

# Mountain Biking's Role in Regional Economic Development: The Experience of Scotland

A mountain biker wearing a helmet and a backpack is riding a dirt trail through a scenic Scottish landscape. The trail is surrounded by tall grass and leads towards rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The biker is positioned in the lower center of the frame, facing away from the viewer.

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- \* the value of cycling/mountain biking for economic development
- \* discussion on how cycling and mountain biking developments can aid economic development
- \* lessons from Canada, New Zealand and, especially, Scotland

\* the presentation

- \* doctoral research in England and New Zealand
- \* supervision of a Masters thesis in Canada
- \* two consultancy studies undertaken for the national MTB body in Scotland
- \* my own experience as a mountain biker and cycle tourist

\* **presentation based  
on...**

- \* road cycling
- \* cycle tourism
- \* mountain biking
- \* mountain bike tourism
  
- \* focus here more on MTB, but many requirements, issues and processes are similar

\* cycling  
sectors

- \* leisure cycling in Scotland (excluding mountain biking) worth €164 - €335 million per annum (Transform Scotland, 2013)
- \* mountain biking in Scotland worth c.€60 m pa (CRTR, 2013)
- \* multiply this by 2.5 for all trips
- \* projected growth of €17-31 m over next five years

**\*the value of all  
cycling in Scotland**

- \* about 25 purpose-built trail centres in Scotland, and increasing...
- \* mountain bikers in Scotland are younger, more affluent than average recreationalist (SRS, 2010)
- \* mountain biking in Scotland supports c.3,500 jobs (TRC/EKOS, 2009)
- \* 1.3 m mountain biking visits to Scotland (2009)
- \* 600,000 to built centres, 700,000 to wilderness
- \* 7-10% growth in mountain bikers' trips 2009-2012

\* the value of  
mountain biking in  
Scotland

- \* therefore, positive attitude towards mountain biking among tourism and support services
- \* supported by local government:
  - \* economic benefits
  - \* health benefits
  - \* increases attractiveness of areas as 'places to live'

\* attitudes  
towards  
biking

- \* many developments co-funded by EU funding in 1990s
- \* purpose-built centres helped the industry to expand
- \* co-financed by the government forestry service - some forward-looking individuals
- \* more difficult to source funding today in UK

\* **developing  
mountain  
biking**

- \* some private enterprises
- \* some EU or government support
- \* need entrepreneurs
- \* access legislation - 'right to roam' in Scotland
- \* need supporting infrastructure
  - \* cafes
  - \* accommodation
  - \* bike hire etc

\* **developing  
mountain  
biking**

- \* land-use conflict
  - \* but much development on public land
  - \* illegal trails
  - \* some conflict between users - minor problem
- \* funding - capital
- \* funding - revenue
- \* local opposition
- \* lack of understanding
- \* lack of public sector strategic support

\* **potential obstacles**

- \* singletrack
- \* flowing and thrilling trails
- \* creating the 'flow' experience?
- \* challenging trails
- \* well-marked trails
- \* 'appropriate' facilities
- \* a sense of adventure
- \* great scenery

\* desired  
setting  
characteristics

- \* looking for fast and thrilling, built for speed?
  - \* engineered for bikers
  - \* easy to navigate
  - \* conflict-free, and managed
  - \* ... but lacking true adventure?

## \* purpose-built trails?

- \* something more organic or 'natural', not designed for bikers
- \* many more experienced riders enjoy adventure and challenge
- \* they prefer more natural scenery
- \* need to preserve the wild feel'

## \* *or* rights of way?

- \* the appropriate redefinition of paths as ‘multi-use’
- \* encouraging family use as a priority
- \* include safe cycle ways
- \* new trail centre developments should include supporting facilities....
- \* .... or link to facilities/attractions
- \* better signage
- \* user-friendly trail guides

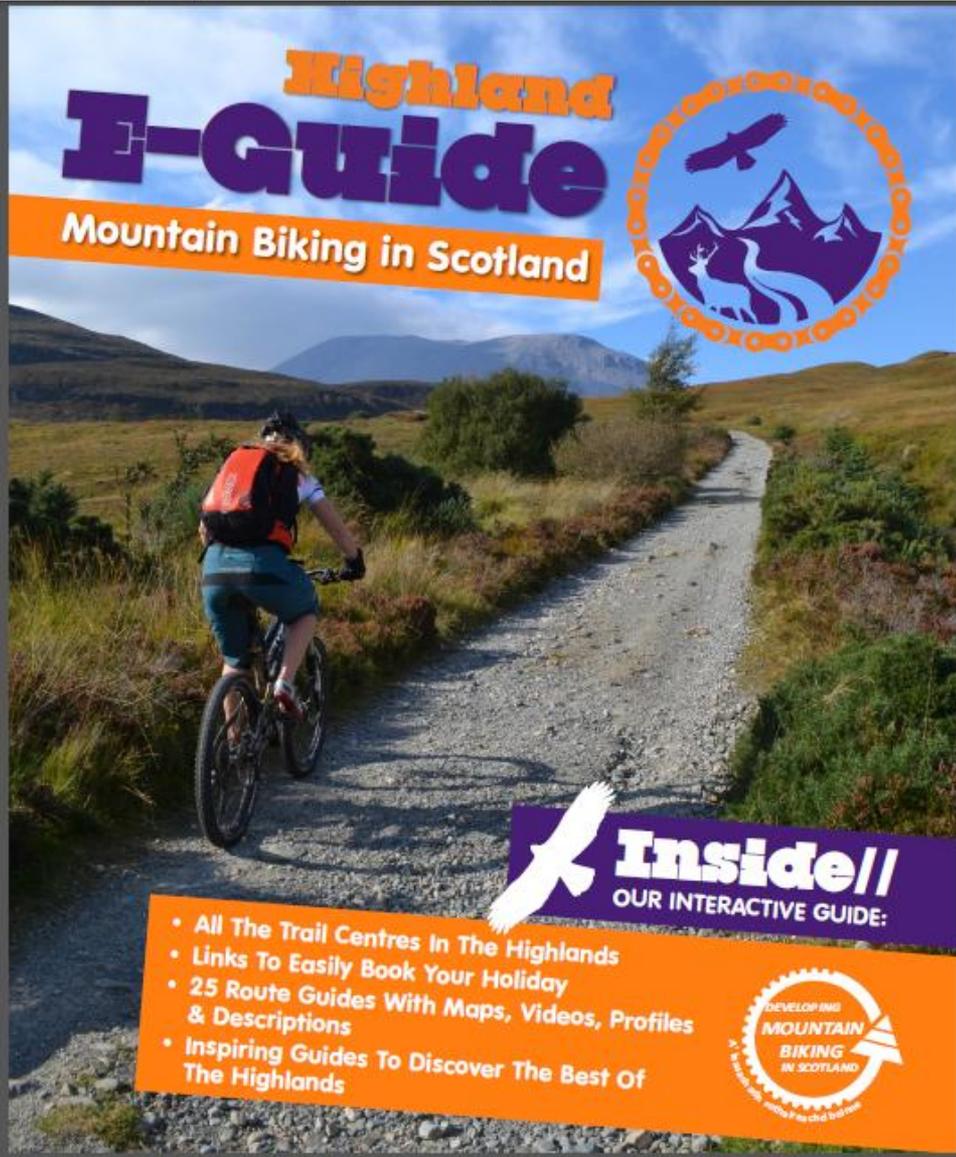
## \* recommendations for development

- \* develop mapped trail network around key population centres
- \* local user groups to help liaison with landowners
- \* purpose-built trail centres should also be prioritised near to centres of population
- \* public transport improvements should be encouraged
- \* cities/towns should have their own skills areas for children

\* **recommendations for  
development**

- \* creation of an identifiable 'brand' for mountain biking for regions
- \* use iconic landscapes and names (eg. Loch Ness)
- \* single web site for information related to all things mountain biking
- \* make use of the social media generation wherever possible and encourage word-of-mouth
- \* use events to publicise developments
- \* use of video/Strava/webshare etc.

\* **effective promotion**



**Highland**  
**E-Guide**  
**Mountain Biking in Scotland**



**Inside//**  
OUR INTERACTIVE GUIDE:

- All The Trail Centres In The Highlands
- Links To Easily Book Your Holiday
- 25 Route Guides With Maps, Videos, Profiles & Descriptions
- Inspiring Guides To Discover The Best Of The Highlands



Highland E-Guide: Mountain Biking in Scotland

Fortwilliam & Lochaber Challenging Route: Cow Hill

# 3 Challenging Route Cow Hill



### Trail Stats

Is this trail for you?

**Grade:** Red (Difficult)  
**Length:** 10.8km  
**Average Time:** 2-4hrs  
**Total Ascent:** 704m/2310ft  
**Start Grid Ref:** NN 121 736  
**Start Post Code:** PH33 6BU

This is a great route if you are looking for a short-ish blast of energetic mountain biking close to Fort William. It is not technically difficult but there are parts which have pretty steep climbs and it will test your fitness — many locals use it as a training run.

Park at the Braveheart Carpark in Glen Nevis and follow the path which runs along above the top car park. After a short climb there are good

views over Fort William and Loch Linnhe to be had as the path follows the contour of the hill around.

This is a popular area for local walkers, frequently with dogs, be a good mountain biker and make yourself heard/seen and be ready to give way and a short hello/thanks as you pass doesn't go amiss.

Once round the back of the hill the climbing begins — it is a tough-ish climb which leads up to a fork on your left. If too much you can keep going around however it is worth the extra haul to the mast at the top — amazing views followed by a steep descent make it very worthwhile.

Once back at the fork take a left till you reach a gate, look for the path on your left and take that for a great section of trail which is fast & swoopy

with good sight lines. It isn't a mountain bike specific trail so be ready to give way but it is a lot of fun — enjoy!

At the end of this path it joins up with the start of your route & you will retrace your steps with a 0.5km descent back to the car park.

A good route if you have only an hour or two to spare in Fort William and want to enjoy some good views, fun descents and a fitness test.



### Route Profile

The elevation profile for this route with height in metres vs distance in kilometres:



### Do the Ride Thing?

It's important to be responsible for your actions while out riding:

- Let other path users know you are coming as early as possible.
- Please watch your speed, especially on blind corners and dips.
- Please take extra care near wildlife and leave the environment as you find it.
- Help land managers and others to work safely and effectively.
- The route description and quality of path may change over time so please remain flexible with your plans and be ready to use alternative routes. Correct at time of print June 2013
- Check the weather forecast and ensure you have all the equipment you need for your route.
- If you are in any doubt please pop into one of our bike shops for advice!

### Online Route Maps

The Route profile and maps for this ride are available to view online at:

[www.mapmyride.com](http://www.mapmyride.com)

### Downloads

GPS file data of the route is available to download for your GPS device in either GPX or KML formats.

**Download GPX File**  
Right Click Save As

**Download KML File**  
Right Click Save As

DMSiNG Highly recommends that if you intend to use a handheld GPS device for navigating that you also take a paper map version and familiarise yourself with the area and map prior to undertaking any routes.

- \* developing an 'image' very important
- \* wildness of the Yukon a key attraction
- \* 'heritage of area' can increase attractiveness of touristic product - uniqueness
- \* involve MTB magazines through 'fam' trips
- \* information provision so important - web sites, trail guides
- \* guiding in remote areas can enhance the destination

\* lessons from Canada

- \* much purpose-built development more 'grassroots' than Scotland
- \* less sophisticated 'product', but...
- \* wildness and scenery are key elements
- \* overall branding and use of imagery is excellent
- \* strong outdoor/adventure ethos

\* **lessons from New Zealand**

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- \* diverse range of factors attracts bikers to destinations
  - \* cycling can play a significant role in business and job creation, and regional economic development
  - \* land and trail managers and entrepreneurs need to cater for increasingly demanding and diverse sets of consumers
  - \* outside perspective: Slovenia has the right ingredients to be an excellent MTB destination

\* conclusions