

FIFE COAST PATH - Notes on multi-use access

As its name suggests, the Fife Coast Path follows the coastline of the Kingdom of Fife from the Kincardine Bridge, on the Firth of Forth, around to Newburgh, on the south side of the Tay. The terrain, path surface, landscape and the fascinating history of the villages, towns and countryside through which the path runs are very varied, with some sections across sandy beaches or climbing around rocky headlands, while others follow tarmac cycle paths, farm and forest tracks.

The Fife Coast Path was originally developed and is promoted primarily for walkers. As a result, only limited sections are suitable for multi-use. These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to help horse riders, cyclists and other potential path users identify location and brief details of sections which may be suitable for multi-use. The notes are intended to supplement the Fife Coastal Path official guide, and other information already available from www.fifecoastalpath.co.uk and other sources.

Not surprisingly, the Fife Coastal Path is very popular with walkers, most of whom don't expect to meet horses on the coast path. Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>. Riders need to be particularly careful to respect and walk quietly past others enjoying the path, or stand aside to let walkers and cyclists safely pass. Although the Fife Coast Path is waymarked throughout and generally easy to follow, it is always worth carrying a map (and making sure you know how to read it!).

All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or sections thereof, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc.

Kincardine Bridge to North Queensferry

Most of this section follows tarmac cycle path, pavements or public roads, with short stretches on farm tracks. For much of this section, the coast path coincides with the national cycle route, with few restrictions on multi-use, but some stretches are alongside very busy roads carrying a high volume of heavy vehicles. Horse riders may prefer to find alternative off-road routes. Points which riders should be aware of along the cycle route are:

Culross – OSGR NS993860 Level crossing over railway line, self-closing gates either end



Low Valleyfield: OSGR NT006063 Restricted height and percussive surface over railway bridge. Ramped path provides alternative to steps on north side of railway.



Limekilns and Rosyth: there are various barriers and bollards along this section designed to prevent illegal vehicular use of the path. All allow minimum 1.2m and usually 1.5m gap, but riders need to take particular care negotiating these barriers.



At the time of survey (September 2017), major roadworks were still ongoing west of North Queensferry around the northern end of the new Queensferry Crossing. Safety measures are not designed with horses in mind, including narrow, relatively low height barriers. The relatively narrow roads are very busy with visibility poor in places.



North Queensferry to Aberdour

The path east from Queensferry is in places narrow with occasional single shallow steps, passable with a horse, other than two 90cm gates at approximately OSGR NT135816 with a short section of stone wall either side. Some pedestrians and cyclists are skirting around the end of the wall, but space is very constrained on the western gate.



West Ness to Jamestown: metal footbridge 1.2m wide with noisy metal decking at OSGR NT134819. It may be possible to avoid this by diverting onto the quarry road (beware heavy machinery).



Aberdour to Kinghorn

The waymarked Fife coast path follows an increasingly narrow path along the coast from Aberdour harbour to Silversands Bay. West of Forth View at OSGR NT198850 a flight of steep, curved stone steps, impassable with a horse or bike, provide an alternative to the rocky paths around Hawkcraig Point. The steps can be avoided by following the ramped path which branches off at the east side of the harbour, linking directly up to the car park above Silversands Bay.



The shallow steps on the path between the upper and lower car parks can be avoided by following the tarmac road.



East of Silversands Bay at OSGR NT211859, the coast path crosses under the railway through a culvert with restricted headroom, which may be passable dismounted with a pony but not a horse. Remember that cyclists and walkers are not expecting to meet horses.



At Burntisland, horse riders are recommended to follow the waymarked high tide route along the road to avoid the steps and rocks leading onto and off the beach, and the tunnel under the railway by the old pier at OSGR NT241862.



After a stretch along the main road, at Kinghorn the waymarked coast path turns off on a minor road past the cemetery, and then down several flights of steep steps (pictured below left), impassable with a bike or horse, which link down onto the road round Kinghorn Ness to Pettycur. The alternative is to stay on the A921 and follow the alternative coast path signs on the road to Kinghorn. The waymarked path follows a contoured tarmac path down to the harbour. Numerous flights of steep concrete steps at the lower end of the path (pictured below right) make this section unsuitable for horses or cyclists. The alternative is to continue along the road.



Kinghorn to Kirkcaldy

The whole of the section between Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy is impassable with a horse and unsuitable for cyclists because of narrow gaps, numerous steps and a kissing gate at the eastern end. North of Kinghorn harbour, the waymarked path branches off the public road through a 1m wide gap in the railings into a park, followed by a low tunnel under the railway.



East of the railway bridge, the path becomes much narrower.



Most of the steps are relatively shallow and/or can be cut around to the side, but just east of Linford Court at approximately OSGR NT277880, a very steep, narrow flight of steps is passable only on foot. Metal railings alongside the railway on the north side of these steps, a wooden handrail and steep bank on the south side, do not allow any alternative.



East of these steps, the path broadens to a firm track, but two kissing gates with locked field gates adjacent restrict multi-use access. Cyclists are cutting round the western gate but have no choice other than to lift their bike over metal railings around the car park near Long Craig at OSGR NT279897, and horses cannot get past.



Kirkcaldy to Buckhaven

The signed coast path goes through Ravenscraig Park and down a flight of steps to Dysart Harbour, climbing up again from Panhall along a further set of steps.



To avoid the steps, follow the upper path through the park to the A955 and then take the road down into Dysart. The entrance to the path east of the Frances Colliery memorial is wide, but at OSGR NO308938, between Dysart and Balir Point, there are two offset barriers across the path with a gap of 1.1 m between.



There are two long flights of steep steps around Blair Point, designed for walkers rather than cyclists, and impassable with a horse.



The path east from West Wemyss follows the coast past Wemyss Castle, without restriction on cycle or equestrian use other than a 35cm wide gap between barriers where the path joins the road south of East Wemyss at OSGR NO337963.



There are two long flights of relatively shallow steps along the waymarked coast path east from East Wemyss. Cyclists are wearing a groove alongside the steps.



North of MacDuff's Castle, the coast path joins the disused railway, with a long flight of wide shallow steps at OSGR NT346974 followed by offset concrete bollards with a 90 cm gap between.



There are a further two sets of offset concrete bollards with a flight of steps inbetween at approximately OSGR NT352979, each with passing space alongside.



Lower Largo to Elie

The waymarked coast path heads east from Lower Largo along the disused railway. It may be possible to join the railway west of Temple Hill to avoid the steep steps climbing up from the shore road at OSGR NO426026, and there is an unlocked metal gate adjacent to the wooden kissing gate across the railway at the top of the steps.



However, the gate across the track at OSGR NO428025 is permanently locked with no other alternative to the narrow metal kissing gate (pictured below right).



There is a further metal kissing gate adjacent to the locked field gate across the track at OSGR NO 433024, which means the whole of this section of disused railway is inaccessible for multi-use.



The waymarked coast path leaves the disused railway line east of Carrick Villa. A set of steps leads down off the railway embankment to the dunes. The steps could potentially be bypassed down the steep bank.



The low tide option through Dunbarnie Links nature reserve runs along the beach, which apart from a short rocky section, is mainly sandy.



The high tide option, which is clearly used by mountain bikers, runs through the dunes, with some fenced sections to protect planting aimed at dune stabilisation. The only physical restriction along the high tide option is the row of coastal defence tank traps east of the bunkers at OSGR NO443021, with very restricted passing space between the concrete cubes.



The footbridge across the burn north of Ruddons Point has six steps and a long boardwalk on the northern end and is impassable with a horse. The banks of the burn are relatively shallow, especially on the north side, but the ground is boggy both sides and the burn is very flashy, so not easily forded.



The first section of path south of Shell Bay is clearly used by horses. The wooden footbridge at OSGR NO464003 has a step at the northern end. Alternative access direct off the beach involves a scrabble up a short section of rock.



A narrow beaten earth path climbs up a steep flight of steps around Kincaig Point. It may be possible to avoid the steps by following the field margin after harvest of any crop, although the eastern end of this section of path is impassable with a horse and very difficult with a bike due to steep steps.



The fence and gates around the wartime defences have been removed or opened up, but there is no alternative to the steep, narrow steps down the eastern slope leading down to Elie golf course and Earlsferry Links.



Elie to St. Monans

Most of the coast path between Elie and Ardross follows a broad path along the coast which although designed for walkers has few restrictions on other types of use other than those noted below. From Ardross to St. Monans the path becomes narrower with several sets of steps. Although not impassable with a horse or bike, other restrictions at the St. Monans end of the path make this section impassable other than potentially using the inland high tide alternative.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description
NO505004	Gabion baskets with galvanised pig netting exposed in places which could potentially puncture tyres or present a trip hazard. Beach may be an alternative at low tide



NO509008

2 short sets of 3 stone steps



NO512008
Headland
east of
Ardross
Castle

Two sets of relatively narrow stone steps, the second with a rail alongside, no space to pass alongside, tricky with a bike or horse



NO516012

Long flight of shallow stone steps



<p>NO518012 Fence above Newark Castle</p>	<p>6 steps leading up to self-closing gate, no platform or gap between top step and gate and no turning space with path fenced both sides would make this very difficult to negotiate with a bike or horse. Beware stay wires across path below steps.</p> 
<p>NO519012 Dovecote</p>	<p>Wooden kissing gate in wide section of wooden railing between windmill and fence. It may be possible to skirt around the coastal side of the windmill to avoid the gate - or follow the high tide alternative inland</p> 
<p>NO522013 Above Long Shank</p>	<p>Wooden steps in line of path, ground slopes steeply either side so no scope to avoid.</p> 
<p>NO523014 St. Monan's Chapel</p>	<p>Steep stone steps leading down to narrow path around sea wall</p>

	 <p>Further steep stone steps lead down onto stone set supporting wall at cross gradient which 'path' climbs up to narrow stone bridge. No alternative - beach below is rough slabs of rock. High tide alternative inland may be an option.</p> 
NO523015	<p>Steep narrow stone steps climbing up to narrow path between houses, up further steps onto road. High tide route provides alternative</p> 

St. Monans to Anstruther

As with most of the Fife coast path, the path between St. Monans and Pittenweem is designed and promoted for walkers rather than cyclists or horse riders. The wide whin-dust surfaced path narrows east of the windmill, in places is uneven with some rough stone steps. Some short stretches are suffering from coastal erosion (see picture below right).



East of Pittenweem, the coast path drops back down towards the shore via several flights of narrow stone steps, with space alongside limited by the gradient.



Thereafter a grass and beaten earth path runs along the edge of the golf course, before joining the road at Anstruther Wester.



Anstruther to Crail

East of Anstruther, the coast path follows a broad, firm grass track, with unlocked field gates alongside the kissing gates until meeting a succession of stiles and kissing gates which obstruct multi-use.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description
NO593053 east of Caipie	<p>Stile over stone dyke which obstructs the path with several stone steps on the east side. It may be possible to scabble over the collapsed dyke on the shore side of the stile</p> <div>  </div> <p>The next section of path east towards The Coves is wet in places, with stones laid to create a causeway</p> <div>  </div>
NO597056 West of Hermit's Well	<p>Wooden kissing gate in line of path. Fence extends down onto shore, no alternative way around</p> <div>  </div> <p>East from this gate the coast path follows a broad grassy track, with several sections of boardwalk across ditches and burns</p> <div>  </div>

NO602060

Wooden kissing gate across path, immediately followed by stone step stile over dyke. Fence and dyke extend down onto shore, no alternative way around.



NO604064

Rough rocky stone steps



NO609068
West Ness

Path splits, no signage to confirm coast path. One branch climbs steep stone steps to narrow wooden kissing gate leading onto broad farm track.



1.2 m metal bridlegates alongside several locked field gates on track.



Narrow gap alongside locked gate at eastern end of track at OSGR NO610071

	
NO610071 Westland Skelly	<p>Coast path (signed from eastern end) follows lower beaten earth path to kissing gate followed by stone steps leading up onto road</p> 

Crail to Kingsbarns

There are no physical obstructions between Crail and Kilminning Coast Wildlife Reserve, but the first section follows tarmac path through a public park and then runs through a caravan park, which is not ideal for multi-use. Beyond this, kissing gates, stiles and steps make it unsuitable for use by cyclists or horse riders.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description
NO631086	<p>Narrow wooden kissing gate in march boundary between caravan park and wildlife reserve</p> 

NO634091

Narrow wooden kissing gate



NO635092

3 flights of narrow uneven stone steps, easily passable on foot but not with a bike or horse.



NO636095

Stone steps



NO638097

Wooden steps



NO619108

Stone steps



NO619109

Wooden stile, beyond which promoted path climbs over rocky beach (impassable at high tide even on foot)



NO612113

Stone steps in wall leading from beach/field onto golf course, no alternative



NO602125

Wooden kissing gate from golf course track onto public car park



Kingsbarns to Boarhills

Between Kingsbarns car park and Hillhead, the only physical restriction to multi-use access is a single flight of stone steps at OSGR NO593140.



However, cyclists and horse riders would need to be particularly careful using the path through the golf course, and be aware that the path north around Airbrow Point and Salt Lake is narrow.



North of Salt Pans, the broad grass track ends at a locked gate/fence into private property at Hillhead, OSGR NO580142, beyond which the waymarked coast path is impassable with a horse and very difficult with a bike. Steep, narrow stone steps lead down onto a path along the south bank of the Kenly Water.



The gates at Hillhead are (quite legitimately) locked so the only alternative would be to use the track west of Salt Lake and then follow the busy A917 to Boarhills.

At NO574139 there is a further flight of steep stone steps along the waymarked coast path, followed at OSGR NO574139 by a footbridge with steps either end.



Boarhills to St. Andrews

The track from Boarhills to Buddo Rock is multi-use accessible, with an unlocked metal field gate alongside the stile over the dyke at OSGR NO562151, but between Buddo Ness and East Sands at St. Andrews there are countless flights of steep, narrow steps which are a challenge for some walkers and impassable with a horse or bike, and several wooden footbridges with steps either end.





Some of the waymarked coast path along this section is accessible only at low tide, involving a scrabble over the rocks, challenging for walkers and impassable with a bike or horse. At one point a plastic handle is provided to help haul yourself up the rocks. Further access restrictions and hazards along this section include a chain across the beach in the line of rusty metal fence posts.



There is a narrow wooden kissing gate across the path at OSGR NO539155, followed by steep narrow stone steps round to the Rock and Spindle, followed by more stone steps and a stile north of the sewage works



Numerous further slights of steep, narrow steps and a narrow path are cut into the cliff around Kinkell Braes and Maiden's Rock. From the caravan park, a broad whin-dust surfaced path leads down to East Sands, including a long flight of shallow steps and a single short flight of steeper steps.



Signs suggest that cycling is strictly prohibited along the path around East Sands

St. Andrews to Leuchars

Most of this section is on tarmac cycle path parallel to the road, with a minimum 1.2 m and usually 1.5 m between any bollards or barriers installed to prevent illegal vehicular use, other than at Guardbridge (OSGR NO452189) where the gap between the metal barriers on the west side of the bridge over the River Eden is only 1.1 m (pictured below left). The alternative is to cross the river on the A91. West of the river at Guardbridge, the waymarked path and cycle route runs between houses, with a 1.2 m gap between a barrier and fence (pictured below right), further constrained by the lamp-post immediately before. The alternative is the A919.



Leuchars to Tay Bridge

Between Leuchars and Tentsmuir Forest, the Fife Coast Path is signed and promoted specifically for walkers. Restrictions on multi-use are identified below. Although passable with a horse or bike, riders and cyclists are recommended to follow the minor road from Pitliehie to Tentsmuir. The waymarked coast path through Tentsmuir Forest is fully multi-use accessible, there is ample parking east of Kinshaldy, and a wide variety of other tracks offering scope for circular routes.

At Comerton, east of Leuchars, 1.5 m bridlegates allow multi-use access but horses usually graze across the track. At NO473216, where the path branches off the wide track, there are two 1.2 m self-closing gates, although the passable width is reduced by the latch mechanism and is a relatively tight squeeze for a horse. Beware holes in the middle of the fenced path immediately north of the second gate (pictured below right).



A series of 7 wooden boardwalks have been installed across the very marshy ground south-east of Wards, designed for walkers rather than horses. In places there are missing or broken decking boards.



On the east side of Tayport, the coast path follows the tarmac road through Tayport Links caravan park. This section is signed for walkers and cyclists. Horse riders enjoy the same rights of access, but to avoid dunging issues may prefer to follow the minor road which runs parallel.

West of Tayport harbour, the coast path follows a stone surfaced path. Width is constrained to 90cm between stone walls on one bend, which together with the steps along the waymarked path can be avoided by following the minor road which runs parallel towards the lighthouses.



The waymarked coast path follows the old railway line west from West Common, north of the cemetery and then a purpose built tarmac path parallel to the B947 west to the Tay Bridge. Both of these paths are in principle entirely suitable for multi-use but narrow gateways – even where the gates have been removed – allow a maximum 90 cm gap, in some cases further constrained by protruding gate hinges. The only alternative is the very busy B946.



Wormit to Hazelton Walls

Part of this route, north of Scurr Wood, is used by horses, but multi-use of the rest of the coast path along this section is restricted by kissing gates and steps.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description
NO388257	<p>Narrow hooped metal kissing gate</p> 
NO381257	<p>Narrow hooped metal kissing gate</p> 
NO476218	<p>3 flights wooden steps, top flight step and narrow. The steps can be avoided by skirting uphill around the gorse, but beware horses grazing field</p> 
	<p>70 cm gap between offset wooden barriers/fence rails at foot of 3 flights of wooden steps. Horses grazing this field climb the steps, but barrier at top with 60cm gap between rails.</p>

		
<p>NO376255</p>	<p>Narrow hooped metal kissing gate in line of path, no space to bypass</p> 	
<p>NO366254 North of Kirkton</p>	<p>Long steep flight of steps. Potential bypass on track into Kirkton</p> 	
<p>NO355246 West of Balmerino</p>	<p>Flight of steps from beach onto woodland path</p> 	

NO353244
Taylor Den

Wooden bridge over burn, shallow steps up bank on western side. Gradient of banks limits scope to ford burn.



NO351 243
Cuttle Den

Wooden bridge over burn. Ford immediately adjacent downstream.



NO341238

Short wooden bridge. Trees restrict scope to ford burn



NO346239

Several further short wooden bridges, path narrow in places but passable with care with a horse or bix.



Brunton to Newburgh

This section is mainly along farm and forestry tracks, with a short section of 1.5 m grass path enclosed between fences either side above Old Higham. There are gaps or 1.5m self-closing bridlegates in all of the fences, and alongside the locked vehicular gates across the tracks.

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