plus other extreme weather, such as drought and flooding, add to this, the increase in pests and diseases and failure of crops due to these issues and it has left a forest that has required significant intervention, with limited economic return to show for it, with this limiting investment in infrastructure, such as roads and paths and some of the recreational facilities that were previously installed on the hill.

FLS has constantly seen its budgets cut, a forest which once had its own local team to effectively manage and generally care for the area, have been stretched out across larger regional areas, meaning less time is spent in the woodlands to keep an eye on things, maintain the infrastructure, remove invasive species, care for the ecology and protect the forest from anti-social behaviour, such as littering, fires, unauthorised off-road motoring and other things which have unfortunately come to blight so many areas of tree cover across Scotland- my first year in Monymusk, I was horrified to see the waste left at Tillyfourie quarry by partiers looking to escape the heat.

So how does this relate to encouraging more people to Pitfichie by enhancing mountain biking? I've been lucky enough to visit many forestry bike pikes across

Scotland- Learnie red rocks, Moray Monster, Fort William, Laggan wolfrax, Seven Stanes and more and I would strongly suggest anyone considering opposing this development to visit these places. The sense of community and proud ownership of the land to which hosts these facilities is inspiring to see. People with a shared passion, not just for maximum speed and the quickest turnaround for the next run, but people who genuinely care for the environment they are interacting with. They want to make things better, care for the trails, the paths, the parking areas, shared facilities and they then take on many of the roles that FLS, or other landowners can't undertake. I won't pretend that everyone that mountain bikes is like this, i've told people driving through Pitfichie to slow down, taken home rubbish I've picked up, explained why people shouldn't start fires and why it is important to clean gear to stop the spread of disease. Bringing people together pushes the unsavoury few to stay away.

These centres also benefit the environment; access helps scarify hard soils, allowing regeneration, buffer zones around runs allow biodiversity corridors to be introduced, managed to reduce invasive species which limit growth, they also provide areas of open space to allow wildlife to flourish. Contrary to popular belief, many protected species are encouraged by these changes, the open spaces allowing hunting grounds for raptors, trails allowing wetland areas to attract invertebrates, flowering broadleaves attracting birds and bees and other insects, where they was once a barren non-native productive forest. The landscape changes as well, rather than a stark scar to the landscape, that many doubters would have you believe is the result of trail building, you get corridors of colour across a hillside that provides shade and diversity.

Add to this, the benefit to the local economy, the places i have mentioned above all have seen the benefits of people coming to stay in the local area, cafes, bed and breakfasts, bike shops, all employing local people and benefiting the local area. Monymusk was built to house estate workers, but I would imagine the estate only employs a handful of people now, people involved in these projects are fiercely loyal to their local community and want to see things prosper and bring a sense of community with it. Everytime I walk or ride past the Pitfichie car parks, I am positively engaged by people out biking, many of them younger people, this is strikingly different to some of the interactions i have had with younger folk who loiter around the village more and more of an evening, who seem openly hostile at times.

I won't say that the development of Pitfichie won't result in a change to some residents, some of which will see it as a negative, but looking at things from a wider perspective, I see the benefits far outweigh the negatives. We all need to engage more and work together to ensure the best result for all involved, rather than simple 'yes or no' camps.

I would be more than happy to discuss these issues further, to explain some of the points I have made, I would even go as far as offering to take interested parties out to discuss forestry or even show other areas that have benefitted from these trails. Despite being pro the development of the trails, that does not mean that i won't push back on anything that threatens the village or the woodland and this again goes towards that all important compromise.

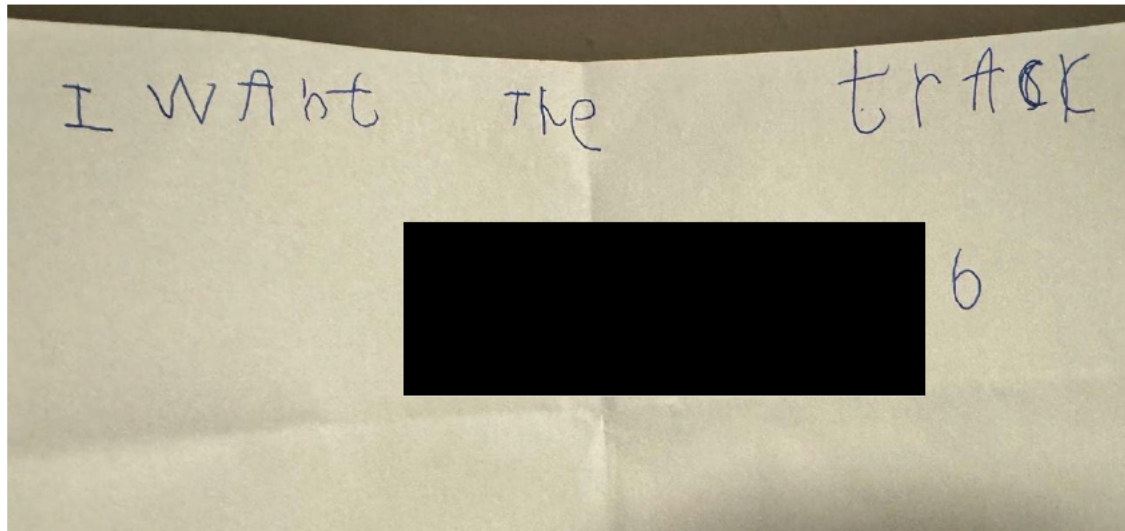
I would suggest the Community council read different documents into sustainable forest management, which includes the UK forestry standard, Scotland's Forestry strategy, as well as Aberdeenshires. Scottish land-use strategies, the Scottish land rights and responsibility statement, FSC/PEFC guidance on sustainable forest management and nature Scot guidance on the protection of protected species. These are all core to the development of rural land and go hand in hand with planning.

I appreciate your time in reading my response and look forward to supporting the community in Monymusk and the wider area on different matters moving forward.

Best Regards.

[REDACTED]

From our suggestions box at the information day in February



Frequently Asked Questions

During our Information Days we answered questions that had arisen from a circular distributed to residents. These are the questions and responses.

Q: Is Gravitare Northeast (GNE) a Developer?

A: No. GNE is a community group of volunteers, that is constituted as a Scottish Charity, to enable local riders and residents to create community amenities for mountain biking. Please get in touch if you would like to get involved, particularly if you live locally to Monymusk.

Q: Has local opposition stopped the project progressing elsewhere?

A: No. GNE has investigated sites at Durris and near Aboyne but because of ground conditions and lease agreements GNE trustees chose not to pursue them further. No planning applications were made for these sites.

Q: Will Bike Trails permanently change the character of Monymusk?

A. Yes, for the better. This development will add to the heritage and environment of the village. Pitfichie Hill is already an established mountain bike destination with thousands of visitors every year. The area is currently managed for commercial timber production, with poor facilities for forest users and limited benefits to the community. This project will be an asset for the community, with proper car parking and toilets, effective site maintenance and an increase the areas of native woodland on the hill. It will increase participation in sport and the outdoors around Monymusk, particularly for young people. Longer term, we hope that Monymusk becomes known for sustainable, community-led, outdoor activity and stewardship of the

environment that attracts new residents and supports the local economy.

Recent studies from rural bike centres in Wales have shown how the appeal of the bike centres for families and younger workers has increased house prices, sustained local school roles and bus routes in the village.

Q: What do you mean by “world class, downhill competition trails”?

A: Scotland has produced riders that compete at a world class level, including World Champions and World Series Winners. Despite a ground swell of talent, our local riders do not have the type of trails, with the terrain, and features for developing skills, places for coaching and race practice nearby. Pitfichie Hill has the potential to offer these features, if built to the highest worldclass standards. However, it does not have the scale to host international events.

Q: We see that other Trail Centres have high visitor numbers. Will Pitfichie have 300,000 visitors like Glentress?

A: No, Glentress is several orders of magnitude larger visitor attraction than what is planned. Glentress has 115 trails, 2 cafes, 56 Holiday Lodges, and a Hotel. It is also within riding distance of another bike centre at Innerleithen (116 trails and uplift) within a 2 hour drive of Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow a catchment of 2 million people. It's like comparing visitor numbers for Union Square in Aberdeen to the COOP in Kemnay.

A better comparison is with Tarland Trails in Aberdeenshire, which are community run amenities. Tarland has 40,000 visitors a year, and more in its first year, without any strain on local services. Tarland

Trails, is a larger facility, with 17km of trail for the ability of most riders. Pitfichie Hill is smaller and more challenging for specialist bikes and riders. A key factor limiting rider numbers is capacity of the uplift vehicles which are limited to pre-booked tickets, and if required

a booking system could be extended to carparking to further cap rider numbers during peak periods.

Q: Will the traffic pass along the single-track road?

A: Yes. GNE is investigating two sites for the car park. One is at the north of the hill, using the current Forestry Access from the single-track Road. The other is east of the Pitfichie Hill, at the top of the field opposite Pitfichie Steading. This is 300m from the start of the single-track road.

At peak periods, we estimate 60 cars a day will use this road (this includes bikers that have use this route over the years, so is not an increase of 60). This number is in line with the volume of traffic handled by similar roads to similar venues.

GNE have commissioned a Transport Statement Report to assess the viability of this road, and recommend any traffic management measures.

Q: How will you manage litter?

A: Most mountain bikers respect the trails and their environment.

There is even a rider's volunteer organisation called Trash Free Trails that works to clean up woodlands and public places.

If approved this project will have a maintenance team that will remove litter, as well as maintain the trails and roads, maintain

drainage and facilities, probably improving the current situation.

Q: How will you manage campervans on site?

Some mountain bikers have vans for their bikes (about 20%). The carpark spaces will be large enough for modern cars, 4x4s and campervans. The site will not be suitable for overnight parking, and most likely locked when not in use.

Q: Will traffic going to the bike trails be dangerous for children attending the primary school in Monymusk?

A: GNE understands that children are safe from the hundreds of cars and lorries that currently pass the school every day. We have not found data for the traffic passing the village square, but there were 6600 car per day counted officially on the B933 in 2019.

If other residents feel that the current traffic management around the school could be improved, GNE would be happy to support changes as an interested community group.

Q: Do you plan to keep expanding the site?

A: No. From experience in other areas, there is unlikely to be a growth in demand above the initial levels and no need for a larger car park or toilets. Some new trails and biodiversity corridors may be required to refresh and replace trails to continue to attract visitors. Outside of the site, there is the opportunity for growth of facilities to support the visitors and the local community, such as a bike wash, a kids pump track, cafes and accommodation through local businesses. If successful, there is the opportunity to take more of the hill into community ownership and extend the biodiversity corridors.

Q: Will this project restrict public access to Pitfichie Hill or make it unsafe for me to walk on the Hill?

A: No, it will make access easier and safer. Our survey from September 2025 identified conflict from multiple user types is currently a problem on Pitfichie Hill. The project in its design, and operation, will resolve pinch points for different users by, for example, deploying proper signage, calming measures on trails and ensuring lines of sight are clear.

Q: Will the bike trails have a detrimental effect on the wildlife?

A: No. Making the trails sustainable and the whole project add to the natural environment is a key goal. We hope to replace the commercial planting with native species in corridors along the trails, increase native woodland through compensatory planting requirement and partner with environmental stewardship groups, such as the Woodland Trust in design, operation and education on the site.