



Developing
Mountain Biking
in Scotland

Mountain Bike Volunteer Trail Dig Leader



A group of five people are in a forest, likely participating in a conservation or trail-building activity. They are wearing safety vests (yellow and orange) and carrying tools like shovels and axes. One person on the right is carrying a large red backpack. The forest floor is covered in dry leaves and branches, with many trees in the background. The text "Day 1- Welcome & Introductions!" is overlaid in large white letters.

Day 1- Welcome & Introductions!

What are the aims of the DIRT project?

- Improve the sustainability and quality of the trail network
- Identify & bridge skill gaps in the sector
- Address lack of specific training in planning, design, construction, maintenance of MTB Trails
- Create an EU set of MTB Trail Building Guidelines
- Establish EU wide level 'Expert' Group & National Reference Groups in each country

Course – Delivery

Training course will be a (max) 30 hour course split as follows:

- 7.5 hrs (max) online training in advance of course
- 15 hour face-to-face course (weekend)
- 7.5 hrs (max) online consolidation of learning after the course

Course outcomes

- Increased competency in group leadership and trail maintenance techniques.
- Dig leaders understand what is required to organise a successful dig.
- Land managers are reassured that trail associations are suitably competent to help manage the trails.

This course will enable participants to:

- **Liaise with a landowner** and help towards **securing permission** to maintain an existing or build a new sections of trail using hand tools
- **Inspect an existing trail and develop a series of maintenance tasks** to upgrade the trail
- **Organise a work group** (dig plan)
- Remove **unnecessary risk** on a trail
- **Improve the sustainability & quality of a trail through maintenance**
- Understand the appropriate use of different **trail build techniques**, their benefits and limitations
- Maintain and enhance the **special character** of your trails

Day 1

- Working with land managers
- Identifying trails
- Risk assessment
- Trail inspection Principles
- Practical Inspection
- Dig Plan

Day 2

- Trail build techniques basics
- Organising a dig
- Revisiting our dig plan
- Leading a dig
- Next steps....

A sepia-toned photograph of four people working in a forest. The individuals are dressed in outdoor work clothes and are engaged in clearing or managing the forest floor, which is covered in dry leaves and branches. The background shows a dense stand of bare trees. Overlaid on the center of the image is the text "Working with land managers" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The entire image is framed by a decorative border consisting of diagonal stripes in shades of yellow, brown, and dark brown.

Working with land managers

Working with land managers

- Importance of permissions
- Understanding a landowners/land managers perspective
- Brief guide to liability
- Reaching compromise
- Paperwork & why it matters for liability

Land owner concerns include:

- Managing liabilities
- Maintaining standards of woodland management
- Keeping SOAC compliant
- Managing work – eg forest operations
- Protecting environment, archaeology etc...
- Protecting third parties

Working with land managers

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003:

Land owner must respect responsible access but there is no requirement for them to maintain access routes (in this situation informal or unauthorised MTB trails).

Working with land managers

Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC):

- Respect the rights of other people.
- Care for the environment.
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

Working with land managers

Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960:

Land owner has a duty to take reasonable care to ensure people will not suffer injury or damage as a result of any dangers due to condition of property.

(reference....)

- But what is *reasonable care* in the case of informal or unauthorised MTB trails?

Working with land managers

National Access Forum



Scotland

November 2018

UNAUTHORISED MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

A guide for land managers and riders



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

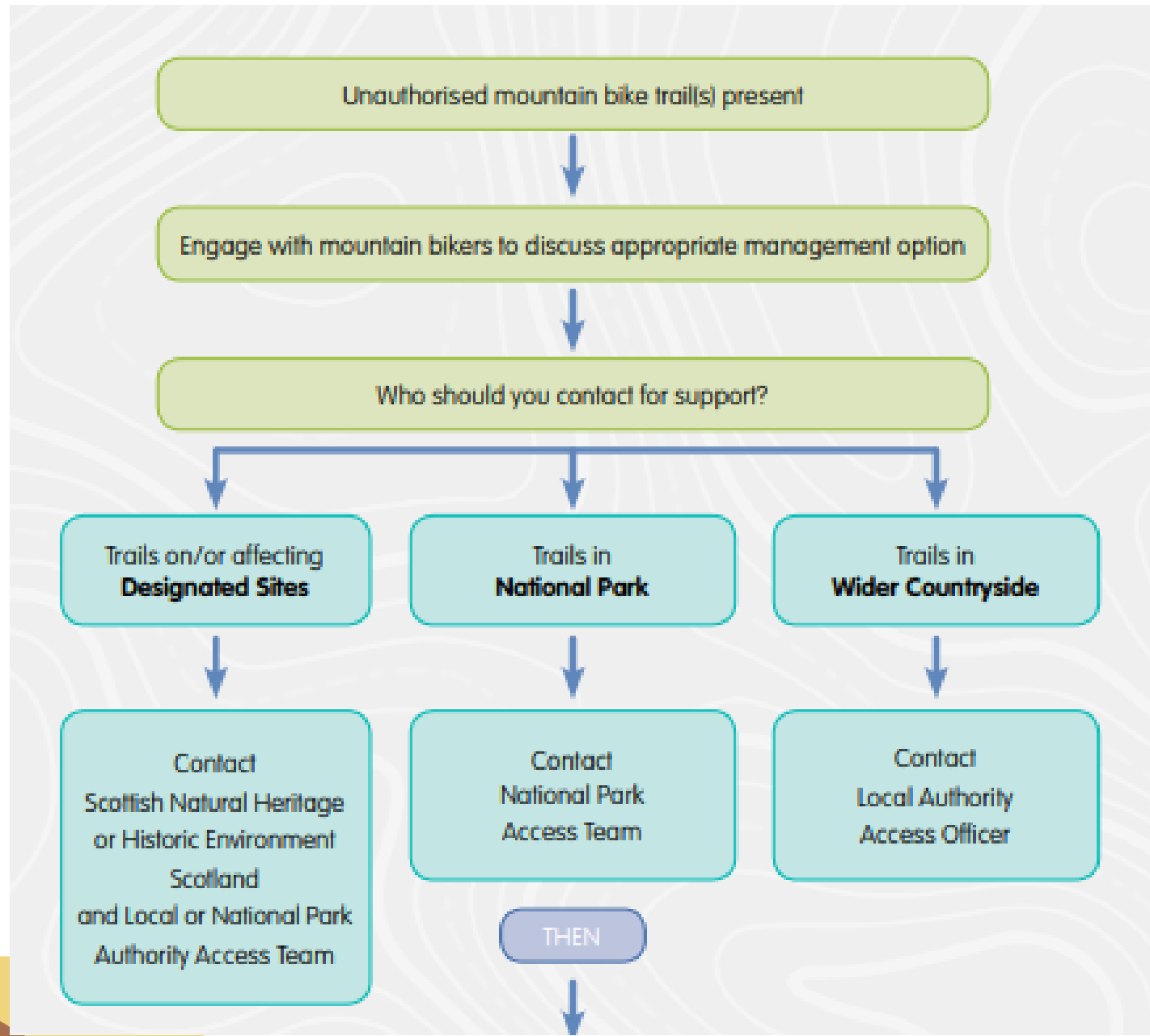
Scottish
Land & Estates
Landowners Working for the Community

Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
nature.scot

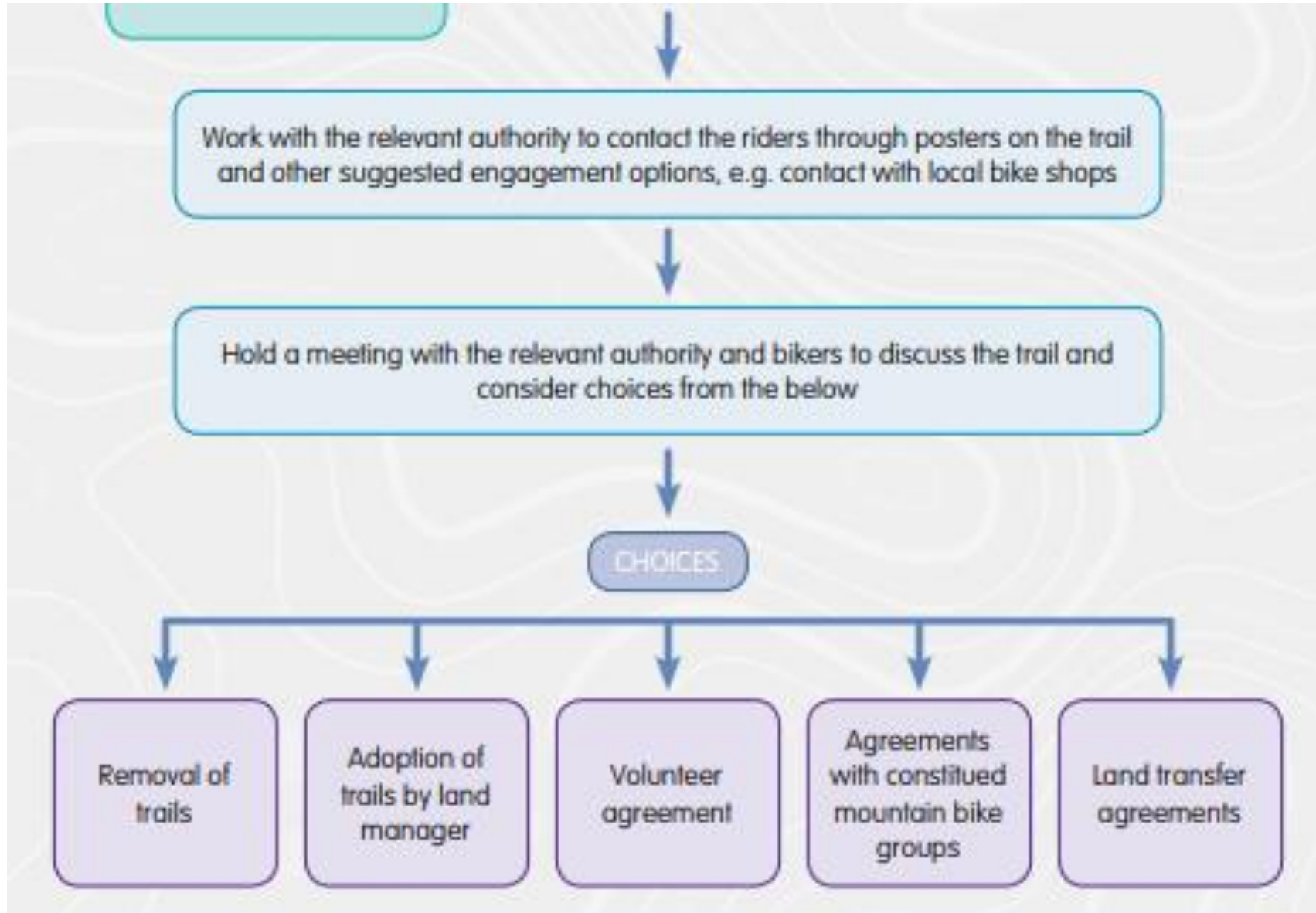
“In the case of unauthorised trails that have been constructed, the occupier has a duty of care to ensure that the state of the premises does not cause injury/damage, and must therefore inspect the trail, determine whether it represents a hazard, particularly to other users who have not accepted the risk of mountain biking on the trail, and assess the risks in the specific circumstances. They need to decide what action is reasonable, and keep a record of decisions, the justification for such decisions and action taken.”

National Access Forum - Unauthorised Trails Guidance

Working with land managers



Working with land managers



Working with land managers

Question:

Ask permission vs seek forgiveness?

Land Manager/owner Permission

Allows **land managers/owners** to have a suitable level of inspection, maintenance, risk assessment and insurance for the trails be manageable risk.

Allows **mountain bikers** to have a level of security for mountain bikers over the future of their trails, and effectively help to allow responsible access.

Working with land managers

Building positive relationships:

- Understand the land managers perspectives
- Help them to manage the trails on their terms
- Assist land manager with their communications with your community
- Contribute to them meeting their duty of care through appropriate inspection and maintenance of trails
- Clear and consistent communication
- Professional approach – maintain standards
- Avoid multiple points of contact
- Don't move the goal posts – have plan and stick to it – Build trust.

Working with land managers

Things to consider:

- Share and agree Short / Medium / Long term aims and objectives of Trail Association
- Develop an MOU that presents an agreed relationship and values
- Appoint an agreed person in group who will look after landowner liaison
- Give appropriate notice (8-12 weeks) of dig when asking for permission
- Present information in an organised and consistent way
- Develop standardised approach to recording information:

Trail inspection, session plans, risk assessments, session reports etc...

Identifying trails



Identifying Trails

It is essential to identify both existing, proposed and new trails:

- Start point understanding trail assets – value and risk.
- Formalising the existence of the trail.
- Communicating with land managers and other agencies.
- Used in work plans for inspections and dig sessions.

Identifying Trails using Trailforks

- Trailforks is a crowd-sourced trail management database and has many features including:
 - GPX import/export and multiple map layers
 - Auto ride-log generation linked to Strava
 - Trail Reports - Open or Moderated options for areas/trails
 - Data/Reports
 - Smartphone App
 - “Trail Karma”
 - Hidden / Planned trails

Free to use version is adequate - www.trailforks.com

Risk Management



Risk Management

Leading a dig or performing work on a trail?

- You are responsible for your team's, the public and your own safety.

Good risk management:

- Informs you how to minimise issues & aids in the smooth running of digs
- Ensures you are prepared should something go wrong
- Protects you should legal action be taken

Types of Risk

Generic - Those that can be anticipated in conducting the activity in normal circumstances. E.g. Injury as the result of tool use

Specific – Those that vary with the circumstances/context of an activity.
E.g. Experience level of a group

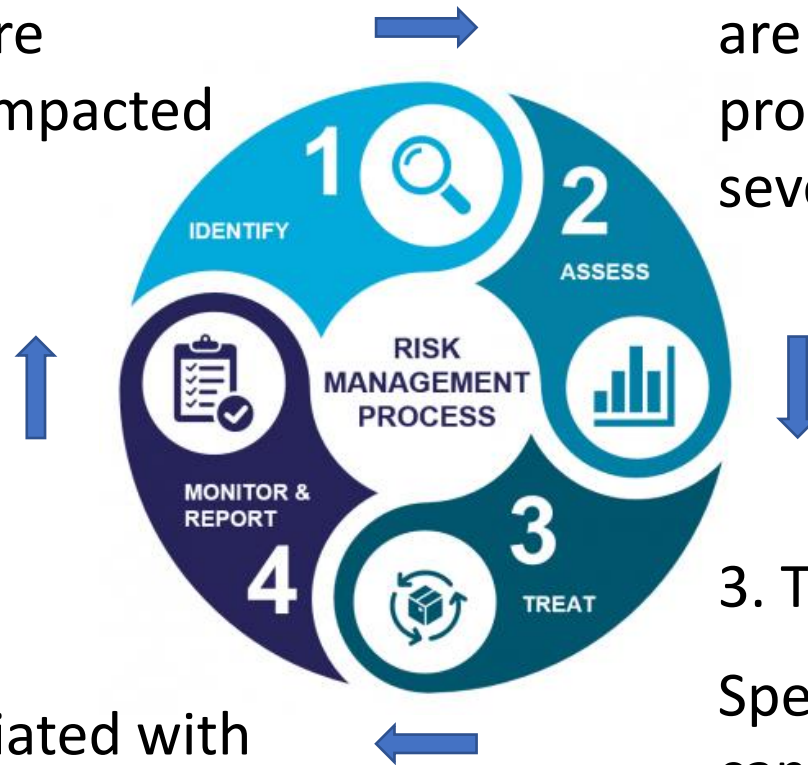
Risk management lifecycle

1. Identify

Consider what risks are associated with the activities you are conducting and who is impacted

2. Assess

Determine what existing controls are in place and assess the probability of occurrence and severity of the impact



3. Treat

Specify controls and mitigation plans can you put in place to reduce the probability and severity of the risk.

4. Monitor & Report

Consider the risks associated with the activities you are conducting

Generic Risks and Controls

Risk #	Hazard	Who Exposed	Uncontrolled Severity	Uncontrolled Probability	Uncontrolled Risk Value	Controls in TVTA method statement	Controlled Severity	Controlled Probability	Controlled Risk Value
1	Rider(s) entering the dig site and failing to stop resulting in a crash	Riders Diggers	4	3	12	a) Trail Closed from top if appropriate. b) High Vis/Signage above dig site. c) High Vis worn by diggers. d) 'Banksman' role allocated to digger at top group. e) Diggers briefed to shout "RIDER". f) Diggers briefed to clear trail upon shouts of "RIDER" g) Diggers briefed to work facing oncoming traffic when possible. h) Diggers briefed to keep tools off the trail when not in use. i) Social Media Posts to advise of dig location and timing.	2	2	4
Identify			Assess		Treat				

Build the controls into your normal way of working to ensure you mitigate your risks by default.

Tailgate Risk Assessment

Conduct with volunteer team

Leader / Location / Date

Location

- Vehicle Access?
- Mobile Phone Reception?
- Trail Closed?

Work part ability

- Known People?
- Sensible, listen, follow instructions and ask questions?
- Level of competency?

Weather

- Wind Speed?
- Temperature?
- Ice/Mud
- Sunburn

Work Planned

- Which Tools bring what risks?
- Which tasks have an increased risk?

Emergency Planning

Be prepared and equipped should something happen:

- Emergency Plan – Area specific evacuation plan
- Equipment – Leader Pack
- Skills – Competent to lead group in the terrain you are working on
 - Strongly Recommend – 2 Day Outdoor First Aid
 - Outdoor Leadership Awards

Group Insurance and Land Manager may mandate specific standards, qualifications or conditions.

Trail Inspection



Trail inspection uses

- Sell benefit to land managers
- Evidence of proficiency and competency
- Evidence of work done of *Reasonable measures*
- Record keeping – Consider communication with Trail Association & Land Managers

Trail inspection

- Principles of trail inspections
- Application of trail inspections
- Inspection schedules
- Inspection formats

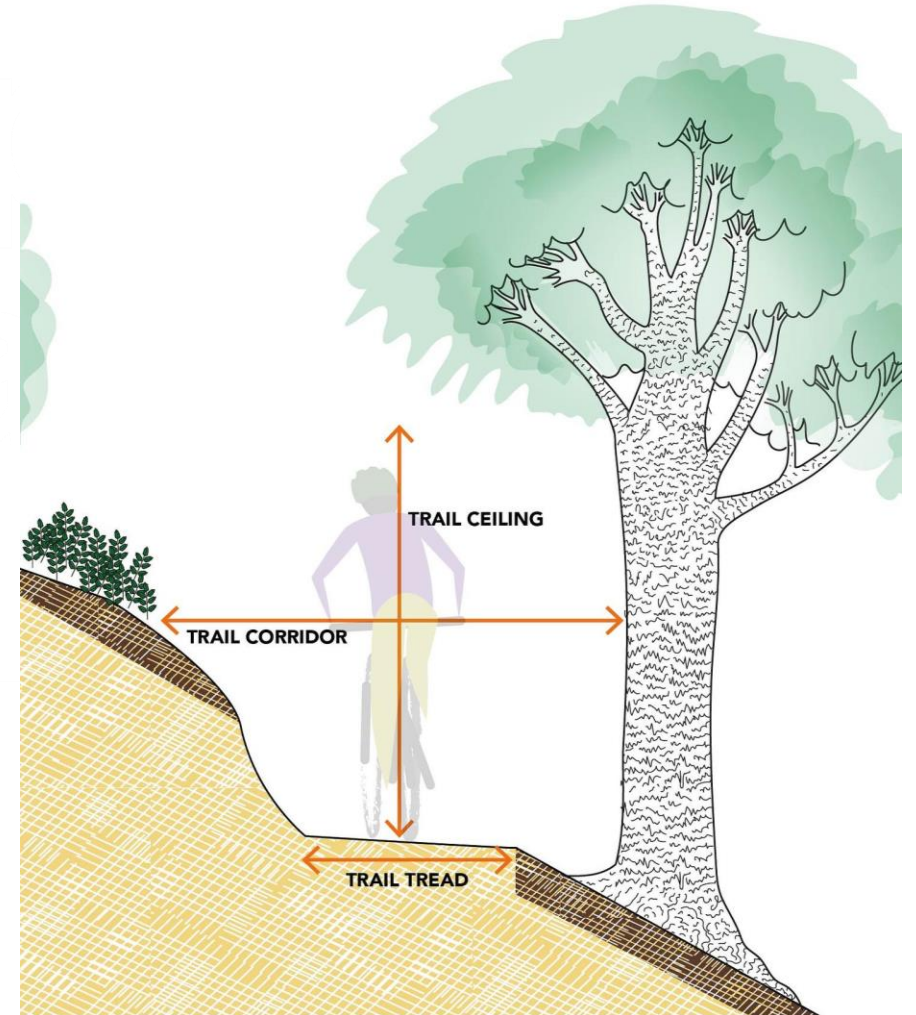
Principles of trail inspections

1. Safety – Remove Unnessassary Hazards
2. Sustainability – Environmental & Societal Impact and Maintenance
3. Ride experience - Fun, Flow, Challenge and Line Choice, trail character.

Principles of trail inspections

Trail comprises:

- Trail Corridor
- Trail Tread
- Water Management
- Junctions



Inspection Frequency

- Scheduled
 - How frequent:
 - Standard – 1 per year.
 - More frequent for high use – eg trail centres.
- Responsive
 - After storms, races and events....



Practical Inspection Session

A group of five people are in a forest, participating in a practical inspection session. They are wearing high-visibility vests (yellow and orange) and casual clothing. One person is standing on a tree trunk, while others are on the ground. The forest has many trees and a dirt path. The text 'Practical Inspection Session' is overlaid in large white letters.

Practical Inspection

Trail Inspection Report

Trail Network	
Trail Name	
Date	
Location	
Trailforks	

Item / Storm	Location or Grid Ref	Issue	Action	Priority (H,M,L)	Risk
Trail inspection carried out top to bottom – Photo evidence on following pages					
1					
2					

Creating a dig plan



Creating a dig plan

- In groups, develop a dig plan to inform land managers of proposed works, and dig leaders of the plan for the event.
- Based upon your trail inspection report, create a realistic plan that could be carried out in a volunteer session by your team
- A dig plan should prioritise jobs based on the following elements:
 - 1) Health and safety considerations
 - 2) Trail sustainability
 - 3) Ride experience – fun, flow, challenge, trail character.

Creating a dig plan

Some considerations when creating a dig plan:

- Likely number and competency level of dig team?
- Planned duration of dig?
- Location of dig site?
- Experience of dig team?
- Work being undertaken?
- Tools required?

Good Plan = Good Dig

Dig Plan - Template



Trail Maintenance Dig Plan:

Dig Location:

Meeting time and place:

Number of people on site:

Dig Session

Priorities	Actions

Day 1- Summary



Day 1

- Working with land managers
- Identifying trails
- Risk Management
- Trail inspection
- Dig plan

Day 2

- Trail Essentials / Trail Maintenance Essentials
- Leading Groups
- Organising a dig
- Delivering a dig
- Next steps

A sepia-toned photograph of four people working in a forest. The individuals are dressed in outdoor work clothes and are engaged in clearing or planting activities among bare trees. The ground is covered with dry leaves and twigs. The text "See you tomorrow at 09:00" is superimposed in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image. The entire graphic is framed by diagonal stripes in shades of yellow, brown, and dark brown at the top and right edges.

**See you tomorrow at
09:00**