

New Forest Fact File

TOURISM AND RECREATION CYCLING IN THE NEW FOREST

WHY DO PEOPLE CYCLE IN THE NEW FOREST?

- ◆ **Leisure and Recreation** ~ cycling is a simple and relatively cheap way of exercising and promoting good health. It gives the opportunity to enjoy the countryside away from the pollution and congestion associated with motorised travel.
- ◆ **Environment** ~ as well as pursuing a healthy activity, cycling is non-polluting and in comparison to the car, far less damaging to the environment.
- ◆ **Economic** ~ saving on vehicle costs.
- ◆ **Competitions** ~ people also cycle competitively although this occurs to a lesser extent in the Forest.

CYCLING IN NATIONAL PARKS AND THE NEW FOREST

The number of bikes has increased so dramatically in recent years that policies to control mountain biking are becoming more and more important. These policies are evolving as more is learnt about relevant issues; in some National Parks they are more developed than others.

The overall principle common to New Forest policies is one of 'positive management' to encourage use of agreed routes under recognised guidelines in order to counter the main issues:

- ◆ **Localised erosion** ~ churning up of soft paths, and creation of water gullies.
- ◆ **Disturbance of wildlife stock** ~ nesting birds on heathland in spring, deer in rut.
- ◆ **Visual intrusion.**
- ◆ **Safety and conflict with other users** ~ walkers, horse riders, foresters etc.

In 1996 a Cycling Working Group was set up to consider the future of cycling on the Crown Lands. After six months of consultation with interested local groups and residents, the Cycling Working Group produced a report detailing recommended waymarked cycle routes. The new cycle routes, launched in April 1998, provide hundreds of kilometres of forest tracks linking local villages, main tourist sites and the start of on-road routes across the Forest.

It is hoped that by restricting cyclists to only waymarked gravel tracks, providing a route map and employing cycle rangers during the peak summer months, incidences of cyclists becoming lost and straying onto unsuitable tracks will reduce. It will also help reduce conflicts with other forest users by keeping cyclists to designated areas.

The New Forest 'Access and Recreation Plan' 2001 states that the Forestry Commission will;

- Continue to provide and promote a network of waymarked cycle tracks for people to enjoy and which contribute towards the New Forest Transportation Strategy.
- Continue to promote a cycling code of conduct and take steps to prevent unsustainable cycling.
- Work with Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and others with an interest to identify under or over provision in the network and implement actions to complete the network.

Current joint organisational initiatives include a Recreation and Access forum, Integrated Transport strategy group and integrated cycle network group. It is by working together that the future of the New Forest will be secured.

NEW FOREST CYCLE CODE

1. Please keep to waymarked gravel tracks when cycling in the forest
2. Think ahead and be aware of animals, other cyclists, pedestrians and drivers whether you are on gravel track or on the road.
3. Always ride in a single file when roads are narrow and never ride more than two abreast.
4. Keep your speed down, give way to walkers and be friendly to other road users.
5. Make sure you are visible by wearing bright colours.
6. Always use your lights in the dark or in poor daytime visibility.
7. Keep well away from any work going on in the Forest.
8. Do not pass any vehicle loading timber until you have been told it is safe to do so.
9. Plan your route to be out of the Forest by dusk



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