

Go Ape Forest Segway at Dalby Forest, Pickering, North Yorkshire

SUPPORTING STATEMENT / Design + Access Statement

Introduction

Dalby Forest is a popular multi-use forest situated within the North York Moors National Park. Close to the park's southern boundary the forest lies approximately four miles North East of Pickering. The Low Dalby area of the forest is an important recreational hub with the impressive Visitor Centre and associated facilities including parking, toilets and refreshments. A short distance north of this, along Dalby Forest Drive is the site of the Go Ape Tree Top Adventure.

Go Ape is the multi award winning provider of high ropes adventure courses within the UK and has successfully operated one of its popular Tree Top Adventure courses at Dalby Forest since 2007. In that time an excellent working relationship has been established between Go Ape and the Forestry Commission. Go Ape are committed to improving the range of activities that are on offer within the forest and so it was with this in mind that Go Ape worked closely with the Forestry Commission to establish a 'Forest Segway' experience within Dalby Forest, which families and individuals of all ages who visit the forest could enjoy.

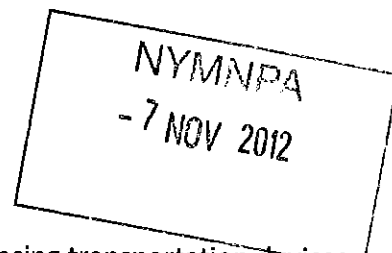
This retrospective application is for full planning consent for the various elements of infrastructure that were built in order to run the 'Forest Segway' experience successfully. The scheme was discussed with the Planning Team at North York Moors National Park Authority before any works began.

Background to Forest Segway

What is Forest Segway?

Segways are environmentally friendly, two wheeled, self balancing transportation devices... The devices used for the 'Forest Segway' activity are the off-road version, fitted with rugged tyres they are built to be able to handle a variety of uneven terrain, perfect for forest trails¹.

'Forest Segway' is the name of the activity operated by Go Ape that gives people the opportunity to use these two wheeled devices to explore parts of the forest they might not normally have visited in a unique way that is both fun and challenging.



¹ See Appendix 1 for an image of an off road Segway used for the 'Forest Segway' activity.

How did the activity come about?

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Forest Segway was first developed after a year's trial at Thetford Forest, Suffolk. The trial was so successful that the Forestry Commission put out to tender the opportunity to set up and run a number of Forest Segway operations at their sites across England. Go Ape with 10 years experience of bringing accessible adventure to over 3 million people and the experience and knowledge of doing this in often remote and important locations, including National Parks and AONBs won that opportunity and have now successfully brought Forest Segway offerings to eight sites across England including at Dalby². With almost three years experience of operating Forest Segway Go Ape are confident they have an activity which will enrich the recreational offering within the forest.

How are the sessions run?

Forest Segway is run like other Go Ape activities on pre bookable sessions that last for one hour. The first 10 to 15 minutes of each session are a safety and training brief that take place in a purpose built 'Training Area' (one of the infrastructure elements which will be described later). During the brief, participants are introduced to the Segway devices individually before being set off on 'laps' of the training area to increase their confidence further. Before anyone leaves the training area our instructors make sure all participants are competent on their Segway device. The group, which can be a maximum of 14 (two instructors for groups over 7), then set off on an instructor led 'safari style' tour of the forest, using the network of existing trails and some newly created sections of trail (to be described later) all of which have been agreed with the Forestry Commission.

Participants never take their Segway devices anywhere within the forest unsupervised. The frequency of the sessions varies depending on the time of year and demand. Sessions are normally every hour and a half. However if there is demand during the peak summer season then sessions can be run every hour.

Who can use Forest Segway?

Forest Segway is offered to anyone over 10 years old and weighting between 7 (45kg) and 19.5 stone (125kg). All that is required is that participants are sure on their feet and able to comfortably stand for at least 60 minutes.

² See Appendix 2 for a map of the existing sites offering a Forest Segway activity.

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Do Segways conflict with other Forest Users?

The Forest Segway experience at Dalby has been operating since March 2012 and there have been no reported cases of conflict between Forest Segway and other forest users. This has also been found to be true at the seven other sites where our Forest Segway tours are operating. Across the different sites we have experience of operating Segways on all kinds of terrain and trails and alongside all different types of forest users including families, hikers, dog walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders. There have not been any conflicts with any of the various groups.

It is important to remember that the tours are instructor lead. The instructor sets the pace and will stop or slow the group when appropriate for other forest users, to offer advice, warn of any upcoming hazards and of course let the group experience the views and other unique aspects of the forest.

The speed of the devices is controlled by the instructors. Two settings are used during Forest Segway sessions; each limits the maximum speed the devices can travel. In training mode the maximum speed is 7.5mph and at our full speed setting the maximum is 10.5mph. The initial ride out of the training area is always in training mode and whenever instructors feel it appropriate or when previously agreed with the Forestry Commission groups can be put back onto training mode, perhaps around busy areas or where a known obstacle exists. All Segways are brought back to the training area after each session and each device's unique operating key is removed to a safe place.

What infrastructure is required to operate Forest Segway?

Consideration must be given to the following infrastructure in order to successfully operate the activity:

- A secure and dry storage space capable of storing 20 Segway devices alongside helmets, paperwork, tools and other associated items.
- A reception point where participant's can be greeted, necessary paperwork can be completed and Personal Protective Equipment issued.
- A training area where participants can become confident using the devices. This should also have an outdoor electrical charging station so that the devices can be trickle charged throughout the day to ensure they have enough battery life for all sessions.
- Trails suitable for the devices to travel along.

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Details of the Forest Segway Infrastructure at Dalby Forest

The above elements will now be described with specific details regarding the infrastructure that was built at Dalby Forest³.

Segway Store

Our experience at the other seven sites had shown us that the best storage solution for the devices was a small 20ft x 8ft shipping container⁴. The metal containers offer the necessary security for the devices and the size and construction mean these containers can easily be placed in often remote settings without the need for foundations which would be required for other buildings. To minimise the impact of the store on the surroundings the container was custom fitted so that once finished it would bear little resemblance to a shipping container. A 'normal' door and reception window was fitted on to one of the long sides of the container and the whole container was then clad in larch planks and stained dark brown to match the existing Go Ape reception cabin. The overall effect is that of a small wooden cabin which does not look out of place within this woodland setting⁵. The Segway Store also acts as the reception point for the activity.

Location of the Segway Store

In deciding on the location for the Segway Store a few important points had to be considered:

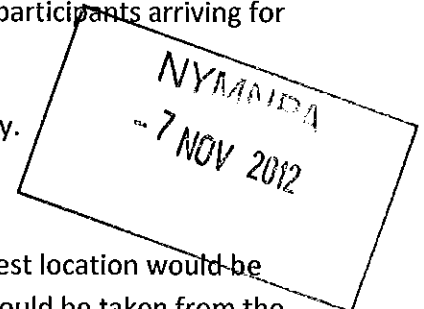
- The need to minimise any impact of the Segway Store ecologically or visually.
- Proximity to the training area for moving the devices between the two locations.
- Proximity to the existing Go Ape cabin to avoid confusion for participants arriving for the activity.
- The ability to connect the Segway Store to an electricity supply.
- Ease of delivery and installation of the Segway Store.

After discussions with the Forestry Commission it was decided that best location would be the area of grassy scrub next to the Go Ape reception cabin. Power could be taken from the existing cabin by way of a short spur so not having to dig large new trenches in order to lay electricity cable. The ecological value of the patch of grass was minimal with no discernible

³ See the attached 'Go Ape Dalby Segway Trails 1:1250 Location Plan' to see the various elements in the context of the wider site.

⁴ See the attached 'Go Ape Dalby Forest Segway Store Floor Plan & Front Elevation 1:50'.

⁵ See Appendix 3 for an image of the Forest Segway Store at Dalby Forest.



species or features. The site required a small amount of landscaping work. A small amount of material was removed from the bank and the area was made level in order that the Segway Store could be correctly located. The spoil from the excavations was used to raise and make levels parts of the training area. The location meant the Segway Store could be delivered on the back of a lorry and easily lifted into place by the small crane mounted on the vehicle. This meant there would be no negative impacts of accessing the location, such as damaging earth or having to remove trees. The area already had the existing Go Ape cabin and so it was decided that a new building which closely resembled it would not look out of place in the locality.

Location of the Training Area

As stated earlier the training area is an important part of operating Forest Segway as it is where participants get to grips with their two wheeled devices in a safe and purpose built environment. Like the Segway Store there are a few points that must be considered when deciding the location for the training area:

- As always minimising the impact of such developments on the surroundings and the ecology.
- The area ideally needs to be cleared and a suitable surface created.
- A location close enough to both the Segway Store and an electrical cable from which a spur could be taken off so that an outdoor charging station can be built to allow the devices to trickle charge throughout the day (even more essential at Dalby due to the steep terrain which drains the batteries more than at other sites).
- A location that allowed appropriate access to the suitable trails within the forest.

After discussions with the Forestry Commission it was decided that the patch of grass next to the existing Go Ape reception cabin, where the Segway Store was to be located would also offer the most appropriate location for the training area⁶. The proximity to the Segway Store gave a practical solution and meant the electrical spur could easily be extended again without the need for major trenching work. The area was not important ecologically and the position meant Segways could easily access the network of forest trails by way of the forest track up to Snever Dale that was close by. The spoil removed from the bank to make room for the Segway Store was used to give a uniform and gently sloping profile to the training area. Having a slight gradient as opposed to a completely level surface ensured large quantities of material were not removed from the bank and it gave participant's a

⁶ See the attached 'Go Ape Dalby Segway Container 1:500 Block Plan'.

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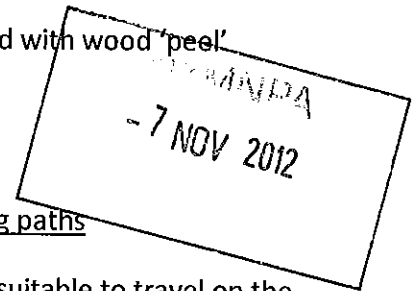
taste of using the devices on an incline, a useful experience as many of the trails they encounter are not flat.

Details of the Training Area

Once the most suitable location for the training area had been decided the training area was then designed around the space. In the end the training area is approximately 200m² including the space within which the Segway Store is located and the outdoor charging station positioned. A post and rail fence stained dark brown to tie in with the other built features of the site surrounds three sides of the area for the safety of the participants⁷.

Along the northern edge of the training area to the west of the Segway Store is a simple shelter under which a number of electrical hook up points are positioned to allow the Segway devices to be trickle charged throughout the day, whilst providing some protection from the elements⁸.

The training area surface is simply the natural underlying soil covered with wood 'peel' sourced locally from within Dalby Forest itself.



Details of the newly constructed Segway paths and improved existing paths

The off road Segway devices used for the Forest Segway activity are suitable to travel on the majority of trails within the forest, where the Forestry Commission have granted permission to do so. However in order to improve the flexibility of the session and give more diversity to the style of trail that participants were travelling on it was necessary to improve some short sections of existing trails, to make them suitable for Segways, and to construct a new trail more akin to a mountain bike trail that would challenge participants. Discussions regarding the trails took place with the Forestry Commission beforehand and all underwent the Forestry Commission's internal review process to ensure the suitability of each trail and flag up any potential problems before any construction work took place. All the improved and constructed trails are within the Sneverdale Rigg area of the forest⁹.

Three different construction/improvement techniques were used for the trails depending on the state of the trail to begin with and the underlying geology in that area. The three techniques were:

- Scrape – the top layer of earth was removed to reveal the hard surface of stone underneath.

⁷ See Appendix 4 for an image of the Training Area at Dalby Forest.

⁸ See Appendix 5 for an image of the Outdoor Charging Station.

⁹ See the attached 'Go Ape Dalby Segway Trails 1:1250 Block Plan'.

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- Invert – the earth was dug down to a layer of suitable stone material that could then be flipped over so that the stone sat on top creating a suitable surface.
- Stone – used when the geology below did not offer any suitable material close enough to the surface to either be scrapped back or inverted. An appropriate amount of earth was removed and then stone infill added to create a suitable trail.

When stone was used to infill areas of the trails it was either sourced from the vicinity or was local limestone scalping brought from a local quarry.

Trail 1

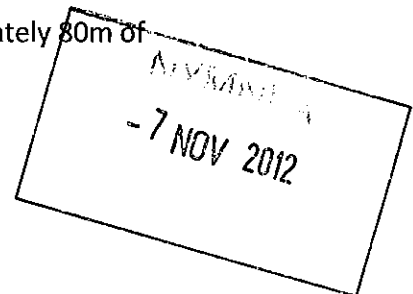
This was the newly constructed path¹⁰. The total length measures approximately 500m. The path is 1500mm wide for the full length. All three techniques were used for its construction. Approximately 120m was inverted, 230m was scraped back and 150m of new stone was brought onto site.

Trail 2

A well used path it needed minor improvements to make it suitable for Segways¹¹. Approximately 20m of the path needed stone infill. The remaining 230m was just scraped back.

Trail 3

Already a well used desire line, this short section of path needed approximately 80m of stone laying down to make it suitable for Segway use¹².



Here's what our Dalby customers had to say about Forest Segway

Hardwick, David

The staff were very friendly and helpful. They were patient with our group who had not been on Segway before.

Burns, Phil

What a great experience! Been looking forward to Segway for a long time and it didn't disappoint. The training was good and gave you confidence. Can't wait until the next Segway adventure.

¹⁰ See Appendix 6 (a) for images of the completed Trail 1.

¹¹ See Appendix 6 (b) for an image of the improved Trail 2.

¹² See Appendix 6 (c) for images of the improved Trail 3.

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»»»»» Simpson, Helen

Brilliant fun on a great course through the beautiful forest at Dalby. Very organised and efficient which maximised the time you got to spend on the Segways.

»»»»» Dobinson, Jane

Very well organised, we felt very safe and well looked after. Both the helpers (Nial and Sarah) were very professional and gave us both confidence to go for it straight away. A very enjoyable experience.

»»»»» Peare, Justin

Really great fun, lovely welcome and staff very friendly, one of my daughters struggled a little with the Segway but the staff were very helpful and kind to her. Overall a thoroughly enjoyable time. Thanks.

»»»»» Beckerleg, Angela

brilliant experience for both myself and my two 16 year old boys.i would certainly do it again and it was extremely enjoyable.would highly recommend giving it a go.

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