THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN BIKING IN SCOTLAND

A National Strategic Framework
2016 - 2018 Refresh
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The first Strategic Framework for Mountain Biking in Scotland was published in 2010 with the primary aims of maximising the impact of the activity for Scotland and providing all relevant partners with the chance to work together to achieve the best returns for sport, health and tourism and economic development.

Since the publication of the original Framework, there has been considerable progress in all areas of development and the multi-agency partnership working has been outstanding in the development and promotion of mountain biking in Scotland as an enjoyable activity. After five years of successful implementation, this refresh of the Framework aims to reflect the progress made and the opportunities that still remain to be addressed.

The Scottish mountain biking development consortium (the consortium) comprising all the relevant national agencies and sports bodies with an interest in the activity, has driven and coordinated the implementation of the Framework. The work has been done both by the member organisations working individually to deliver relevant parts of the Framework and through a range of bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnership initiatives.

The key action taken by the consortium has been the creation and funding of the Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS) project since December 2009. The project, which is hosted by Scottish Cycling, has been instrumental in delivering many exciting initiatives across the range of the Framework’s objectives and has contributed significantly to Scotland being recognised as truly world-class in developing mountain biking to achieve cross-cutting benefits for the country.
Vision

Our vision continues to be for Scotland to be a world leader in all aspects of mountain biking including:

- Levels of participation
- Sporting performances achieved
- The economic value delivered for Scotland
- Numbers of visitors attracted
- Major events staged
- The quality of facilities and opportunities provided
Key Objectives

The Scottish Government aims to focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth with the following five strategic objectives:

• Wealthier and Fairer
• Healthier
• Safer and Stronger
• Smarter
• Greener

In the context of these over-arching objectives for Scotland, mountain biking is a clear example of an activity which delivers across a range of policy agendas, and the partner agencies are committed to ensuring that mountain biking makes its optimum contribution to the key objectives of this Framework which are:

• improved health and well being through increased participation
• tourism and other aspects of economic development
• sporting development and success
The delivery of this Framework will contribute to the Scottish Government's National Performance Outcomes in the following ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scottish Government National Outcome</th>
<th>Contribution of the MTB Framework</th>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>• increased growth of the Scottish tourism product through being the mountain biking capital of Europe;</td>
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<td>• increased volume and value of mountain biking product development companies.</td>
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<td>Research &amp; innovation</td>
<td>• Increased engagement between mountain biking businesses and academia;</td>
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<td>• continued growth of the Borders Academy Sporting Excellence (BASE) DH programme at Borders College;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• increased pathways for students with a mountain biking background from further education into higher education;</td>
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<td>• integration with Glentress masterplan to further develop the Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland as a centre for innovation and excellence.</td>
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<td>Employment opportunities</td>
<td>• Mountain biking is estimated to contribute £149m per annum to the Scottish economy supporting 4,350 FTE jobs across Scotland by 2017.</td>
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<td>Healthier lives</td>
<td>• increased physical activity through promotion &amp; facilitation of increased participation;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• creation of a world class network, of largely volunteer, leaders, coaches and instructors who will facilitate the development of mountain bikers across Scotland.</td>
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<td>Children, young people &amp; families</td>
<td>• improved public perception of their neighbourhood;</td>
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<td>• intergenerational connections encouraged through more volunteering opportunities</td>
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<td>Sustainable places</td>
<td>• increased use of bikes for active travel;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• sustainable development of MTB facilities;</td>
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<td>• regional clusters used to disseminate good practice and identify joint working initiatives to improve local environments.</td>
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| **Communities** | • increased number of mountain biking clubs and informal groups contribute towards healthier communities and encourage a pride within local communities.  
• regional clusters provide a focus for local communities to work together, spread good practice and increase the sustainability of mountain biking in communities.  
• local provision, particularly, urban and rural small facilities, and informal paths and trails in parks and forests encourage a greater emphasis on increasing health benefits and are more environmentally sustainable as they do not require the use of a car. These facilities are increasingly imbedded in local communities and are supported by local volunteers and partner organisations. |
| **Environment** | • increased public use of the outdoors;  
• sustainably built and managed trails;  
• increased opportunities to volunteer in trail repair and maintenance which help sustain trail networks. |
| **National identity** | • Recognition of and pride in Scotland’s status as a world class nation for mountain biking development.  
• opportunity for Scot’s to achieve success on the world stage through sporting opportunities. |
| **Inequalities** | • reduction in health inequalities through increased participation in mountain biking, particularly in areas of deprivation. |
Since the publication of the original Framework, the public sector policy context has changed, with new policies / strategies being launched which this refreshed Framework and the work to take it forward must take cognisance of. The relevant strategic drivers are:

- The Christie Commission on public sector reform – Scottish Government 2011. Key priorities include: public sector services working more effectively together; a focus on preventative action; a focus on tackling inequalities.


- The National Strategy: Tourism 2020 - One of the key assets identified is Nature and Activities of which mountain biking/ cycling is the second biggest outdoor activity undertaken in Scotland behind walking.

- One Scotland – a Programme for Government – Scottish Government 2014. Key priorities include: creating economic sustainability; tackling inequalities and empowering local communities.

- Scotland’s Economic Strategy (March 2015) Reaffirms the Scottish Government’s commitment to creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.
The Framework will continue to provide a clarity of vision for mountain biking activity in Scotland, which, in turn, will encourage a professional approach coupled with commitment and cohesive action amongst a wider range of stakeholders.

The original Framework had four guiding principles and this revision reaffirms these, however we have also added three new principles based upon the progress of delivery of the Framework and to indicate a direction of travel for Scottish mountain biking. Our proposals for the further development of mountain biking in Scotland should take cognisance of these principles:

- coordination
- equity
- economic sustainability
- environmental sustainability
- internationalisation
- innovation
- fun
In terms of **coordinated planning and collaborative delivery**, much has been achieved in the past 5 years by the consortium to bring together all agencies at a national, regional and local level. The formation of Clusters has greatly improved the communication and project delivery at regional and local level. At a national level the continued cross-sector engagement of the consortium and the approach to working with and through others helps ensure that the greatest possible impact is made with investment and activity.

In terms of **equity**, all of the partners recognise that they have both a legal and moral duty to ensure that they actively promote opportunities to participate for men and women, for people of all ethnic origins and for people with a disability. Effective consultation and monitoring will be central to ensuring that this is achieved.

Any work undertaken by the DMBinS project or by its partners is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 which is the main equalities legislation in the UK, providing a legal framework to protect people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, based on nine protected characteristics.

In terms of **economic sustainability**, there continues to be a need for a clear understanding of what the opportunities are and where the economic benefits will best be realised. As with many parts of the leisure business, investment in mountain biking generally comes from the public agencies and yet the economic returns go to the private sector. No easy solution has been found to this challenge and it is still difficult for the public agencies like Forestry Commission Scotland to find resources for the on-going maintenance of the investments they have developed. However, charges for parking and income from tenant businesses should improve the economic sustainability of facilities.
In terms of **environmental sustainability**, the partners fully recognise, support and promote their responsibilities for encouraging development and access in a way which is consistent with protecting the natural heritage resource and compliant with The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The future development of purpose-built facilities needs to be planned within the context of natural heritage designations and environmental impact assessment. The promotion of these sites and routes in the wider countryside must be accompanied by messages about responsible use.

In terms of **internationalisation**, the partners recognise that there is growing interest in Scottish mountain biking internationally and a growing interest in the private sector to reach out to international audiences. This strategy intends to position Scotland as one of the five best tourism destinations for mountain biking globally and encourage more Scottish supply chain businesses to internationalise by breaking into new global markets.

In terms of **innovation**, the Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland in Glentress affords an enviable opportunity for Scotland to be one of the world’s leading destinations for new product service development and design innovation by fostering stronger industry support and greater links to academia, resulting in knowledge transfer.

In terms of **fun**, the partners recognise that mountain biking, especially in Scotland, is really good fun and people are likely to continue to participate in an activity that they enjoy. This principle should carry through into everything we do.
Consultation with stakeholders and a review of various international perspectives has confirmed the strength of the Scottish position in the mountain biking world.

The Positives To Build On

The present provision for mountain biking in Scotland has a number of very positive factors going for it. These include:

• A worldwide and growing reputation as a high quality destination not just for tourism but for product development/innovation.

• Good network and number of trail centres spread across the country – albeit with some geographical gaps.

• A growing network of smaller scale purpose-built local/regional facilities created, or being created, closer to communities.

• Unrivalled access legislation which facilitates general responsible access to the outdoors.

• A huge range of natural and informal paths providing mountain biking experiences in rugged and remote areas as well as close to towns and cities.

• Increased mapping of suitable sustainable routes across core path networks and other routes.

• Strong international events – UCI DH WC Fort William, Enduro World Series and Commonwealth Games.

• Increasingly stable national race series run by SDA & SXC and the rapid growth of the Scottish Enduro Series.

• Growth in family orientated bike festivals which combine elite mountain biking with participation events such as Tweedlove, Angus Bike Festival and Muckmedden Events.

• Improved communication and project delivery at national, regional and local level between stakeholders.

• Growing sense of momentum within the private sector to realise the opportunities which mountain biking creates.

• Greater awareness within the supply chain of the accommodation and service needs of mountain bikers.

• Increased industry engagement with national agencies and regional clusters.
The Positives To Build On (continued)

- An increase in the number & quality of businesses offering quality products or services to the MTB market.
- The increasing number of schools and clubs which are delivering mountain biking sessions to young people.
- Increase in the provision of local and regional racing opportunities, particularly, for children and young people.
- Increasing engagement with Higher and Further Education providing additional expertise and knowledge to businesses and national agencies and increased learning opportunities for students and learners.
- There is anecdotal evidence of a growth in female participation and greater numbers of families accessing the activity.
- The Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland is providing a centre of excellence for supporting and developing mountain biking businesses and growing links between business and academia in terms of product and service development and innovation.
- Increasing willingness from the private sector to internationalise the Scottish mountain biking industry – both from a tourism & product development perspective.
- Overall professionalism within the industry has greatly improved.
- The new UK MBLA Leadership offers a great opportunity to expand the current mountain bike delivery workforce and deliver a unified product across the UK.
- Excellent example of a Bike Patrol being delivered in the Tweed Valley – a volunteer group offering local knowledge, emergency assistance and bike repairs out on the trails.
- The outstanding attractiveness of Scotland’s great outdoors as a venue for recreation and adventure sports....
Issues to Address

Wile considerable progress has certainly been made by the Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland project, regional and local organisations and by the work of the individual partners in the consortium, there are still major challenges to be faced. Some of these were identified within the previous Framework and have their roots within wider cultural issues, increasing participation by girls and women for example, however although they are wider issues they should still remain a target to overcome.

The current issues to address include:

• Gaps remain within the geographic distribution of trail centres – particularly in Aberdeenshire, Trossachs, Spey Valley and Highland Perthshire. Consultation of this refreshed national strategic framework would indicate that Aberdeenshire would be of the highest priority.

• Lack of a ‘signature’ high-end elite trail/bike park/centre which will excite the bike media and engage expert riders.

• Sustainability of trail provision on both purpose-built and on regularly used ‘natural’ trails.

• Improvements in bike technology, riders capabilities and the ‘enduro scene’ encouraging riders to explore further and wider is having an impact on fragile paths and trail networks and could, although there is limited evidence to suggest this is the case, lead to additional demands on mountain rescue teams.

• Lack of central co-ordination and drive to recruit, train and engage volunteers in trail repair. Current volunteer groups have limited support and lack a central point for advice, support and to effectively spread good practice.

• Although there is anecdotal evidence of mountain biking becoming more accepted there remains a perception of the activity as predominantly an ‘extreme’ sport.

• Whilst anecdotal evidence suggests there has been an increase in participation, there remains a need to continue to promote mountain biking and break down barriers to the activity for women and girls.

• There are examples of good practice in introducing a greater ethnic diversity to mountain biking in Scotland. However there are improvements to be made to see a more representative ethnic mix on the trails.

• Lack of an effective marketing strategy to promote the breadth and quality of mountain biking in Scotland.

• Lack of international awareness of the quality of mountain biking in Scotland.
• Although there are improvements in the service needs of mountain bikers from the tourism supply chain there could be enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between the private sector businesses to provide targeted packages. In particular, easily linking mountain biking with other activities and Scottish cultural experiences as part of a co-ordinated cross sector tourism product offer.

• Need for more business engagement and collaboration, including commercial partnerships, within the private sector and between the public and private sector.

• Continued business support is necessary to continue to grow the pipeline of mountain bike supply chain companies.

• Whilst improvements have been made in the knowledge economy of Scottish mountain biking there continues to be a challenge to collect accurate data on the sector and its performance.

• Growth in online race training tools which can highlight trails that aren't sustainable and can inadvertently cause irresponsible mountain biking practices.

• Health inequalities and inclusivity of the activity, particularly in relation to lower income groups.

• Large waiting lists for clubs, particularly, those which attract children and young people.

• Lack of accessible regular uplift to a variety of trails.
The original Framework highlighted the importance of effective leadership in overseeing the implementation of the strategy. That has been achieved through the formation of the consortium which has developed a strong leadership and co-ordination role since it was established.

The consortium has been instrumental in creating the Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS) project to drive forward some of the initiatives identified in the Framework. The DMBinS project has been hosted by Scottish Cycling.

The consortium continues to be an informal organisation with a membership comprising the following:

- A representative from Scottish Local Authorities
- Cycling Scotland
- CTC (Cyclists Touring Club)*
- EventScotland
- Forestry Commission Scotland*
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Scottish Cycling*
- Scottish Enterprise*
- Scottish Natural Heritage*
- sportscotland*
- VisitScotland

The following additional members have recently joined:

- Scottish Land and Estates
- The National Trust for Scotland

During the first phase, input was also received from IMBA UK; a private mountain bike business; Wild Scotland and NHS Health Scotland.

**Investment**

The public sector partners and cycling membership organisations (indicated above with *) in the consortium have been instrumental in providing the majority of funding for the first six years of the DMBinS project and for further investing in areas of development appropriate to their own organisational objectives.
This section of the strategic framework seeks to identify a series of clear areas for action that will deliver the objectives and address both the priorities of the partners, the MTB industry and the interests of local participants and visitors alike.

Leadership of the delivery of the actions will be vested in partnerships with public agencies working with the private sector, local authorities, NGOs and local communities. Although the roles of organisations will be expanded upon later in the refresh of the Framework – see Annex, it should be noted that these opportunities will not, and cannot, be delivered by any one project or agency by itself.

The role of Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland with regard to each of these action areas is defined in the next section.

The Framework provides the opportunity to co-ordinate the sustainable development of mountain biking in Scotland – the following have been identified as key areas of interest and activity for the period 2015 - 2020:
Facilities

• Bike Park & ‘Enduro’/XC trail networks to be created in a key strategic location.

• Purpose-built trail centre developments in identified ‘key tourism’ locations feeding through to regional clusters.

• Every major city in Scotland to feature purpose-built MTB trails to increase participation & develop the sport – current gaps exist in Aberdeen, Stirling, Edinburgh and Inverness.

• Local trail developments (sub £250,000 capital investment) to be created dependent on local demand, management planning & need from clubs and communities.

• Seek to develop a mechanism which helps sustain facilities and encourages more volunteering from mountain bikers to maintain their local trails. To be developed alongside an annual national ‘Take Care of Your Trails’ weekend.

• Expansion of ‘natural’ trail maps – including sustainable long distance routes.

• Develop and improve facilities in order to host international level events in all disciplines.

• Expand the network of volunteer groups offering local knowledge, emergency assistance and bike repairs out on the trails (Bike Patrols) to both ‘remote’ trail centres and ‘urban’ trail centres.
Events

- UCI DH World Cup to be hosted every year in Fort William.
- International level Enduro event to be hosted in Scotland annually.
- European Championships 2018 to include MTB, along with road track and BMX.
- An inspiring cross country event per year – eg European Championships MTB 2018, British Series, BC Champs, Class 2 UCI Event or MTB marathon champs.
- Promotion & support the governance of national series’ SXC, SDA, Enduro and key endurance events (eg 10 Under the Ben, Relentless, Strathpuffer)
- Each Cluster area to have an annual mountain biking festival (eg South – Tweed Love)
Participation

- Establish a National MTB recreation scheme with a focus on encouraging new participants from urban areas.
- National MTB day supported by local events/rides.
- Develop a strategy and pathway to introduce and keep girls and women in cycling from toddler to adulthood. Key elements should include creating a greater number of role models, particularly women leaders and coaches; increased use of females in marketing and imagery, and not only elite, very slim females with high end kit; highlight the variety of opportunities for girls and females to get involved in mountain biking from family rides to multi-day adventures; and entry level racing to elite performance. These should be complemented by sharing of examples of good practice and case studies to encourage further growth.
- Establish a MTB Scotland brand - highlighting Scotland’s unrivalled access legislation and purpose built trail centre network.
- Further promotion of Go MTB scheme & Leadership awards.
- Series of taster sessions with information & promotion of how to get involved in mountain biking at key events.
- Pilot leading to national MTB ‘Healthy Options/Green Prescription (similar to NZ Green Exercise Programme)’ NHS referral programme.
• Create a robust event pathway and co-ordinated calendar for children and young people with appropriate and fun local race opportunities, leading to regional race series’ which then feed into national series.

• Continue to grow the number of qualified coaches delivering in an MTB context with additional support necessary to support coaches to qualify then deliver MTB discipline specific coaching awards (Level 2 and Level 3)

• Regional coaching camps (XC & DH) in each Scottish Cycling region.

• Additional support for clubs to grow their membership, particularly clubs attracting children and young people who have waiting lists.

• Expansion of Borders College BASE Downhill course (A BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Sport)

• Increase the number and quality of events which are part of a co-ordinated calendar.
Attracting Visitors

- Establish a MTB Scotland marketing strategy - highlighting Scotland's “responsible freedom to roam” experience linked to our unrivalled access legislation and our unrivalled purpose built trail centre network.
- Co-ordinated national and international marketing campaigns using a MTB Scotland brand.
- VisitScotland to host a comprehensive web-based guide to all trails in Scotland.
- Promotion of tour operators & guides to discover Scotland’s best singletrack.
- Scottish MTB profile at key events - international, UK & Scotland.
- Market new Scottish ‘Velo Hotels’ to domestic and international audiences.
### Business Development

- Develop Scotland as an emergent global centre for MTB innovation and service excellence.
- Continue to support innovative product and service developments from idea to an international marketplace.
- Refresh the existing Tourism Intelligence Scotland (TIS) guide for MTB tourism.
- Create two levels of MTB workshop – ‘new to the market’ & ‘creating the world’s best MTB product & attracting new visitors’. These will be based upon the refreshed TIS guide for MTB tourism.
- Encourage the industry to develop a network of Velo Hotels.
- Continue to develop knowledge exchange between businesses and academia.
- Evolve the good practice guidance for tour operators, guides, coaches and skills instructors after its initial phase. (2015)
- Encourage international companies to launch, test and develop bikes & bike accessories in Scotland.
- Secure greater industry leadership and commitment to developing the Scottish MTB sector.
- Roll out an annual Scottish MTB Business Barometer Survey to monitor the growth prospects of key industry stakeholders.
- Ensure greater industry awareness and appreciation of the importance of up to date market intelligence leading to more informed investment decision-making.
- Work with Scottish Development International and VisitScotland to ensure a Scottish MTB presence at Eurobike beyond 2015.
The DMBinS project’s role will be crucial to achieving the ambitious framework for action. To be an effective project DMBinS will continue to work with and through partners, and partnerships, to deliver for Scottish mountain biking.

To understand the project’s role we have detailed each of the action areas with the specific functions DMBinS will fulfil. DMBinS will develop a separate work programme which will deliver the necessary products, support, or projects to support the implementation of this strategic framework.

National Strategy

• The leadership to steer the overall strategic growth of mountain biking in Scotland will sit with DMBinS, supported by the consortium partners.

• Help to ensure there is synergy between participation, sport and economic development – ensuring that any resource allocated has maximum strategic impact.

• Bring national and regional partners together to ensure that there is communication, co-ordination and growth at all levels.

Facilities

• Support partners to develop new facilities – both purpose-built and off-road multi-use paths - in key strategic areas and ensure these are integrated into regional clusters at the earliest opportunity.

• Support landowners and the MTB community to sustain existing facilities – both purpose-built and into wider countryside.

• Promote Scotland as an internationally recognised destination of good practice for mountain bike trail development.

Events

• Support Scottish Cycling to present the case for international events to be staged in Scotland.

• Ensure major events are joined to the tourism business developments and marketing campaigns.
Participation

- Develop, pilot and refine MTB recreation scheme.
- Support Scottish Cycling to develop a full suite of leadership courses.
- Support the further development of MTB proficiency schemes.
- Promote responsible access.
- Use digital marketing platform to drive participation in mountain biking across Scotland.
- Expand access to opportunities by promoting inclusion.

Sports Development

- Support Scottish Cycling to create a world class sporting system.
- Enable the use of Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland for performance development and a key venue for running courses.

Attracting Visitors

- Work with Visit Scotland, MTB businesses and MTB community to create the most dynamic and engaging MTB digital promotion in the world.
- Attend key international events to promote Scotland as a world class destination for mountain biking.
- Encourage international brands, magazines and journalists to launch products, endorse and promote Scottish mountain biking – work with VisitScotland and MTB businesses to ensure maximum but sustainable exposure is gained.
- Work with VisitScotland and EventScotland to ensure maximum exposure for Scottish mountain biking from international events.

Business Development

- Lead, support and encourage private sector tourism partners to develop the tourism product across Scotland both MTB related businesses and the supply chain.
- Support the Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland to develop new and innovative products for the mountain biking market ensuring that they can connect with participation growth and sporting events.
- Work with partners Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International (SDI) to help support Scottish MTB businesses to internationalise.
Summary of Primary Partner Roles

(Strategic lead organisation is in the arrow)
Sporting Success

Volunteers

Major Events

Local Authorities

Economic Growth