

Steyping Downland Scheme

Mountain Bike Statement, February 2016

The Steyping Downland Scheme (SDS) was set up as a land-managing charity to enable people to enjoy the Steyping Downland landscape and to get involved in looking after it.

The mountain bike area was set up by local bikers and used for several years without the SDS or the landowners being involved. Later, conversations by the landowners with local mountain bikers and naturalists were the main inspiration for forming the SDS. Today the charity remains committed to encouraging people to use the land, including mountain biking and especially by young people.

Our aim is also to support walkers, horse riders and other people who enjoy using the land. In fact we have a responsibility to make sure people are not put in danger when they do.

Many local young people enjoy the biking area, but there have also been problems. These include several serious accidents where bikers have been hospitalised, and regular reports of 'near misses' with other members of the public. Some walkers and horse riders are being discouraged from using the area because of the risk of an accident. There are also important insurance implications for the SDS.

Nature conservation is also an important part of what we do. We aim to make sure that everything that happens on the land protects and enhances wildlife. Cutting down trees in an unplanned way can undermine our work to protect habitats.

We've talked with many local people who have an interest in using the land and there have been a wide range of views.

After careful consideration, the SDS Trustees and Steering Group have set out a plan to make a good environment for all users of the SDS.

We will:

1. Create two safe crossing points over The Link Bridleway, fitted with bike gates and fencing / dead hedging, no other crossings to be permitted;
2. Put up permanent signage to make clear which paths and areas are within the permitted biking area;
3. Take action to make sure there is no increase to the size of the biking area;
4. Remove the trails that are too close to the Beechers Bridleway;
5. The area below The Link Bridleway will only be used as a 'get you home' track because of the safety issues around bikes crossing The Link;
6. Remove any biking features which are considered unsafe by the SDS Trustees, taking account of guidance from our insurers;

7. Remove any new jumps or trails which have not been first agreed with the SDS Project Manager;
8. No trees should be cut down without the written permission of the SDS Project Manager.

We plan to implement these changes through 2016. Meanwhile we are very keen to work closely with all users of the site and to listen to your views. If you would like to get involved in looking after the biking area to make it an even better facility for local young people, please contact the SDS Project Manager, Matthew Thomas on:

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Thanks for reading.