

SETTLE HARRIERS

Environmental Statement and Guidance

At Settle Harriers, we're lucky to have the beautiful Yorkshire Dales as our training ground. As a club whose membership is growing, it's important that we have an awareness of the landscape we're running through, particularly on club runs and during races, when our behaviour as a group can have a significant impact on the wildlife and ecology of the area. We can further minimise our negative environmental impact by reducing car use as a club and promoting less car use at our races.

Furthermore, we're lucky to have many club members who have considerable expertise in the fields of ecology and conservation, who are always happy to share their knowledge and promote wider appreciation of the wildlife of the Dales when running.

The club has established an Environmental Group comprising members with interest in this area and/or specialist skills and experience. It is hoped that as our Environmental Group evolves, Settle Harriers can become known as a club with strong environmental values and practices.

Issues within the scope for consideration by the group include:

- Protected sites
- Flora and fauna
- Erosion
- Geology
- Dogs
- Livestock
- The local community
- Club races

Protected sites

There are many areas through which we regularly run, which have designated protections (such as SSSI, SAC and others) due to their particular ecological importance. Run leaders and race organisers can seek guidance on these from one of several club members who have specialist knowledge in this field (e.g. John Osborne)

When running through these sites we should take extra care of the following:

- Sticking to established footpaths and trods so as to avoid disturbing or damaging the habitat (this may mean running in single file in places)
- Take particular care not to run through or damage wildflowers – some of these, while locally abundant, may be nationally scarce or vulnerable
- Be mindful of ground-nesting birds, and avoid running through known nesting sites from March – August (see below)
- In some cases, it won't be appropriate to take dogs onto protected sites

Flora and fauna

Wildflowers: as mentioned above, our local area is home to a huge variety of wild flowers and other plants, several of which are extremely rare. While some of these may have been identified as

featuring in the protected sites, they are also present in the wider area and great care should be taken when running through areas where wildflowers are present.

Ground nesting birds: our corner of the Yorkshire Dales is an internationally important breeding area for several species of ground-nesting birds, notably the curlew, golden plover, redshank and lapwing amongst others. Some of these are red-listed as vulnerable and their numbers are in steep decline. We should do our best to avoid disturbing them during the critical breeding months, so that they have the best possible chance of protecting their young until they fledge. If possible, we should avoid running altogether from March – August on sites that are known to host ground-nesting birds. At any point during breeding season, we should avoid running *en masse* across open moorland or other likely nesting ground, instead sticking to established paths and keeping any dogs on a short lead and under close control (or better still, leaving them at home).

Erosion

While we all love a racing line, we also have a duty to not cause unnecessary damage to the landscape. Erosion isn't just unsightly but is bad for habitats and ecosystems and is very costly and time-consuming to repair. We can all do our bit by observing these guidelines:

- Stick to the established paths on steeper ground, particularly if it is sparsely vegetated, bare soil, peat or scree.
- Running alongside the path may feel better underfoot, but in time is just going to result in wider and wider paths, so avoid doing this wherever possible.
- Flagstones have been laid for good reason – to keep people off the peat, or in places that are under high pressure like the 3 Peaks path. Although they're not nice to run on, it's especially important in these areas that we're not adding to damage that has been done historically.

Fragile geology

The limestone vistas we take for granted around here are actually really rare and are host to a unique assemblage of plantlife. We can do our bit to protect the limestone pavement by not running directly across it, which in any case is likely to end in tears/broken ankles.

Dogs

Settle Harriers' Dog Policy recognises the negative impact dogs can have on wildlife if they're not under control. All dogs on club runs should be in line with the policy – on short leads only; check with run leader if it's suitable for dogs before turning up. And it goes without saying that all dog poo needs to be taken home.

Livestock

Although not strictly an environmental issue, it's worth remembering that the Dales is a working landscape and we need to do our bit not to cause problems for farmers:

- Be calm when moving through livestock – especially important during lambing season so as not to cause distress to pregnant ewes (stress can cause them to abort).
- Always leave gates as we find them.
- Keep dogs under close control around livestock and avoid taking them close to pregnant ewes (see above – a dog running towards sheep is still perceived as a

threat even if it's on a lead and not actually a threat – the sheep doesn't know the difference).

- If a gate needs to be climbed, do it at the hinges as it will do less damage, and avoid climbing over dry stone walls.

The local community

We can minimise disruption – and our carbon footprint – by car-sharing as much as possible when meeting for runs and travelling to races. Facebook is the starting point for this; there are also some lift-sharing WhatsApp groups being set up by regular Monday and Wednesday runners.

Settle Harriers Races

The club is beginning to explore ways of encouraging car-sharing, and alternatives to car travel, to get to races. Some ideas which have been suggested:

- Offering a discount/incentive for runners who arrive in a car with at least 2 other runners in it;
- Publicising train times as part of pre-race info (3 of the 4 club races can be reached by train)
- Offering prizes to runners who've travelled the furthest by public transport/bike
- Offering somewhere safe that bikes can be left during races

Approved by Committee 14 August 2025