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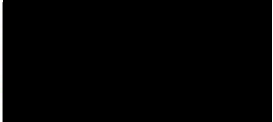
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Forest District Manager

Michael Wall

Mr Niall Thompson
Chairman
Carron Valley Development Group



Ref: ENV21/70
7th June 2004

Dear Niall

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS AT CARRON FOREST

As promised, this is to confirm our discussions of 2nd June.

Forestry Commission Scotland is committed to the promotion of outdoor recreation on the national forest estate. We recognise that over the last year the Carron Valley Development Group (CVDG) has shown resourcefulness and dedication in the gradual creation of a circuit at Carron Forest. Your course is being established under an official 'permission' which we have renewed for a year but which does not currently give any security beyond that time.

The CVDG has made a case for the development of a nationally significant mountain bike course at Carron, which led to our meeting. I am also aware that you have had discussions with Robert Hunter of Stirlingshire Council, which has offered some practical support toward the construction of the first trail.

Forestry Commission Scotland is receiving numerous requests from all parts of the country to support new mountain bike courses in national forests. Resources are limited and clearly our support has to be carefully targeted. We are also concerned that new facilities do not detract from the success of the centres already established at Glentress, across the south west of Scotland and at Fort William. I am advised that the various national funding partners take a similar view.

You argued that the existing centres address the local tourism market, and so do not cater for visits which people would make to a much more local venue. In your view Carron Forest is ideally situated to attract people that do not have time, transport or the desire to travel long distances to Fort William or Glentress very



frequently. Carron also offers a long forest ride to those that might take the trouble to cycle-in some distance from the conurbations to the south. Whilst not discounting this suggestion, we consider that it has yet to be proved and as such our concern remains not to compete with the existing courses.

Over the coming months, Forestry Commission Scotland will draft a national strategy for the guidance of new mountain bike developments on the national forest estate. If you wish to make representations regarding Carron, I will be pleased to forward your details. Until we have an agreed national position, I am unable to support any feasibility study on a new mountain bike course at Carron Forest. We must further recognise that Carron Forest may not be identified in the national strategy as a primary mountain-bike investment location, although that cannot be ruled out.

On a more positive note, we do recognise that in addition to the nationally significant mountain bike centres there are likely to be more restricted regional or local ones fulfilling a specific need. These will include local 'community' led initiatives such as the course that the CVDG are now constructing.

Our view is that the opportunities for all types of major outdoor recreation need to be considered at a regional level, potentially within a Campsie / Touch Hills study, and I am discussing this with Stirlingshire and North Lanarkshire councils.

Additionally, during this year Forestry Commission Scotland will draft a local recreation strategy for Carron Forest, that will be informed by both the FCS national position and any Campsie / Touch Hills study. Our local strategy will seek to show how we can support walkers, family cyclists, mountain bikers, horse riders, husky sleds racers, rally drivers, Clan fort visitors and so on. We agree that all appropriate recreation activities should be catered for, whilst reconciling conflicting demands. Our local strategy will be the subject of stakeholder consultation and your views will be welcome.

Considering the foregoing points, we will give practical support towards the completion of your first course, which I understand amounts to some three miles, of which about one half will follow forest roads. We will:

- a) provide a proportion of your stone and other materials requirements, which would ideally be matched by other partners, such as the councils.
- b) contribute FCS machinery and staff when available in the area.
- c) include the mountain bike course in any recreation funding scheme that we may secure for Carron Forest, in accordance with the local Recreation Strategy.
- d) provide a three year license for the construction and subsequent use of the course, which will give the CVDG greater security of tenure, albeit with provision for temporary closure etc. This will of necessity include the



transfer of elements of public liability for use of the course following approved commissioning. Before issuing this license we will

- e) review the exact route to confirm that it is unlikely to be severely affected by forest operations in the foreseeable future.
- f) consider linking some dead end roads with un-surfaced tracks where feasible, to increase the opportunities for longer distance biking along the extensive forest road network.

The completion of the existing course should provide the means to show that there is a demand for mountain biking at Carron Forest and that this can be satisfied without undesirable impacts at Carron or elsewhere.

We look forward to making steady progress and I hope that, like me, you found our meeting helpful.

Yours sincerely



Michael Wall
Forest District Manager

Copy to:

Mr Robert Hunter, Stirlingshire Council
Ms Cathy Johnstone, North Lanarkshire Council
Ms Rena Tarwinska, DF Community & Environment
Mr Andy Gallacher, C&E Ranger, Carron Forest

