

## 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 Lawsondale Woods to make it truly orbital. Although much of the route is on tarred surfaces, there are four 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, 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.

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 Lawsondale 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](http://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. Carnie Woods has some sections of boardwalk due for replacement and some sections that can be muddy at times, so care is needed.

**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, head south to the roundabout and on to Prospect Road. Turn right immediately past the bus stops 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 here, but lots of paths to explore and enjoy, usually to a background of birdsong and the occasional sighting of red squirrels.

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 Carnie estate and follow the trail signs running 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 Broadstrak 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. 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.

Bear left here onto a grassy track 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, turn sharply left to join a path that has been cleared through the trees/ shrubs next to the boundary wall. The path skirts round the back of the 5<sup>th</sup> tee and comes out on to the compacted gravel path near the 7<sup>th</sup> green. Follow this path to the back of the clubhouse. If you have social membership [annual subscription £5] 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 exit from 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 track that runs parallel to the northern edge of Meadowlands. [there's an option here to keep walking out along the verge of the busy main road for another quarter mile as far as the turn-off to Beechmar Grange, then loop east and north again to join a private road that leads south to Westhill Road [the "Brodiach Road"], adding about 1 mile to the overall distance.] From the track there are open views towards Kirkhill. Note that the track can be very wet after periods of heavy rain. 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. If heading this way, please observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.]

The path leads 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 picnic table and take in spectacular panoramic views over the town to the surrounding hills, all the way from Durriss 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. It can sometimes be wet at the entrance after spells of wet weather, so look out for the “drier route” sign. You now 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 this 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 a picnic table 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.

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 for approx. 50m then take the grassy track on your right, which takes you to a farm track. Turn left, 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]**

Turn left down Westhill Drive for 300m and take 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 this is also a field on a working farm and used as rough grazing ground in the summer months. At time of writing Scottish Water’s contractors are still on site at the top of the hill, so access may be problematic occasionally. This option will add two miles to the overall distance] Walk up this tarred road to the Golf Course taking 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 for refreshments and take in the views to the west, or drop into the clubhouse for coffee or lunch (booking and social membership required)?

When refreshed, head to the right of the clubhouse and down a gravel path towards the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> tee, branch off to the right through the trees on a grass path. Parts can sometimes be wet and slippery after heavy rainfall that runs off the fields. Follow this well-defined path down behind the 5<sup>th</sup>tee skirting the Golf Course boundary. To the right go through the wrought iron gate which leads along a grass track behind the houses at Broadshades. The grassy track joins a more formal gravel track near the bus turning circle. Bear slightly right onto the gravel track and continue straight along this path (passing a playpark), bear slightly left to take you down 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 1mile 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.

Walk through Carnie Woods following the well-trodden path in an easterly direction, passing under high-voltage cables keeping the housing estate then the Industrial estate on your left hand side. There are no waymarkers for the Westhill Orbital Trail here, but lots of paths to explore and enjoy, usually to a background of birdsong and the occasional sighting of red squirrels. Take care as some areas are boggy and some of the boardwalk is due for replacement.

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's filling station (another BOSKALIS building on your left-hand side). Head towards the Doctors surgery, cross the road northwards towards Tesco's 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 at the Gateway Sculpture, but this junction can be very busy at times, so it may be safer and easier to cross at the zebra crossing.