

Case Studies – Dalby Forest, North York Moors

Dalby Forest is owned and managed by the [Forestry Commission](#).

It is an excellent example of how leisure activities can be safely accommodated within a working forest.

The forest contains over 8,000 acres of woodland that is open for exploration by the public. Facilities include play areas for children, barbecue sites, waymarked trails, cafés, cycle hire, craft workshops and a new visitor centre, opened in 2007.

This case study illustrates two of the fundamental [guiding principles](#) of the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (VSCG).

- take account of conservation, heritage, recreation, cultural and landscape objectives
- do not take away people's sense of freedom and adventure

Because of its size and the variety of activities taking place, it is helpful to consider different parts of the forest against the VSCG [risk control matrix](#).



Dalby Forest Visitor Centre

The visitor centre, being easily accessible by car and with its facilities for children, sits firmly at the “urban terrain” end of the spectrum. There is a high level of management intervention to ensure visitors are safe. Specialists in the relevant disciplines were consulted to ensure that the retail and café areas were appropriately designed and laid out to achieve safe visitor flows.

Considerable care has been taken to minimise the impact of the centre. The design incorporates:

- locally sourced timber
- energy efficiency and conservation strategies
- heating with a boiler that burns wood chips
- natural and sustainable materials
- renewable energy systems including a wind turbine and a dramatic array of photovoltaic panels



The building sits well in the landscape. It is clad in larch, grown and milled in the forest. Rainwater is harvested to flush the toilets, reducing demand on the village well. The centre is built on a timber frame and is specially designed to be recycled at the end of its life, leaving behind a minimal footprint.

Cycling

Cycling provision illustrates the opposite end of the risk control matrix.

The black routes require users to take responsibility for their own safety with a very high level of technical ability and fitness expected.



Explore, enjoy, discover
Dalby the Great Yorkshire Forest

	<p>GREEN BEGINNERS / FAMILY 6 Miles (9.6km) 2 hours from Adderstone. 2.5 Miles (4km) 1 hour from Low Dalby. A couple of short nodes on mostly flat terrain. No special skills required. Includes short single track sections. Suitable for most people in good health.</p>
	<p>BLUE EASY / MODERATE 8 miles (12.8km) 2.5 hours. Start in Low Dalby, Adderstone or Crosscliff. Intermediate cyclist/mountain bikers with basic off road riding skills. A simple route on mixed terrain, steep in places. A good standard of fitness required.</p>
	<p>RED CHALLENGING 23 Miles (37km) 4 hours. Start at Low Dalby, Adderstone or Crosscliff. A long route, or a series of shorter routes, on variable terrain. A wide range of steeper, tougher climbs and descents of a challenging nature. Riders need good technical ability and higher level of fitness.</p>
	<p>BLACK HIGHLY TECHNICAL 6.5 Miles (10.4km) 1.5 hours. Start at Adderstone. A short but physically demanding route. Some very steep climbs and purpose built descents, needing a very high level of technical ability and fitness.</p>

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Routes are graded and clearly signed so that cyclists do not inadvertently take on terrain that is beyond their capabilities.

A green route is included that does not require special skills or fitness, designed for beginners and families.

There are 73 kilometres of graded and sign-posted routes and a specially designed skills area, Dixon's Hollow, making Dalby Forest one of the best purpose-built facilities for cycling in the country.



The skills area has been created in 3 acres of old quarry. This helps to screen it from view and restrict access.

It is, however, close to a car park and forest road, which allows easy ambulance access. It is also possible to land a helicopter nearby.

Forestry Commission staff carry out a daily visual inspection and make a written weekly report on site safety.

Care is taken to ensure that here are no nasty surprises.

Signs at Dixon's Hollow clearly warn riders of the risks, and indicate the level of skill expected.

The design of the skills area incorporates carefully positioned rocks that require appropriate levels of skill to access the track.

Heights are kept under 1 metre to minimise the severity of injuries from falls.





Chicanes encourage cyclists to stop where the trails cross vehicle roads.

Signs also indicate the quickest way back to the visitor centre, in case of emergency.

A bike centre in the forest not only sells equipment and hires out bikes, but also offers tuition and provides a good source of advice.



PURPLE MOUNTAIN BIKE CENTRE & CAFE

This was all designed by the Forestry Commission in partnership with Pace Cycles and the SingletrAction user group.

SingletrAction is affiliated to the [International Mountain Biking Association](#) and work using their standards. These aim to ensure sustainable, natural trails that cause minimum disturbance to the landscape and give maximum fun on the bike.

The Forestry Commission brought forward plans for forestry work along the lines of the trails. In effect, the next 10 years of anticipated work on the trees was carried out prior to the construction of the cycle routes. This should ensure that future use will not be disrupted.

Go Ape

The forest caters for adventurous visitors with [Go Ape](#), a high wire adventure course of rope bridges, tarzan swings, and zip slides, 40 feet up in the trees.



Go Ape operate a dozen sites and have worked on Forestry Commission land since 2002. Their vision is to provide an eco-educational experience where participants absorb valuable risk assessment and risk management skills, whilst having a naturally thrilling time on an environmentally responsible and sustainable activity.

The adventure course is designed in association with conservationists and arboriculturists to ensure that the structures are safe. These specialists use their knowledge and experience, together with techniques such as ultrasound to monitor the internal health of the trees, to ensure that the natural environment is protected.



The structures are designed to allow trees to grow unrestricted. Build materials are selected to blend into the natural scenery.

An element of risk is designed into the activity. This follows the Go Ape philosophy that exposure to risk in reasonably controlled circumstances is necessary for people to learn how to safely assess and deal with risks that present themselves in life.



Everyone receives a safety briefing from a trained instructor at the start and must wear a safety harness. But after that participants are unaccompanied and take responsibility for attaching themselves to the safety system.

The detailed [risk assessment](#) is included on the Go Ape website.

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