

Westhill Orbital Trail – Connecting to the Countryside



Welcome to the Westhill Orbital Trail, a 12k/7.5m circuit of Westhill that joins up many routes that may be familiar to you, with a couple of new connections added at the golf course and Lawsonsedale Woods to make it truly orbital. Although much of the route is on tarred surfaces, there are three sections on rougher terrain, so please select appropriate footwear. Note too that some sections are on private tracks and roads so please observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The “statutory right of responsible public access to land” in Scotland means

- Taking responsibility for your own actions
- Respecting people’s privacy and peace of mind
- Helping land managers [farms and golf courses in this context] to work safely and effectively
- Caring for the environment
- Keeping dogs under proper control

Please ensure that you take all litter and dog poo home with you rather than leave it for others to collect later. Thank you.

The Trail was conceived by Westhill & Elrick Community Council [WECC] as a consequence of our collective lockdown experience in 2020, supported and funded by Aberdeenshire Council, gratefully aided by Westhill Golf Club, Aberdeen City Council, Stewart Milne Homes and INEOS, and created by a handful of contractors and a host of volunteers. It was officially opened in August 2021, with improvements made to the north end of Lawsonsedale over the winter of 2021/22, and further improvements to the section between Broadshade Avenue and Westhill Golf Club in May 2023, and to the main path through Carnie Woods, including a connection from Carnie Crescent car park in the autumn of 2023.

Most properties in Westhill are within about half a mile from an access point to the Trail. If travelling to Westhill by car, then there is public parking at the Shopping Centre and also at Lawsonsedale playing fields.

Here, we have chosen to start from the Gateway Sculpture [at junction of Westhill Drive and A944] and head **clockwise**. Of course, it’s also possible, if you’d like a different perspective to head in an anti-clockwise direction, so we have described that too, further down!

Please enjoy and feedback to WECC Facebook page (www.facebook.com/westhillandelrick)

From Gateway Sculpture to Carnie Woods [approximately 4.5km/2.8m]

This section is fairly flat with the first part on tarred surfaces, transitioning on to a recently laid all-abilities surface of compacted quarry material.

Starting at the Gateway Sculpture the objective is to pick up the trail on the south-east corner of Endeavour Drive [opposite Tesco’s car park] which means navigating a busy junction with only one pedestrian crossing in an anti-clockwise direction. Once there, you’ll see a Community Rest Area. Head south to the roundabout and on to Prospect Road. Turn right immediately past the bus stops

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and continue through the Business Park until you reach the end with Subsea 7 immediately in front of you. Head south-west and on to a compacted gravel path that winds through the landscaped area in front of the building until it reaches the point where it converges with a tarred path.

Follow the narrow tarred path around the SVS building to pick up the waymarker posts again on Silvertrees Drive. Turn right and follow the road around until it leads onto another tarred path that passes over a bridge and forks right. At the end of the path, turn right then first left onto Peregrine Road. There are a number of paths leading into Carnie Woods, but the main entrance is beside the lay-by immediately after passing LFF on your left. Take the path that leads down to the gated entrance. There are no waymarkers for the Westhill Orbital Trail in the woods, but lots of paths to explore and enjoy, usually to a background of birdsong and the occasional sighting of red squirrels. If heading off the main path, take care as some areas can be boggy and the stretches of boardwalk can be slippery and in need of repair or removal.

[Note that most of the conifers and many other species in Carnie Woods were destroyed by Storms Arwen and Malik in the winter of 2021/22. 6,000 saplings have been planted since, but much of the landscape, especially the middle section is still very scarred and different. Paths too were lost, but the main 1.1km route between Peregrine Road and the B979 car park was restored and much improved in autumn 2023. A new link into the woods from Carnie Crescent car park was also created, along with a new rest area with picnic benches, so that the whole experience can be enjoyed by all members of the community, including wheelers once again.]

Once you've finished exploring, head west under the high voltage cables to reach the car park adjacent to the B979 to pick up the Trail signs again.

From Carnie Woods car park via Westhill Golf Club to Westhill Drive [approx 4.2km/2.6m]

Initially on tarred surfaces and later on compacted gravel and rougher ground, this section transitions from the lowest point on the trail to the highest point.

From the Car Park head through the gate at the foot of the steps into the Carnie housing development and follow the trail signs running on the western fringes of the development and parallel with B979 to the junction with the A944 at Mason Lodge. [En route, you'll see an optional spur of 2.5 miles or so to Garlogie via Garlogie Woods and reservoir. At Mason Lodge, there's another option to head west to Kirkton of Skene and take refreshments at Bothy 57]

If sticking to the route, head east along the A944 towards Westhill and the round-about. Cross over and head north up Broadstraik Road for about 50 metres, turning left into Strawberryfield Road until it meets Old Skene Road.

As you turn left [west], there's an opportunity to call in at Green Pastures Café/Community Church for some refreshments before heading north and uphill on the compacted gravel path running parallel to the Mains of Keir Road. When you reach the top of the steps at Keirhill Way it's well worth taking a breather and looking back over to Clachnaben and Mount Battock on the southern horizon. Cross the road to take the path that skirts past a playpark and runs along the northern edge of Broadshades until just before it reaches the bus turning circle at Broadshades Avenue.

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Bear left here onto a new surface that was laid in May 2023 heading towards the high safety fence, then bear left again at the fence and go through the wrought iron gate that marks the boundary of Broadshades and the golf course. Please respect golfers by keeping still and silent if they are about to take a shot. If you have a dog, please keep it on a lead and ensure any dog poo is removed from the course. Immediately on entering the golf course, the path turns sharply left and uphill through trees/ shrubs between the boundary wall and a protective mound that screens the golfers from the path users. The path skirts round the back of the 5th tee and comes out on to the compacted gravel path between the 7th green and 8th tee. Follow this path to the back of the clubhouse. If you have social membership [annual subscription £10] you can stop here for refreshments.

From the clubhouse, head onto Westhill Heights and proceed downhill until you reach the junction with Westhill Drive. Turn left and head north along Westhill Drive, passing the sign to Hill of Keir at Blacklaws Brae and passing Meadowlands Drive to reach the northern edge of town.

From Meadowlands to the Gateway Sculpture [approximately 3.1km/1.9m]

This section is on a mix of farm tracks, pavement, grass verges and woodland paths.

At the 30 mph sign turn right and follow the farm track that runs parallel to the northern edge of Meadowlands. [Before turning into the farm track, there's an option here to cross the road and take the new path that runs between the new dog walking compound and the busy road that runs north to Blackburn. At the end of this new path, you'll have to cross the road and walk along the verge for no more than 100m or so as far as the turn-off to Beechmar Grange, then loop east and south again to join a private road that leads south to Westhill Road [the "Brodiach Road"], adding about 1.6km/1m to the overall distance.] Note that the track can be very wet after periods of heavy rain, although reinforced in the spring of 2024. From the track there are open views towards Kirkhill. The track turns sharp right then 100m later it swings left where another path from Meadowlands joins from the right. Turn right here. [The track to the left heads out into the country and leads to a network of private tracks and roads that also lead south on to Westhill Road. If heading this way, please observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.]

The trail from the farm track heads left through a playpark into Hillview Road. Turn right here and proceed for about 50m, taking the lane to the left that leads up to the junction of Hillview Ave and Hillside Crescent. Head up the grassy bank to the top of Mains of Kinmundy Hill for a rest at the stone cairn and picnic area. Take in spectacular panoramic views over the town to the surrounding hills recorded on the metal plaque, all the way from Durris in the south through a 270-degree arc taking in Clachnaben, Mt Battock, Scolty, Hill o' Fare, to Bennachie in the north-west.

Once rested, take the lane in the south-east corner of the park that leads down steps to Hillside Road and all the way downhill to eventually meet Westhill Road [the "Brodiach Road"]. There's an open grassy area here. Turn left, then look out for a lane / farm track to the right, opposite the turning to Mains of Kinmundy Farm. Take care crossing the road as you head south into the lane.

The lane passes between fields and then a small copse of pine trees before leading into the woods that screen Lawsondale playing fields. The first uphill section of this path was previously very wet

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and boggy, but was significantly improved with the help of contractors in early 2022. Volunteers have since spread quarry aggregate along many stretches of the Lawsondale paths to improve underfoot conditions. Follow an obvious trodden path that winds its way through the woods initially in a southerly direction then westerly where it runs parallel to the Brodiach Burn. In drier spells, it's possible to cross the burn about half way along this section to walk next to the field, or continue within the woods until the path joins a tarmac path at right angles. The Gateway Sculpture and "end" is visible from here.

ANTI-CLOCKWISE from the Gateway Sculpture

The Gateway Sculpture to Meadowlands [approximately 3.1km/1.9m]

From the sculpture, head down the slope to the narrow strip of woodland where you'll be faced with a choice of routes. To the right is a trodden path along a grassy strip between the burn and the field. Note that this can be wet underfoot after periods of heavy rainfall, but it leads to a grass covered bridge where you can cross the burn and enter the woods.

If you prefer walking in woodland, take the left fork and follow the path that winds its way through the woods alongside the burn. You will see signs of pruned branches and dead trees that were cut back to frame the line of the path. The two paths join at the bridge and continue in an easterly direction before turning north around Lawsondale playing fields. After a while, the path emerges from the tress and follows a farm track to the Brodiach Road.

[The private road immediately in front of you and the public road to the right take you further out into the countryside, with options to walk to Brimmond Hill or Kingswells. If going straight ahead, please observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.]

To follow the Trail, turn left then first right across the grassy open ground and up Hillside Road. Follow Hillside Road all the way uphill until you pass Craigston Gardens on the right. Take the steep steps on the right. This takes you up on to open parkland and ultimately to a stone cairn and picnic area at the top of Mains of Kinmundy Hill. Stop and admire the spectacular, panoramic view around you, over the town and all the way from Durris in the south through a 270-degree arc taking in Clachnaben, Mt Battock, Scolty, Hill o' Fare to Bennachie in the north-west. Distances and altitudes of these local landmarks are recorded on the cairn's metal plaque.

Continue north over the hill and down the steep grassy bank until you reach Hillview Avenue. Cross the road and continue downhill through the lane in front of you that connects to Hillview Road. Turn right here and proceed for 50m or so to the corner until you see a playpark and path on your left. Follow the path through the park for approx. 50m, then take the grassy track on your right, which takes you to a farm track. Turn left here, then follow the track round to the left again, taking in lovely views of Elrick Hill and open country to the north until you reach Westhill Drive.

Farm track at north end of Westhill Drive to Carnie Woods Car Park [via Golf Club] [approx 4.2km/2.6m]

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Turn left down Westhill Drive for 300m and take 2nd right up Westhill Heights. [option: take the first right and follow the sign at the foot of Blacklaws Brae up to the top of Hill of Keir where there is a scheduled monument which may also have been a Roman Fort. Note that the monument is in a field on a working farm and used as rough grazing ground in the summer months, so please observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This option will add 3.2km/2m to the overall distance]. The walk up Westhill Heights to the Golf Course entrance takes in lovely views over the golf course and town to the south. Follow the WOT signs into the Golf Club car park. Why not stop here and take in the views to the west. If you have social membership [annual subscription £10] you can stop here for refreshments.

When refreshed, head to the right of the clubhouse and down a gravel path towards the 8th tee. Please be mindful of the golfers by pausing and staying quiet if they are about to play. If you have a dog, please keep it on a lead and ensure any dog poo is removed from the course. Just after the 8th tee, the trail path branches off to the right through what's left of the copse of trees. Parts of this section used to be very wet and slippery after heavy rainfall that runs off the fields, but contractors were engaged in May 2023 to raise the path and significantly improve the drainage. Follow this well-defined path downhill behind the 5th tee skirting the Golf Course boundary. Turn right through the old wrought iron field gate and follow the path between the field and the houses at Broadshades. The new path joins a long-established gravel track near the bus turning circle. Bear slightly right onto the gravel track and continue westwards straight along this path (passing a playpark), bearing left in the north-west corner to reach the steps at the top of Keirhill Way. It's worth pausing here to take in the great views over to Clachnaben and Mount Battock to the south.

Follow this gravel path (which runs parallel with Hill of Keir Road) all the way downhill crossing over Broadshade Road and Skene Crescent on the way. At the bottom of the hill turn left onto Old Skene Road (head towards Westhill). [option to turn right to Kirkton of Skene and take refreshments at Bothy 57 looping round to join the Trail again at Mason lodge. This will add around 1.6km/1m to the overall distance]. There's another possible refreshment stop at Green Pastures Café.

Just past Green Pastures Café/Community Church cross the road and head down Strawberry Field Road. At the bottom turn right onto Broadstraik Road. Walk 50 metres down to the roundabout at the top of Carnie Crescent. Cross the A944 and walk towards Mason Lodge. Turn left at the junction and follow the tarred path down the side of the B979. After 100m there's an optional spur of 2.5 miles or so to Garlogie via Garlogie Woods and reservoir. Turn left at the end of the houses, then right to the end of Mackie Place to pick up the path leading through a gate into the Car Park at Carnie Woods.

Carnie Woods car park to the Gateway Sculpture on Westhill Drive – [approximately 4.5km/2.8m]

This section is flat and most of the route is on tarred surfaces (apart from Carnie Woods) and suitable for bikes. It is a safe route through the industrial area of Westhill.

There are no waymarkers for the Westhill Orbital Trail once you get into the woods, but lots of paths to explore and enjoy, usually to a background of birdsong and the occasional sighting of red

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squirrels. If heading off the main path, take care as some areas can be boggy and the stretches of boardwalk can be slippery and in need of repair or removal.

[Note that most of the conifers and many other species in Carnie Woods were destroyed by Storms Arwen and Malik in the winter of 2021/22. 6,000 saplings have been planted since, but much of the landscape, especially the middle section is still very scarred and different. Paths too were lost, but the main 1.1km route between Peregrine Road and the B979 car park was restored and much improved in autumn 2023. A new link into the woods from Carnie Crescent car park was also created, along with a new rest area with picnic benches, so that the whole experience can be enjoyed by all members of the community, including wheelers once again.]

Walk through Carnie Woods in an easterly direction, passing under high-voltage cables keeping the housing development then the Industrial estate on your left-hand side.

Exit Carnie Woods onto Peregrine Road. Turn right the road along until it reaches a “T” junction. Turn right onto a short unnamed road [BOSKALIS building will be on your right-hand side]. Follow the road to the turning point then bear left onto a footpath which crosses a small footbridge and leads into Silvertrees Drive. Follow this road around for approx. 200m and you will see the Trail sign pointing to a footpath on your left-hand side – which continues around the back of the SVS building. Follow this around and once you come through the opening you will see the Car Park for SUBSEA 7 building. Turn right and follow the gravel footpath around the front [south] of the building. Until you join Prospect Road.

Continue all the way along Prospect Road until it comes to a “T” junction, turn left (again on Prospect Road) heading up towards the roundabout at Tesco filling station (another BOSKALIS building on your left-hand side). Head towards the Doctors surgery, cross the road northwards towards Tesco and head down Endeavour Drive. At the roundabout turn left and cross the road via the Pedestrian crossing and head up Westhill Drive (towards the Shopping Centre). The Trail sign directs you to cross over to “finish” the anti-clockwise route at the Gateway Sculpture, but this junction can be very busy at time, so it may be safer and easier to cross at the zebra crossing.

-----End-----

Thank yous

WECC would like to record special thanks to FCC Communities Foundation and Paths for All Ian Findlay Path Fund [IFPF] [through support from Transport Scotland] for funding major surface improvements to the 480m section between Broadshade Avenue and Westhill Golf Club in May 2023, and to IFPF, Aberdeen City Council [ACC] and Aberdeenshire Council for funding the resurfacing and improvements to the 1.2km path network at Carnie Woods in the Autumn of 2023.

Thanks are also due to Aberdeenshire Council, ACC, Scottish Gas Networks, Stewart Milne Homes and Westhill Golf Club as landowners, for their support in making these improvements possible.

Finally, we must thank our team of dedicated Green Spaces volunteers for helping to create the new links in the Orbital Trail in its early stages and, since 2021, for keeping control of overhanging vegetation most of the time, and for patching uneven and/or muddy surfaces when called upon. Impossible without you!

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