

Trail Management Guide for Mountain Bikers October 2025

The Right Trail, Right Place, Right People for the Long Term



**Developing
Mountain Biking
in Scotland**

Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Choosing the Right Management Method.....	5
2.a. Factors Affecting Trail Management.....	5
2.b. Legal Requirements.....	6
2.c. Why Work Together?	6
3. Management Options	7
4. Land Transfer/Lease/Sale	8
4.a What is a Land Transfer?	8
4.b. When Should You Consider a Land Transfer?	8
4.c. Benefits and Challenges	9
4.d. Real-World Example - Deeside Bike Collective – Banchory Woodland Trails	9
4.e. Lease or Sale – Non-Public Bodies.....	10
5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Low-Impact Trails.....	11
5.a. Purpose	11
5.b. What an MoU Typically Includes.....	11
5.c. Benefits and Challenges	12
5.d. Minimum Requirements	13
6. Permit, Licence and Sustainable Trails Plan	14
6.a. Permit.....	15
6.b. Licence	16
6.c. Sustainable Trails Plan (STP).....	17
6.d. Summary	18
7. Sustainable Trails Plan	19
7.a. Introduction	19
7.b. Management Levels Explained	20
7.c. Choosing the Right Level.....	21
7.d. Management Level Specifications.....	22
7.e. Benefits and Challenges of Each Management Level.....	24
8. Recommended steps for developing a Sustainable Trails Plan (STP).....	26
8.1 Steps to create an STP	26

8.2 Trail Audit	27
8.3 Communicating with Land Manager	28
9. Appendices	29
9.1 Appendix 1 – Sample Memorandum of Understanding Template.....	30
9.2 Appendix 2: Permit (Routine Work) Flow Chart	34
9.3 Appendix 3: Licence (Non-Routine Work) Flow Chart	35
9.4 Appendix 4: Trail Work Enquiry Form Template	36

1. Introduction

Across Scotland, groups of mountain bikers have been voluntarily maintaining trails for many years. Today there are circa 30 formally constituted Trail Associations, plus many more informal local groups.

This thriving volunteer culture reflects two parallel needs: The personal benefit riders gain from connecting with nature and giving back to their local environment; The wider need for well-managed, sustainable trails that reduce environmental impacts, enhance safety, and support recreation. Together, these have created opportunities for positive, lasting partnerships between volunteers and land managers.

However, Scotland's trail network is highly diverse, with different landscapes, different land managers, user pressures, and community goals. There is no single management model that suits every site. Instead, there is a range of options to match local opportunities, constraints, and priorities.

This guide builds upon the [National Access Forum Scotland's 'Unauthorised MTB Trails: A Guide for Land Managers and riders'](#) and the [UK Trails Project 'Your Trail Report'](#). It has been authored by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS), led by UK Trails Project Manager, and has been reviewed by Forestry and Land Scotland.

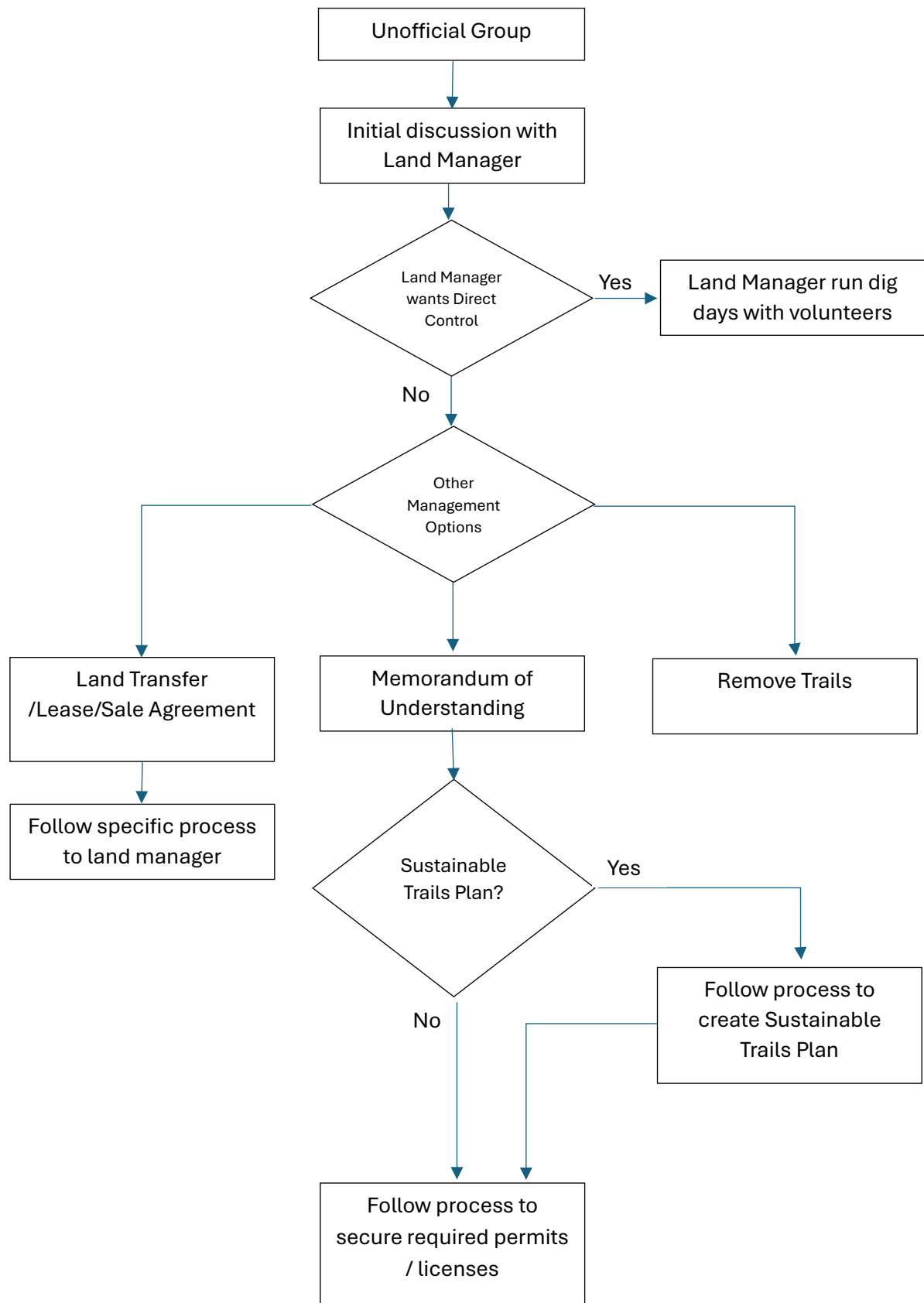
The guide hopes to achieve the following:

- Further explain the trail management options available.
- Help land managers and volunteer groups choose the most appropriate approach for any site.
- Provide a clear roadmap and templates of best practice for applying management solutions consistently and appropriately.

Note of scope of this guidance:

This guide sets out general principles drawing on the past years of experience gained from (principally public sector) Land Managers and the Mountain Bike Community. There is a caveat in that different land managers will have different approaches, objectives, and ways of handling requests for access. If your trail project is on land managed by a private owner, it may take time to establish contact and develop a relationship. The landowner may be happy to adopt the principles set out here, or they may not. To that end DMBInS will continue to engage with the Land Management Sector to understand their pressures / objectives and in turn continue to improve trail management guidance for the mountain bike community.

Example process when working with a land manager:



2. Choosing the Right Management Method

The fundamental principle of trail management is having the right trails in the right place. Successful trails should work in harmony with their surroundings and add value to their location.

2.a. Factors Affecting Trail Management

Several key factors influence whether a trail is well-suited to its surroundings and how it should be managed:

- **Location:**
Trails in remote locations may need less management input than those in busy, highly populated areas.
- **User Numbers:**
More popular trails require greater maintenance and management to keep them safe, sustainable, and enjoyable.
- **Impact**
All trails must work in harmony with their surroundings. Managing environmental, social, and operational impacts is critical to success.
- **Intentions and Purpose**
Some trails serve local riders only, while others are intended as destination-level attractions drawing visitors from further afield.

By choosing the right management model, land managers and volunteers can ensure the effort and resources required remain proportional to user numbers, trail impact, and the capacity of those looking after them.

2.b. Legal Requirements

The Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 require land managers to provide ***reasonable and practicable*** management of safety for visitors.

The trail management options in this guide align with Visitor Safety Group (VSG) principles of ***“providing overall benefit to society and individuals by balancing risks and benefits.”***

The law requires reasonable and proportionate safety management measures—it is neither necessary, realistic, nor desirable to apply the most stringent systems everywhere. This guidance aligns with the Visitor Safety Group's “Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside – Principles and Practice”, which we recommend reading.

2.c. Why Work Together?

Working in partnership with a land manager delivers real benefits:

For mountain bike groups:

- Builds trust with landowners
- Clarifies permitted work
- Helps secure funding and support
- Ensures trails remain rideable, sustainable, and enjoyable

For land managers:

- Reduces liability risks
- Helps allocate resources effectively
- Ensures environmental, social, and operational impacts are well managed

By matching the model to the place, land managers and trail organisations can build strong partnerships that keep Scotland's trails sustainable and valued for years to come.

3. Management Options

A land manager needs to address the parallel and, sometimes, conflicting needs of conservation, site operations and recreation. To apply their duty of care, a land manager must show they have assessed trails they have provided or exist on their land and decide how they are managed.

As defined with the NAF Unauthorised Trail Guide, some land managers may directly run their own volunteer groups (e.g. Glentress “Trail Fairies”) to assist with trail management, develop informal agreements with volunteers, or remove trails. If these options aren’t feasible or agreeable, there are two main ways to formally engage that this guidance helps explain and give practical examples/templates to be realised

1. Land Transfer Agreement

Where there is a mechanism in place or the land manager / owner can agree this can be used for the construction of new facilities or transfer of ownership/lease for existing trails or entire sites. See Chapter 4 for further details.

Examples: Eligible Public Bodies in Scotland can accept requests for Leasing arrangements or a transfer of ownership through Community Asset Transfer.

2. Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with third party to manage trails

Used to set out how the Land Manager and Trail Association will work together, the MoU is the overarching statement of intent forming the foundations of a partnership. Finer details (such as location and type of works) are then authorised using the land manager’s Permit system if they have one in place. Chapter 5 outlines how an MoU works.

Larger sites may benefit from creating a Sustainable Trails Plan (STP) to contain the vision and timeline for the area. Chapter 6 demonstrates Sustainable Trails Plan more fully.

4. Land Transfer/Lease/Sale

4.a What is a Land Transfer?

For certain public bodies in Scotland, Community Asset Transfer gives eligible communities a right to make a request for ownership, lease, or other rights over land. This grants long-term control and responsibility over the land, including trails and facilities.

Supported by Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, community bodies can request ownership or lease of public land if they demonstrate additional public benefit.

For a community group to be eligible they must be a community-controlled body and have the following in place:

- Have a **written constitution or governing document**.
- **Define the community it represents** (either a community of place or interest).
- Ensure that **membership is open to anyone from that community**.
- Ensure that **members from the community have control of the organisation**.
- Use its **assets and surplus funds** for the benefit of that community.

Private land has different rules (owners can't be forced to sell; communities are typically defined geographically).

4.b. When Should You Consider a Land Transfer?

Best suited for:

- Purpose-built facilities with major investment.
- Projects needing long-term security of tenure (often required by funders).
- Sites needing strategic planning over years or decades.
- Sites that provide additional value through community ownership, for example increased economic, social, or community value.

4.c. Benefits and Challenges

Land Transfer is the most complex solution available for trail management, but can produce the greatest rewards. It is important to consider the benefits and challenges carefully before choosing this route.

Mountain Bike Groups

Benefits:	Challenges:
• Opportunity to secure income from trails • Long-term control over the trail network • Ability for strategic planning • Improved ability to attract funding • Ability to develop own risk assessments	• Securing start-up and long-term funding • Need for clear succession planning • High governance, legal, and technical requirements • Time needed to secure rights and build trails • Legal liability and insurance costs • Possible payment for rights to land • Potentially wider land management responsibilities beyond the mountain bike facilities

Land Managers

Benefits:	Challenges:
• No further legal liability (if sold) • Reduced liability (if leased) • Payment for rights to land (case by case)	• Loss of control over land use • Need to consider impacts on other activities

4.d. Real-World Example - Deeside Bike Collective – Banchory Woodland Trails

The vision for the Banchory Woodland Trails project came around 10 years ago as it was recognised that young riders in particular would benefit from quality, accessible, purpose-built mountain bike trails providing them somewhere to be active and socialise on bikes.

Deeside Bike Collective undertook a thorough and collaborative process to secure a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) for the Banchory Woodland Trails. The group began by forming a constituted community organisation and developing a clear vision for creating inclusive, sustainable mountain bike trails for local riders of all ages and abilities. Working closely with FLS, they completed feasibility studies,

environmental assessments, and community consultations to ensure the project aligned with local needs and national forestry objectives. A detailed business plan, governance framework, and long-term management strategy were then submitted as part of the formal CAT application. Following rigorous review and positive engagement with stakeholders, FLS approved the transfer—enabling Deeside Bike Collective to purchase the land, with funding from the Scottish Land Fund, and bring the Banchory Woodland Trails project to life as a community-led recreational asset.

DMBinS, through the North East Adventure Tourism (NEAT) project, has provided support, guidance, and helped Deeside Bike Collective secure funding. This included £100,000 of funding from the Cycling Facilities Fund (CFF) which is a fund jointly administered by sportscotland, Scottish Cycling, and DMBinS.

The funding has helped create three trails Dee-Lite, Dee-Send and Dee-Line and a starter skills zone offer suitability to complete beginners all the way through to experienced riders and those who enjoy ‘big air’ jumps.

The trails provide progression on berms and different sized drops and jumps. To further promote inclusivity, the core path and Blue trail “Dee-Lite” are suitable for adaptive bikes and have a halfway access point to introduce less experienced riders.

The trails provide many volunteering opportunities, particularly in trail maintenance and local cycling clubs. The engaging trails provide a quality “home” location for clubs and coaching groups such as Deeside Thistle, Ride in Peace Adventures and Deeside MTB, allowing them to flourish.

Banchory is another exciting facility that supports the growing mountain biking scene in Aberdeenshire leading to increased participation and increased tourism to the area, helping local hospitality and retail industries.

4.e. Lease or Sale – Non-Public Bodies

It is possible to approach non-public bodies, such as private landowners or estates, to explore opportunities for leasing or purchasing land for the development of purpose-built mountain bike trails.

Engaging directly with landowners can provide flexibility in identifying suitable sites and negotiating mutually beneficial agreements. These arrangements can support local recreation, tourism, and community wellbeing objectives while ensuring that the land is managed responsibly and sustainably for outdoor access, economic benefits and liabilities of land management, and environmental protection.

5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Low-Impact Trails

If transfer of land ownership is beyond the scope of your vision for your trails, you are best to consider creating a Memorandum of Understanding with the land manager.

5.a. Purpose

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a simple, flexible agreement between a land manager and a trail group. It sets out how everyone will work together, allowing a partnership formed between organisations to be more resilient to changes of individuals in post.

MoU's suit low-impact trails - like existing trails needing routine maintenance, not major construction.

Key purposes:

- State agreement to work in partnership
- Define communication and collaboration
- Clarify roles, tasks, and locations
- Include an exit strategy

5.b. What an MoU Typically Includes

- Parties involved
- Purpose and scope
- Roles and responsibilities
- Health and safety responsibilities
- Communication methods
- Review periods and duration
- Exit strategy

An MoU **does not** include finer details such as where and when work will be undertaken. This level of detail is achieved using the Land Manager's permit and licence systems as explained in Chapters 6.

Download draft example MoU between a Trails Association and a Land Manager.

5.c. Benefits and Challenges

Using a Memorandum of Understanding has multiple benefits for both mountain bike groups and land managers.

Mountain Bike Groups

Benefits:	Challenges:
• Creates statement of intent to work in partnership with the Land Manager. • Allows partnership to be resilient to changes in personnel in both organisations. • Defines scope and responsibilities which are executed using a Permit process or similar depending on Land Manager. • Builds stronger trust with land managers.	• Need for long-term commitment • Need for volunteers willing to put time into development and governance of the group • Need to build organisation's ability through training. • Time taken to build trust and negotiate an agreement with land manager

Land Managers

Benefits:	Challenges:
• Clear contact point which will be more resilient to changes in individuals. • Reduced liability via planned maintenance and management • Strong community engagement • Trails can be integrated into long-term land management plans • Establishes a long-term engagement with mountain bike community, providing contacts which may help address the issue of unauthorised trail building	• Time and staff resource required to develop a relationship with mountain biking group • Need for professional advice on extent to which there is still liability, and associated insurance requirements • Legacy management

5.d. Minimum Requirements

Land managers may typically require:

- A properly constituted organisation.
- Likely to require evidence of capacity to meet plans.
- Public liability insurance.
- Basic health and safety systems (e.g. risk assessments, method statements, dig plans).
- Evidence of volunteer competence (e.g. appropriate training DIRT course(s)).
- Agreed communication channels.

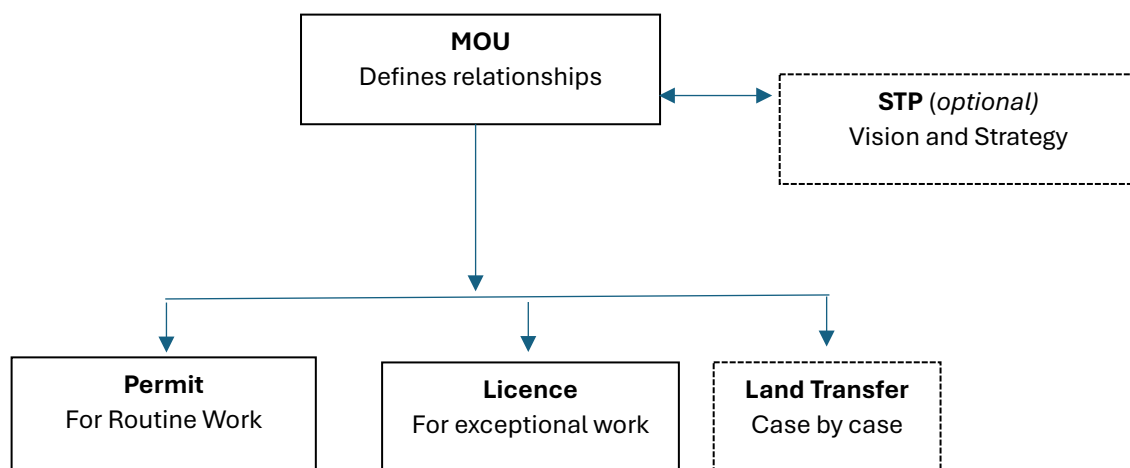
6. Permit, Licence and Sustainable Trails Plan

When mountain bike groups want to carry out work on trails managed by someone else (such as Forestry and Land Scotland or other landowners), it's essential to have clear permission in place.

There is no “single solution” for obtaining permission to work on a trail. Instead, there can be different levels of authorisation that match the type of work you want to do, the scale of impact, and the level of planning and partnership involved. It is important to emphasise that these are general principles based on experience working with Land Managers. You need to take the time to develop a relationship and understand the Land Manager's objectives as this will influence how your trail project could be handled. The exact terminology and processes will vary depending on who owns the land.

In simple terms:

- A **Permit** is intended as a one-off agreement for an event or activity. However, it can be used for low-risk volunteer projects (such as repeated, routine maintenance tasks with hand tools) over a longer period. Discussion and agreement with the land manager is key to ensuring the Permit issued is appropriate for both parties.
- A **Licence** can be a tool for specific jobs which is higher risk work that needs extra scrutiny. A Licence can allow competent contractors (such as chainsaw or excavator operators) to carry out work beyond the capability of the volunteer organisation.
Example: Clearing wind-fall trees; creating a new 'Machine Build' trail.
- A **Sustainable Trails Plan (STP)** sits alongside the MoU, provide the overarching framework for discussion / agreement on trails and their management. This document provides the trail management vision and strategy for a given area, which in turn provides a look ahead program of trail work which would be managed largely by the permission / licence process explained above and dependant on the processes in place for individual land managers



6.a. Permit

A Permit is the simplest type of permission. It allows a group to submit plans for a piece of work at a given time and place.

Examples of Routine Work includes:

- Removing penalty for failure (fall zones, brashing overhanging branches or small trees in trail corridor).
- Clearing drainage ditches or culverts.
- Removing litter or small fallen debris.
- Installing simple drainage solutions including knicks, grade reversals, outslopes, french drains.
- Improving sight lines (Exits, Crossing Points, Entrances).
- Trail re-routes to improve trail sustainability or safety (in corridor).
- Trail tread improvements to ride quality including built features (guideline size – maximum depth two spade blades).

Key features:

- Lower-effort to agree and manage.
- Clearly defined list of tasks, locations and times,
- Can be one-off or ongoing for routine maintenance, providing the work is agreed in advance is low risk and hand tool only.
- Depending on land manager a Permit could last up to 12 months. At that point it would need to be renewed/refreshed.

A Permit is the permission to work on trails from a land manager and will generally cover routine tasks as detailed above.

How to obtain a permit:

- Reference Permit Flowchart and example Enquiry Form in Appendix A.
- Complete it for your site.
- Submit to Land Manager with required evidence of competence.

6.b. Licence

A Licence is used for specific work that goes beyond what's covered by a Permit. Licences are typically for one-off or higher-impact jobs that need closer review and agreement.

Examples of work needing a Licence:

- Clearing non-complex treefall after storms (using trained and competent operators).
- Building a new trail section agreed as part of a STP if one is in place.
- Major rerouting or reconstruction of a trail.
- Installing large infrastructure (bridges, major jumps).

Key features:

- Usually covers a single, defined project.
- Requires detailed planning and landowner approval.
- Ensures organiser and land manager can assess site-specific impacts and risks.
- Means the group assumes the roles and responsibilities of Site Manager for the duration of the works.
- Land Manager must agree to the project at early planning stage.

6.c. Sustainable Trails Plan (STP)

A Sustainable Trails Plan is a broader, longer-term vision and strategy for managing mountain bike trails within wider land management plan. Agreed between the land manager and the trail group, an STP can cover a whole area or network of trails and define how they will be maintained, improved, and managed over time.

A Sustainable Trails Plan uses Permits or Licences to deliver the work specified in the plan, depending on the arrangements specific to the Land Manager you are working with

Examples of what an STP enables:

- Long term vision for mountain biking at the site.
- Coordinated plans for improvements to trail design and construction.
- Input into new trail development.
- Clear vision for long-term sustainability.
- Strategy to maintain, develop, or withdraw trails to shape the trail provision to match identified user and land manager needs.

Key features:

- Requires more planning, communication, and record-keeping.
- Enables greater responsibility and more flexibility for the group.
- Allows different management levels to be applied to different trails (see chapter 7).
- Builds a long-term partnership with the land manager.

A Sustainable Trails Plan is ideal for established groups and land managers with the capacity to take on the additional work, who want a trusted, strategic relationship.

6.d. Summary

The following table outlines a range of agreement options that land managers may use when authorising trail-related work. These options differ in terms of the effort required, the level of activity they allow, and the type of group or project they best suit. It is important to note that terminology and approaches may vary between land managers, and not all will use the same system or process.

Option [terminology may vary]	Effort Required	What It Allows	Best For
Permit	Lower	Individual jobs at agreed time and location.	Routine permissions for all groups.
Licence	Case-by-Case	Specific, higher-impact, or one-off projects / tasks.	Trail reroutes, new trail builds (likely at Rake & Ride and Hand Built Level), non-complex tree windblow clearance.
Sustainable Trails Plan	Higher	Strategic approach to management of trails Broader input into area management.	Established groups managing multiple trails.

7. Sustainable Trails Plan

7.a. Introduction

A Sustainable Trails Plan (STP) is a vision and strategy document by a trail association in collaboration with a Land Manager that defines how an area of trails will be maintained, improved, removed, and generally managed over time. It is a tool for identifying short / medium / longer trail projects, together with how they will be managed and fit within the plans of individual land managers.

A key part of developing an STP is selecting the right management level for each trail or area. Management levels reflect the level of responsibility for trail(s) or forest areas. These can be set out by the TA in a proposal to the Land Manager for their agreement. Choosing the right level ensures that effort and input remain proportionate to the trail's use, impact, and importance.

Work required to deliver the STP will be authorised using either Permit or Licence depending on the nature and scale of the job, and the processes in place for the land manager you are working with (See Chapter 6 for details).

7.b. Management Levels Explained

Below is a summary of four main management levels available within a Sustainable Trails Plan framework. These levels range from minimal intervention to full legal transfer of responsibility. Each has its own permissions, expectations, benefits, and liability implications.

When developing the Sustainable Trails Plan, if you feel a greater degree of security and rewards are necessary for your trail(s), the plan could also consider a Land Transfer Agreement as outlined in Chapter 4.

	Overview:	What may be Permitted:	Benefits	Liability Reduction
Tolerate & Monitor	- For low-impact, low-use trails—often in remote locations. - Recreational benefits outweigh negative impacts. - Minimal formal intervention required.	- Basic maintenance only. - No formal maintenance or improvements without further permission.	- Low effort for both land manager and volunteers. - Trail remains available for local use.	Land manager reduces liability by acknowledging the trail exists but needs no further input at this time.
Stewardship	- A partnership allowing local riders or clubs to maintain existing trails. - Suited to moderate-use trails with local users. - Balances effort with achievable outcomes.	- Basic maintenance tasks. - Input into planning forest operations. - Limited improvements may be negotiated. - Hosting local coaching or club activities.	- Stronger community involvement. - Better trail condition and user experience. - Supports responsible riding messages. - Allows TAs to incorporate trails that have 1 or 2 people maintaining them to be part of a TA and work with permission on trails	Reduced by recognising the trail has sufficient management input and establishing two-way communication to highlight and address concerns.
Adoption	- Suitable for high-use networks with broad exposure. - Requires significant input from both parties.	- Basic and advanced maintenance. - Improvements to trail design and construction. - Planning and building new trails (For public sector landowners, this is likely to entail lease or transfer of ownership, or licences to work.) - Hosting events, including coaching and commercial races. - Promotion of trails and surrounding businesses.	- Greater security and permanence for trails. - Ability to plan strategically. - Strengthened local economy and community engagement. - Prioritised recovery post-storms. [Subject to capacity / priority etc]	Significantly reduced by delegating inspection and maintenance to a trained, trusted volunteer partner who applies Health and Safety at Work (HASW) Act responsibilities to their volunteers.

7.c. Choosing the Right Level

Management levels aren't about enforcing rules—they're about choosing the right approach for each trail's use, impact, and the capacity of the people managing it. By matching the level to the need, groups and land managers can create safe, sustainable, and enjoyable trails for everyone. The Visitor Safety Group "Managing Safety in the Countryside – Principles and Practices" is recommended reading to assist understanding liability and duties of care.

7.d. Management Level Specifications

Introduction

The following table sets out the management and construction specifications for mountain bike trails at varying levels of formality and oversight — from informal, low-impact “monitor” trails to fully managed trails under asset transfer or lease agreements. It provides guidance on key factors such as rider numbers, contractual arrangements, inspection and maintenance requirements, and levels of construction and tooling. This framework helps land managers, community groups, and trail associations determine the appropriate level of management and responsibility based on trail use, risk, and long-term sustainability.

Management Information:

NAF Unauthorised Trail Guidance Definition Application	Low-Impact Trails			Transfer of Management
		Managed Under Agreement		
	Monitor	Stewardship	Adoption	Land Transfer / Lease
Rider Numbers				
Low	X	X		
Medium		X	X	
High			X	X
Contract Level				
Verbal	X			
MoU		X	X	
Permission / Licence		?	X	
Legal Contract				X
Ongoing Work Load				
Inspection Regime (Minimum)	?	Biennial	Annual	6 monthly
Level of maintenance	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Fundraising for Insurance			£500-700 pa	£3000-£10000 pa

Construction and Work:

	Monitor	Stewardship	Adoption	Land Transfer / Lease
Typical Construction Level				
Rake and Ride	X	X		
Hand Built		X	X	X
Machine Built			?	X
Engineered				X
Tools, Contractors & Signage				
Hand tools	X	X	X	X
Low-risk Powered Tools			?	X
Powered tools*			?	X
Subcontractors			X	X
Self-operated plant*			?	X
Signage		?	?	X
Routine Work				
Penalty for failure (fall zones, brashing trees on trail)	X	X	X	X
Drainage	Natural	Grade reversals, knicks, water bar, outslope	Small culverts, pipes, french drains,	Built structures including bridges, boardwalk
Sight Lines (Exits, Crossing Points, Entrances)		X	X	X
Trail re-routes (in corridor)		?	X	X
Trail tread built features (guideline size)		less than a spade blade	less than 2 spade blades	X

7.e. Benefits and Challenges of Each Management Level

Each management level has its own strengths and limitations. Choosing the right one depends on **trail use, location, community capacity, and land manager objectives**.

Benefits for MTB Groups				
	Monitor	Stewardship	Adoption	Land Transfer / Lease
Carry out basic maintenance	?	X	X	X
Make improvements to trail design and construction			X	X
Plan and build new trails		?	X	X
Be informed of planned Forest Operations	?	X	X	X
Take account of trails during in Forest Operations		?	X	X
Prioritised for recovery post-storms		?	X	X
Host Coaching / Club activities		X	X	X
Promote trails and surrounding businesses			X	X
Host commercial races / events		?	X	X
Rewards for Land Managers				
Group to contact if issues or need to spread responsible MTB messages	?	X	X	X
Community engagement	?	X	X	X
Supporting rural economies		?	X	X
Support with the management (inspections, maintenance, removal of unnecessary hazards) of existing trails	?	X	X	X
Allow trails to be built in permitted areas		?	X	X

Managing Liability				
	Monitor	Stewardship	Adoption	Land Transfer / Lease
Impact on Liability	Reduced	Reduced	Significantly Reduced	Transferred
How is liability reduced:	Reduced by acknowledging trail needs no further input at this point	Reduced by acknowledging trail has sufficient management input for level of use and exposure, and having 2-way communication pathways for highlighting and addressing concerns.	Reduced by acknowledging trail has wide popularity and delegating the inspection and maintenance required for safe operation to a volunteer partner.	Transferred through transfer of land, and requirements of Occupiers' Liability Act to another party.

8. Recommended steps for developing a Sustainable Trails Plan (STP)

A Sustainable Trails Plan allows riders' groups to work with land managers to develop and deliver a long-term vision for trails in their area. Using a STP helps trails fit within a wider Land Management Plan and can take account of outside influences such as scheduled timber harvesting.

8.1 Steps to create an STP

- **Map your area:**
Using apps such as Trail Forks, create a map of the trails you wish to manage. Ensure the trails have unique and inoffensive names.
- **Audit Trails:**
Now you have the trail mapped you can log factors such as grade, hazards [To Follow] and management level to give you a clearer understanding of how you intend to develop your management plan and vision.
- **Speak to land manager:**
At this point you will have a vision and plan for trails in a given area to discuss. A Land Manager will need to consider your proposal against other priorities and constraints for the site, and available resource. Initial conversations will raise any red flags that could prevent progress, and any issues which need addressing for the site and plan to be viable.
- **Draft document:**
Once concerns and constraints are understood, you can start preparing your Sustainable Trails Plan. An examples is shown in appendix XXX
- **Review STP:**
The completed STP will need a final review and complementary information such as insurance certificates and training records will need to be submitted at this stage if required by land manager.
- **Sign-off and Delivery.**
The STP should be signed off by both land manager and your organisation, and you are ready to submit permit and/or licence(s) to begin work. Remember, the STP should not be considered a static document and should be reviewed on a regular basis.

8.2 Trail Audit

The Occupiers' Liability Act requires land managers to undertake risk assessment to understand who might be harmed, and how, by activities on their land. Land managers will also wish to understand any environmental and operational impacts trails will have on their estate.

A Trail Audit allows you to capture this information in an agreed format, from which red-flags or issues needing addressing can be identified.

Many trail networks are shown on the community mapping app "Trail Forks". This can be used to identify the number of trails you have within the proposed forest area and help determine which trail trails could, or should, be audited. Trail Audits can be both desk-based and carried out onsite.

DMBINS may be able to help with preparing maps in GIS formats used by land managers.

An example of a typical trail audit developed in Aberdeenshire to feed into a Sustainable Trails Plan (To follow)

8.3 Communicating with Land Manager

Recreation is one of a land manager's many tasks.

However, by using the agreed processes in this document, communication should be smooth and professional. To aid the process, it is best to ensure you have all information available for the stage of communication you are at.

Professional relationships can build trails which can last for decades.

9. Appendices

- Sample MoU Template
- Permit (Routine Work) Flow Chart
- Licence (Non-Routine Work) Flow Chart
- Trail Work Enquiry Form template

9.1 Appendix 1 – Sample Memorandum of Understanding Template

This chapter contains an example of a typical Memorandum of Understanding which may be used to agree collaboration between a mountain bike organisation and Land Manager in broad terms. The existence of this template does not imply that any Land Manager must enter into such an agreement.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

[Land Manager Name]

and

[Voluntary Mountain Bike Group Name]

1. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the framework for collaboration between **[Land Manager Name]** and **[Voluntary Group Name]** regarding the maintenance and responsible management of mountain bike trails on land managed by **[Land Manager Name]**.

This MoU provides a high-level way of working with operational and procedural details contained in separate appendices.

2. Context of Memorandum of Understanding

- **[Land Manager Name]** is responsible for managing **[specific land/forest area]**, ensuring **[adjust to meet land manager's needs, for example 'sustainable land use, biodiversity conservation, and recreational access']**.
- **[Voluntary Group Name]** is a community-led organisation dedicated to the care for and responsible use of mountain bike trails.
- Both parties recognise the increasing popularity of mountain biking and the need for structured trail maintenance to ensure sustainable, safe and suitable trail provision.

3. Scope of this Memorandum of Understanding.

- This MoU applies to **[define geographical area]**.
- It covers trail maintenance, volunteer engagement, health and safety compliance, and communication protocols.
- The MoU does not grant exclusive rights or ownership over the land to the voluntary group.

4. Responsibilities of the Parties

4.1 Responsibilities of [Land Manager Name]

- Provide oversight and ensure compliance with any agreement.
- Facilitate access for approved maintenance activities.
- Ensure alignment with specific land manager / owners objectives.
- Support communication between land users.
- Provide advanced notice of land management activities and work with **[Voluntary Group Name]** to manage impact.

4.2 Responsibilities of [Voluntary Group Name]

- Conduct trail maintenance in accordance with any given permit or licence, issued by the land manager for specific works, and in line with trail management and environmental best practice guidelines.
- Ensure volunteer activities comply with health and safety regulations.
- Promote responsible trail use and engagement with the wider community.
- Secure funding for trail maintenance and improvement projects where necessary.
- Conduct trail inspections at agreed intervals.
- Provide scheduled reports on activities, including volunteer activities and incidents.
- Cascade notice of land management operations to mountain biking community.

5. Governance and Communication

- The **[Voluntary Group Name]** must be a formally constituted body with a minimum of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.
- A liaison group will be established, consisting of representatives from both parties.
- Meetings will be held **[quarterly/bi-annually/annually]** to review progress, discuss issues, and plan activities.
- Reports on maintenance activities, safety updates, and funding efforts will be shared with land manager. **[period]**.

6. Compliance With Relevant Legislation

- Both parties will adhere to relevant legislation. ([A Brief Guide to Access Laws relevant to Outdoor Access in Scotland](#))
- **[Voluntary Group Name]** will conduct risk assessments for all volunteer-led trail work.
- **[Voluntary Group Name]** will conduct risk assessments and inspections of adopted trails at agreed intervals.
- Risk assessments and inspections will be reviewed at agreed intervals.
- Public liability insurance will be maintained by **[Voluntary Group Name]** to cover trail maintenance activities.
- Accident and incident reporting procedures will be followed as per **[appendix reference]**.

7. Limitation of Liabilities

- **[Land Manager Name]** are responsible for the ongoing management of the site under the Land Owners' Liability Act [check title for each country].
- **[Voluntary Group Name]** are responsible for actions under their direct control under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

8. Conflict Resolution

- Disputes will be resolved through consultation between designated representatives.
- If no resolution is reached, the matter will be escalated to senior management within both organisations, with the Trail Association being able to bring Scottish Cycling, through Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, into the dispute if they so wish.
- Industry best practices will be used as a benchmark to aid resolution.

9. Termination of Memorandum of Understanding

- Either party may terminate this MoU with **[1/3/6/12 months]** written notice.
- Immediate termination may occur in cases of significant breach of terms, subject to review.
- Termination of this MoU does not release parties from obligations in separate agreements related to trail management.

Signatures**On behalf of [Land Manager Name]**

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

On behalf of [Voluntary Group Name]

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Witness

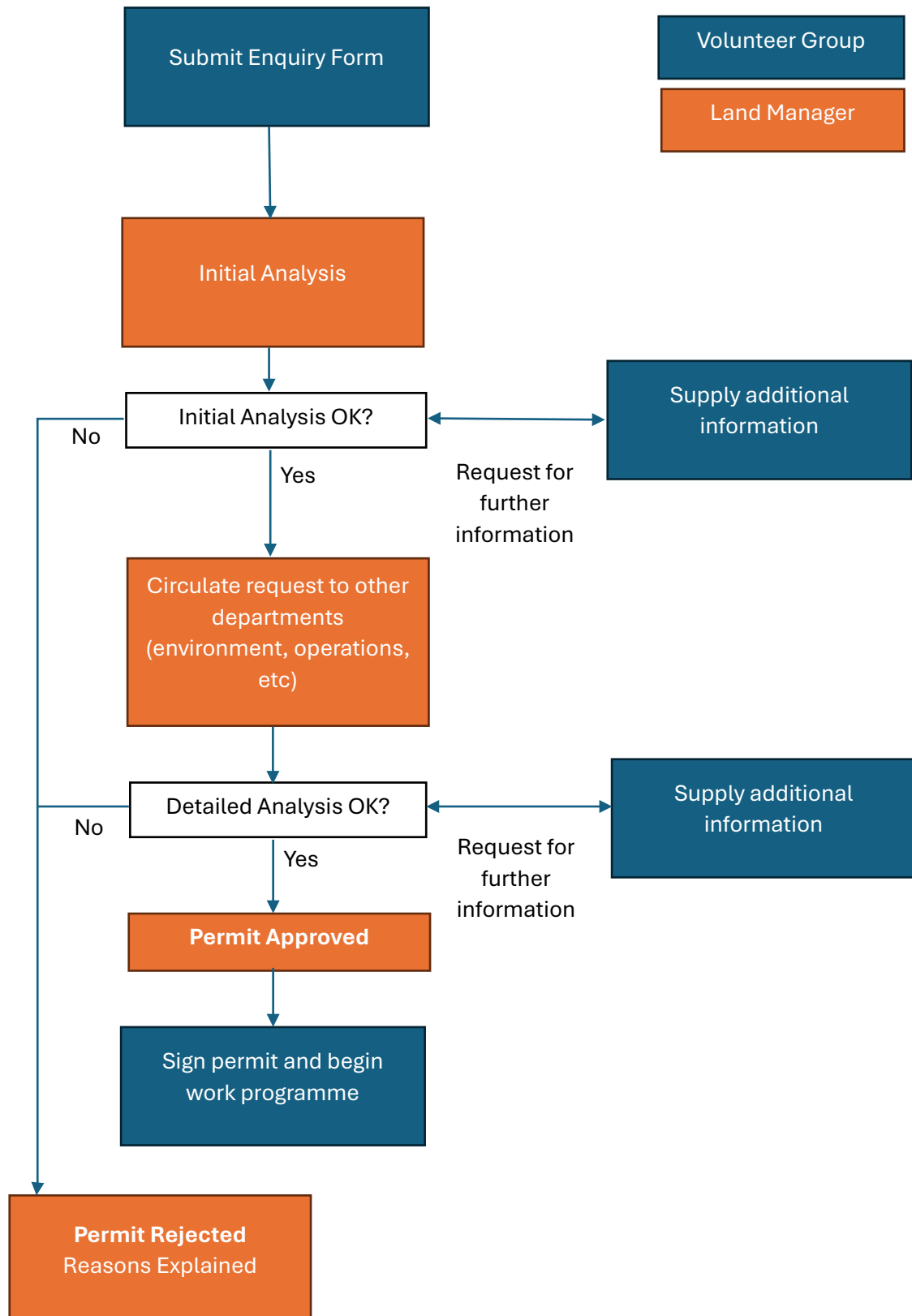
Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

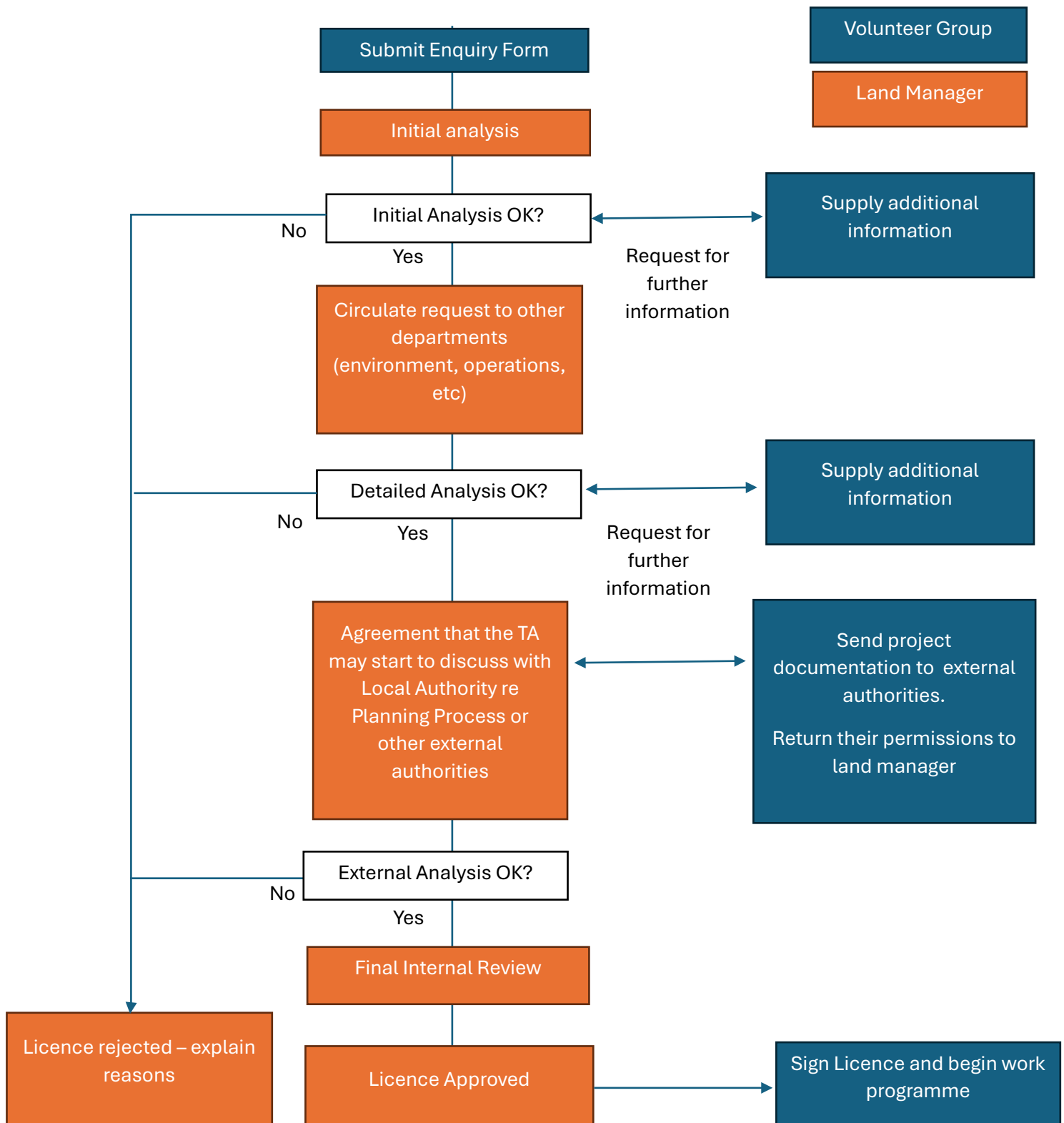
9.2 Appendix 2: Permit (Routine Work) Flow Chart

The below flowchart gives a simplified example of the process involved in achieving a permit to carry out trail work. The exact process and terminology will vary with Land Manager.



9.3 Appendix 3: Licence (Non-Routine Work) Flow Chart

The below flowchart gives a simplified example of the process involved in achieving a permit to carry out trail work. The exact process and terminology will vary with Land Manager.



9.4 Appendix 4: Trail Work Enquiry Form Template

The below enquiry form can be used to enquire about carrying out a range of types of work on trails. Land Managers will use this form to determine which Permit or Licence is applicable to the work. The exact process and terminology will vary with Land Manager.

[Downloadable word version.](#)

TRAIL WORKS ENQUIRY FORM

(DIG or NEW TRAIL or TRAIL POST-STORM CLEARANCE)

If you're looking at approaching a land manager about working on trails (carrying out maintenance on existing trails or creating new trails), you should consider providing these elements of information in your initial correspondence enable a clear understanding of your aims from the start. This will help the land manager understand the appropriate permit, licence, and/or other mechanism for your requested activity.

1. Applicant Details

1. Name of applicant?
2. Have you worked with a land manager before?
3. What type of organisation are you?
 - a. Trails Association, club, local community group, individual, community, private interest
4. Contact Details:
 - a. Name of lead contact:
 - b. Email:
 - c. Mobile phone:

2. Work Information

Complete the section relevant to work being enquired about:

2a. Trail Maintenance ("Dig Day") Information

1. Proposed location of the trail(s):
2. Are the trail(s) part of a 'Sustainable Trails Plan'?
 - a. If yes, please outline the 'Management Levels'?
3. Are the proposed dig(s) open to the public?
4. Are there specific planned dates that the dig(s) will take place?
5. Will the work taking place be 'routine work' as defined in the DMBinS Trail Management Guidance?

2b. New Trail Information

1. Is the trail part of a 'Sustainable Trails Plan'?
2. If not, what is the need for the new trail?
3. Does the trail have 'Planning Approval' or acknowledgement that no approval is required from the relevant local authority? (TBC and to be applied for is a valid answer.)
4. Location of the trail?
5. Is the trail project receiving public funding? If so, what conditions are attached to this funding?:
6. Number of anticipated riders?
7. Level of promotion proposed?
Please check one of the following: Local promotion only, Online mapping sites (Trailforks, Strava), Regional Marketing Promotion, National Campaigns
8. Level of construction?
Please check all of the following that apply: Rake & Ride, Hand Built, Machine Built, Engineered
9. Can you describe the style and character of the trail?
10. What are the plans for the ongoing management of the trail?
11. Arrangements for decommissioning/reclaiming by nature should the Trails Association or other body wind up, or the trail is no longer required:

2c. Post-Storm Clearance

1. Are the trail(s) affected by the storm damage part of a 'Sustainable Trails Plan'?
 - a. If so, does your clearance plan state the 'Management Level' (Adopted, Stewardship, Tolerate & Monitor) of the trails?
2. Have you conducted an initial risk assessment of the trails affected?
 - a. If so, do you have a proposal for non-complex hand tool removal of fallen trees?
3. Location of the impacted trail(s) and initial analysis of the level of clearance required?

4. For multiple and/or complex tree clearance, do you have a Forest Works Manager (FWM) lined up to develop a report including risk assessment and method statement of the proposed clearance?
 - a. If so, name the FWM or the organisation/company who will conduct the report?
5. Do you have competent contractors who will be able to conduct the clearance after the FWM's report has been approved?
 - a. If so, name the FWM or the organisation/company who will conduct the work?

3. Attachments

Please attach a detailed map of the proposed trail corridor with the chosen section clearly marked. OS-type maps are best (clearly marked-up screengrabs are acceptable) and (if possible) supply a GPX file of the proposed trail(s)

Tick here to confirm a suitable map is being emailed along with this form ☐

Tick here to confirm a suitable GPX file is being emailed along with this form ☐

4. Declaration

By submitting this form, I confirm that the information provided is accurate and that I understand no trail digging, construction, or modification can begin until permission is granted by the land manager.

Name:

Date:

‘TRAIL MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR MOUNTAIN BIKERS’ HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE UK TRAILS PROJECT

THE UK TRAILS PROJECT, IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING:

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