

Potential Mountain Bike Park – Pitfichie Hill

Presentation by Gravitare NE to CMMCC Thursday 13th November 2025

Meeting held in Monymusk Church 8pm Start

Attendees

Gravitare NE (GNE)

Mike Wilkes

Cluny, Monymusk and Midmar Community Council (CMMCC) Members

Frank Murray (Chair)

Ian Forbes (Secretary)

Judith Stokoe (Treasurer)

Sarah Flavell

Mark Lappin

Important Note

Gravitare NE have agreed to have a “drop-in” session (most probably early in 2026) in Monymusk. It is suggested to readers that any community questions should be kept until, and asked, at that session.

To be clear, the community council will not be involved in the setting up/organisation/running of this drop in event - we will advertise it though once we know more details.

Meeting Overview

Frank welcomed Mike and gave overview of the community council (CC) role in planning/development matters like this.

- We are duty bound to always place the wishes and views of local residents first – that is who we represent, not any wider “community” with members residing out with the community council area.
- The scale of the proposal will necessitate a planning application, in which case the community council would be a statutory consultee where our opinion may or may not be taken into account in the final deliberation decision. That ultimate decision would reside with Aberdeenshire Council and its elected councillors – considering the size of the proposal it is likely to be discussed and decided at a meeting of the Marr Area Committee.
- As with all planning applications, only material considerations are considered in that deliberation.

Mike explained that he moved into area c.15 yrs ago, ex geologist, now runs small MTB company. They (GNE) are at a very early stage in project.

Want to engage community in its design from the start, want the community happy as want visitors to have a happy experience as well (no friction).

Online survey completed by GNE, lot of positive feedback as well as some negative.

Anonymised collation of this survey to be sent to the CC, Frank noted again that we represent the local community so responses from outwith CC area will have much less weighting.

From online survey now understand the importance of the water supply in the area (was not previously aware).

CC members emphasised that this will be a key local focus.

Group shown two professionally produced videos from c.2019 and 2020.

Seem to be produced via Scottish Government funding.
One linked to “Developing Mountain Biking Scotland” – website below.

<https://dmbins.com/>

Other linked to “NE adventure tourism” – website below.
Based on local examples, mainly Deeside.

<https://northeastadventuretourism.com/>

Meeting in Banchory shortly to discuss national MTB strategy for 2025-2030.
A national Mountain Bike (MTB) training course for future sport coaches to be held at the Arthur Grant centre shortly.
Number of companies in the NE successfully supplying the MTB industry, one company exporting to USA.
Examples shown of positive engagement with young people.
Gravitate setup in 2015.
Mike onboard from 2019.
Very grand plans to start with (emulating Bike Park Wales - <https://www.bikeparkwales.com/> , regeneration of coal mine area).
This now curtailed due to drop in local wealth (O&G collapse).
The grand plan legacy lingers on with recent comments of Alpine Skiing - nothing like that is actually planned now.
Got £17k left to get a design plan together.
Charity status, no active fundraising bar inhouse fundraising.
Low membership numbers at present as don't want to advertise and increase numbers yet as do not want to build up hopes until real chance of getting a project in place.
Website has been hacked resulting in a loss of control of the domain, and are now waiting on the service provider to regain control.
CC members emphasised that this, and overall media communication strategy, needs to be resolved quickly as the hacked site is giving a very mixed message to the community.
Previously looked at Durris as first option for development but not environmentally sustainable as no local material for track building (area is peat based) – too much requirement to bring in material, would never get grant funding as result.
Track building involves sourcing hardcore from as close to new track as possible (borrow pits) – mainly lifting existing groundcover (heather/moss) and extracting substrata (glacial till and equivalent) below before restoring land by “rolling back” the pre-existing plants.
Frank asked if rock blasting was required. Mike assured him that blasting was not acceptable practice and only proven sustainable trail building techniques will be used.
Pitfichie lends itself to this kind of track building due to ready supply of loose material.
Plan to get a 25yr lease for part of the S/SE side of Pitfichie from Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) via the Community Asset Transfer scheme, map shown based on satellite map.
CC members commented that GNE need to get an OS map equivalent of this made up for public digestion.
FLS to retain responsibility for some functions like deer control, tree felling if required.
Definitely not “taking over” whole hill.
Two new tracks, which will be dedicated to MTB use only (segregation for safety's sake).
Track maintenance done by volunteers – way to get youngsters involved.

No taking over of existing tracks used by horses, walkers etc.

Taking on lease of an area recently clear cut by FLS.

Would like to have a buffer zone round tracks to allow planting/regeneration of native species trees rather than the Sitka Spruce currently planned by FLS – help increase biodiversity compared to what FLS are planning (entire site one monoculture).

Emphasised again very much in design stage.

Car park proposed at NE corner of site.

CC members made comment that this is problematic due to the poor-quality single-track road leading to it (with minimal passing places). Also concerns about overall ability of local road infrastructure to handle large volumes of traffic.

GNE aware of concerns and investigating potential for moving car park to site nearer the road to Monymusk.

70 space car park proposed (like the one at Tarland, hardcore surface, with covered area for picnics).

What three words location of Tarland example = <https://w3w.co/instincts.divisible.courts>

Plan for composting toilets – CC members asked how will this affect groundwater supply as whole area has private water supply. To be investigated.

Reinforced by CC members that this is likely to be a major bone of contention with community.

No plan for onsite water or power at present.

Lack of water a challenge should the compost toilets be replaced by containerised toilet system (to prevent groundwater contamination).

Uplift service proposed involving 4x4 pickup and trailer (maybe up to three sets) - only one similar operation in the borders (using minibuses) but is similar to transport of some game shoots.

Using existing FLS fire roads, no road construction planned – though pedestrian paths at side to be installed as required.

Road maintenance responsibility of Gravitare.

Would like to use uplift service 4 days a week.

No vehicles to be kept onsite overnight – storage offsite, possibly Kemnay.

Would prefer to use electric vehicles if at all possible.

Anticipating 20000 visitors, same as Tarland.

Peak usage in summer, events will require overspill parking like that in the competition last month (land owned by Monymusk Estate).

Mark noted that in reality most usage of the site (and associated traffic movement) will likely be at weekends rather than weekdays.

Three events planned at Pitfichie in 2026. Event last month had 300 riders.

Discussion and agreement that the next step is for GNE to have a drop-in session in Monymusk where they can present to the community their up-to-date proposals and accordingly elicit feedback.

Meeting concluded with note that these minutes to be approved at the CC meeting on the 19th November.