

## **Quick guide to public access on golf courses**

Everyone, whatever their age or ability, can exercise access rights over most land and inland water in Scotland at any time of day or night, providing they do so responsibly. Download our quick guide to public access on golf courses from here on the right hand side.

This is for golf course managers, green keepers and committee members to explore some case studies relating to the ways other golf courses have dealt with issues arising from public outdoor access rights and responsibilities. These case studies may help you identify opportunities for better management of access on golf courses near you.

Case studies include:

- CAWDER GOLF CLUB, Glasgow.
- ESPORTA DOUGALSTON GOLF COURSE, East Dumbartonshire.
- FALKIRK TRYST GOLF COURSE, Falkirk.
- GULLANE GOLF COURSE, East Lothian.
- LOCHMABEN GOLF COURSE, Dumfries and Galloway.
- NORTH BERWICK GOLF COURSE, East Lothian.

## CAWDER GOLF CLUB

<b>Description</b>	Two parkland courses in designed landscape on urban fringe north of Glasgow, one undulating but relatively level, the other more hilly
<b>Key facts</b>	2 no. 18 hole courses: Cawder and Keir 6279 yards Par/SSS 70/70
<b>Location</b>	Bishopbriggs, East Dunbartonshire
<b>Demand for access</b>	Local walkers and dog walkers, occasional local cyclists Visitors to the area following Kelvin Walkway on foot or cycle Occasional winter ski-ing and sledging Occasional equestrian use of right of way to move between fields
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	Average 20-50 people daily throughout the year, mainly individuals, couples or small/family groups but with some larger organised groups at weekends and holiday periods
<b>Access provision</b>	- Longstanding right of way through middle of course used by walkers, cyclists, riders and golfers - Path along river flood bank around edge of golf course
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	River Kelvin. Access across river via bridge at intersection of riverside path and RoW. Opportunities for circular walk/cycle ride taking in adjacent canal towpath
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	Width and construction of bridge over Kelvin limits to pedestrian and cycling use only
<b>Access issues</b>	None, public access, golf course management and play happily co-exist
<b>Action taken</b>	➤ Ditch and hedge along right of way help define route and contain access. Joint maintenance by golf course and local authority ensures path always accessible. ➤ Tee moved during development of Kelvin Walkway to allow space for wider path along river floodbank, living willow screen planted between tee and path to minimise disturbance to players. Work initiated, designed and paid for by East Dunbartonshire Council.
<b>Keys to success</b>	❖ Provision of attractive, informal paths along key desire lines, with enjoyable views across golf course, encourage people to use these paths ❖ Lack of any restriction on public access ❖ Mutual respect between golfers and general public ❖ Positive and sympathetic response by golf course to proposals for path development ❖ Rough uncut grass areas along river banks allows area for dog fouling without need for owners to clear up
<b>Benefits</b>	Public choose to follow paths with little if any access across the golf course
<b>Lessons learned</b>	Despite prior misgivings of some members, relocation of tee and living willow screen have proved highly successful without any conflict between golf and public access, no increase in vandalism. Most people using the paths are keen to enjoy the quiet and happy to watch and wait if there is evidently play next to the path. "People out to enjoy roaming through the countryside aren't generally after causing trouble."
<b>Future plans</b>	None – maintain happy status quo

## ESPORTA DOUGALSTON GOLF COURSE

<b>Description</b>	Privately owned/run parkland course on northern edge of Glasgow, part of complex including tennis courts and health club
<b>Key facts</b>	18 hole 6040 yards Par/SSS 70/71
<b>Location</b>	Milngavie, East Dunbartonshire
<b>Demand for access</b>	Mainly dog walkers and other local walkers and residents of all ages and abilities
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	During recent core path consultation, paths around the golf course were cited as the second most popular and heavily used paths in the whole area used constantly throughout the year on a daily basis
<b>Access provision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Circular walk around edge of golf course</li><li>- Network of other surfaced paths through golf course</li></ul>
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	Off-road walks with attractive views across parkland Lochans
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	None (other than barriers to restrict illegal vehicular access)
<b>Access issues</b>	Dog fouling, dogs digging in bunkers, loose dogs interrupting play
<b>Action taken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Development of circular path around the whole golf course based on historic estate tracks as part of woodland management grant scheme. The path affords views across the golf course but is mostly through trees and/or bordered by rough grass so that dogs can be allowed off lead for most of the path.</li><li>➤ Woodland walk signed at key access points</li><li>➤ Information about history of the estate/golf course encouraging responsible use at start of walk behind club house</li><li>➤ Dog walkers asked individually to keep dogs on lead if/where problems arise and there is risk of interference with play</li></ul>
<b>Keys to success</b>	❖ Provision of attractive, well maintained circular path mirrors and wholly satisfies demand for public access
<b>Benefits</b>	Public choose to follow clearly defined path with little if any access across the golf course
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Public access provision was in part a condition of planning permission for somewhat controversial plans for building of the club house in a designated landscape setting but has proved very worthwhile for all concerned.</li><li>✓ Development of perimeter path minimises public access across the golf course and avoids interference with play or course management.</li><li>✓ Public respond best to positive provision and encouragement of public access</li></ul>
<b>Future plans</b>	If problems arise will consider erecting signs at key points to encourage dog walkers to clear up after their dogs but keen to avoid urbanising course

## FALKIRK TRYST GOLF COURSE

<b>Description</b>	Heathland course surrounded on all sides by housing
<b>Key facts</b>	18 hole 6053 yards Par/SSS 70/69
<b>Location</b>	Stenhousemuir, near Falkirk
<b>Demand for access</b>	Locals, mainly walkers, some cyclists, numerous dog walkers. Main route between schools and local housing. Very occasional equestrian access (no associated problems).
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	Very heavy demand for access with hundreds of people walking and cycling through the golf course every day, year-round
<b>Access provision</b>	Two long established rights of way pass through middle of golf course
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	Main right of way between club house and schools
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	None
<b>Access issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog fouling</li> <li>• Loose dogs interrupting play</li> <li>• Safety risks to public</li> <li>• Youths taking direct line across golf course ignoring paths/RoW</li> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Illegal use of paths by quad bikes, concern that use may spread off paths</li> </ul>
<b>Action taken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Major programme of grant-aided path upgrading in conjunction with local authority and other partners including tarmac surfacing of main right of way through golf course to redress potholes and drainage issues</li> <li>➤ Signage at all key access points and wherever rights of way cross the course to direct people along agreed paths and alert members of the public to risk of golf balls and alert players to walkers and others</li> <li>➤ Dog bins at either end of key paths with signs asking dog walkers to clear up after their dogs</li> <li>➤ Liaison with access groups, local and community police officers regarding illegal quad access</li> </ul>
<b>Keys to success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Upgrading of paths has significantly improved quality of paths for majority of users</li> <li>❖ Agreed paths easier for public and golfers to identify</li> </ul>
<b>Benefits</b>	Majority of people choose to follow clearly defined paths Surfaced paths tidier than previously
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Path upgrading will not necessarily overcome problems with vandalism and youths walking across the golf course</li> <li>✓ Extent of signage programme intrudes on character of golf course</li> </ul>
<b>Future plans</b>	None specific

## GULLANE GOLF COURSE

<b>Description</b>	Three links courses, bordered by village, Firth of Forth and SSSI nature reserve
<b>Key facts</b>	No. 1 course 18 hole 6466 yards Par/SSS 71/72 No. 2 course 18 hole 6244 yards Par/SSS 71/71 No. 3 course 18 hole 5252 yards Par/SSS 68/66
<b>Location</b>	Gullane, East Lothian
<b>Demand for access</b>	Local people and visitors of all ages and abilities on foot, with prams and pushchairs, dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders looking for variety of routes of different lengths, mainly circular but also linear coastal route and important link between Gullane and nature reserve
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	All paths used regularly daily throughout the year
<b>Access provision</b>	Network of surfaced and unsurfaced paths and tracks
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	Beach Aberlady Bay nature reserve Gullane Point Viewpoint at top of hill and on promontories
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	None – general policy of unrestricted open access for all users
<b>Access issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walkers and cyclists following main tarmac access road through workshop / maintenance building complex with consequent safety issues from vehicle movement</li><li>• Kids skateboarding down main tarmac access road</li><li>• Occasional past mountain bike damage, skidmarks on tees</li></ul>
<b>Action taken</b>	➤ Development, signage and management of preferred paths
<b>Keys to success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Positive encouragement of access on preferred paths with unlimited scope for further multi-use access on formal and informal paths</li><li>❖ Unmown rough areas remote from golf course where dogs can foul and be let off leads together with absence of litter bins or signs insisting dog owners clear up after their dogs generally minimises dog fouling problems and issues with litter</li></ul>
<b>Benefits</b>	Public choose to follow paths with little if any access across the golf course
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Active provision and encouragement of public access without restrictions or too much signage encourages mutual respect between general public and golfers</li><li>✓ When problems arise, grounds staff talk to individuals e.g. parents of skateboarders and mountain bikers which has successfully resolved issues</li><li>✓ Local access users help informally “police” golf course and encourage others to behave responsibly</li></ul>
<b>Future plans</b>	Changes to workshop area / maintenance complex planned which will overcome safety issues by preventing public access through main risk area of machinery movement

## LOCHMABEN GOLF COURSE

<b>Description</b>	Parkland course on edge of rural town wrapped around the edge of popular Kirk Loch, and including historic site of Bruce Castle within course
<b>Key facts</b>	18 hole parkland course 5933 yards Par/SSS 70/70
<b>Location</b>	Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire
<b>Demand for access</b>	Local people of all ages and abilities on foot, with prams and pushchairs Dog walkers Cyclists People visiting Lochmaben, including those staying at caravan park
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	Probably the most popular and heavily used paths around Lochmaben, used daily throughout the year from dawn to dusk, mainly individuals, couples or small/family groups
<b>Access provision</b>	Two longstanding rights of way, one around the southern perimeter of the loch, and the other along the edge/through the middle of the golf course
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	Kirk Loch Raised motte of Bruce Castle, which golfers are taken onto by tee shot on second hole, driving across the ditch/ramparts to the third hole
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	Width and construction of bridge over Kelvin limits to pedestrian and cycling use only
<b>Access issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dog fouling</li><li>• Health and safety concerns where right of way crosses golf course</li><li>• Concern about public visitors to Bruce Castle interrupting play or being hit by golf balls</li></ul>
<b>Action taken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Path up west side of golf course fenced</li><li>➤ Natural topography with raised unmown banking between lochside path and golf course encourages people to keep on the path, intermittent white marker posts help define course boundary</li><li>➤ Staggered ungated access controls where right of way crosses the golf course with warning signs to alert path users to golf in play</li><li>➤ Provision of poop-scoop bins and accompanying signs either end of right of way to west of golf course</li></ul>
<b>Keys to success</b>	❖ Provision of attractive, well maintained paths along key desire lines, with good views
<b>Benefits</b>	Public choose to follow paths with little if any access across the golf course
<b>Lessons learned</b>	Despite prior misgivings of some members, relocation of tee and living willow screen have proved highly successful without any conflict between golf and public access
<b>Future plans</b>	None

## NORTH BERWICK GOLF COURSE

<b>Description</b>	Links golf course on land owned by local authority in centre of North Berwick with heavy demand for access to beach from visitors and locals
<b>Key facts</b>	18 holes 6456 yards Par/SSS 70/71
<b>Location</b>	North Berwick, East Lothian
<b>Demand for access</b>	Local residents and dog walkers of all ages and abilities using the golf course as access to the beach and/or as the main opportunity for off-road access on their doorstep Visitors to North Berwick seeking access to the beach
<b>Frequency and volume of public access</b>	Throughout the day, throughout the year there are people walking across or through the golf course
<b>Access provision</b>	Two short paths directly across the golf course link housing/road with beach
<b>Key attractions / hotspots</b>	Beach Views across Firth of Forth Childrens' golf course nearest to housing/road used as dog toilet/exercise area
<b>Restrictions on access</b>	Various private and no dogs signs Padlocked gate in chainlink fence on western part of golf course with access restricted to golf club members and local resident keyholders
<b>Access issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public access interrupting and delaying play</li><li>• Lack of public understanding of risks, direction of play</li><li>• Visiting golfers unaware of public access or safety risks, particularly American visitors used to private country clubs</li><li>• Dog fouling. Dog owners putting used nappy bags in golf course bins on greens.</li><li>• Concern about health and safety risks, particularly at bridge across burn used by public at high tide which is blind to golfers and where public are unlikely to be aware of the risks involved</li></ul>
<b>Action taken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Starter at first tee draws players' attention to most popular public access points and associated need for caution</li><li>➤ Warning sign erected at main crossing to beach</li><li>➤ Erection of new bridge across burn on beach side of existing bridge sufficiently out of line of play to minimise any risk of golf balls inadvertently hitting members of the public</li><li>➤ Development of new fenced waymarked path along southern edge of western end of golf course between Yellowstones and North Berwick as part of John Muir Way which provides alternative to access along the beach at high tide and option of circular route in conjunction with beach access.</li><li>➤ Green staff individually redirect people walking across golf course</li><li>➤ Erection of dog bins nearest to the town, emptied weekly by local authority</li><li>➤ Liaison with local dog warden and police regarding dog fouling problems</li></ul>
<b>Keys to success</b>	❖ Liaison with local authority access officer to identify mutually acceptable management solutions
<b>Benefits</b>	New path and bridge maintain public access with reduced risk of interference

with golf or safety risks

Definition of agreed preferred path which makes it clearer to the general public where they can go without causing interference and eases management of golf course by concentrating public access along one path

- Lessons learned**
- ✓ Public access provision was in part a condition of planning permission for somewhat controversial plans for building of the club house in a designated landscape setting but has proved very worthwhile for all concerned.
  - ✓ Development of perimeter path minimises public access across the golf course and avoids interference with play or course management.
  - ✓ Public respond best to positive provision and encouragement of public access

**Future plans**                      Completion of path link to Yellowstone