

# West Central Scotland Cycling Feasibility Study

## Brief

14 February, 2005

### **Introduction**

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley (and potentially Argyll and Island Enterprise) are commissioning a feasibility study into the potential for socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable cycling facilities across four forest districts: Cowal and Trossachs Forest District, Lorne Forest District, Scottish Lowlands Forest District & West Argyll Forest District.

### **Background**

FCS has become the market leader in forest cycling in Scotland. Internationally renowned facilities have been developed in Fort William and Glentworth. Currently there are no national or regional level cycling sites in West Central Scotland and there is increasing pressure for development to both meet the needs of local cyclists, develop local economies and to provide additional recreation provision to the large populations in central Scotland. The purpose of the feasibility study is to ensure that future cycling provision in the West Central region is considered on a strategic level to ensure maximum impact from any resources invested. This study will inform the emerging FCS Scottish Cycling Strategy and support partners' investment decisions.

The potential locations for the developments are:

Cowal and Trossachs Forest District

1. Trossachs (centred on David Marshall Lodge)
2. Ardgartan
3. Glenbranter (possibly twinned with Ardgartan)
4. Dunoon

Lorne Forest District

5. Glen Orchy to Crianlarich
6. Oban Area (Fearnoch & Barcaldine)
7. Glen Coe & Glenachullish

Scottish Lowlands Forest District

8. Arran
9. Carron
10. Kelty

West Argyll Forest District

11. Knapdale
12. Kilmichael
13. Inverary

A summary of the main issues can be found in Appendix 2 and a map of the sites are in Appendix 3.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- a) Determine the potential market for each of the 13 areas above. This should be considered in the context of the emerging cycling provision in Scotland.
- b) Determine the socio-economic impact for each of the 13 areas.
- c) Evaluate each site in terms of potential visitor experience (driving time, views, forest structure, quality of trails, available facilities)

- d) Consider the scale of development applicable for each of the 13 areas above. This should be on the scale: Nationally Important, Regionally Important, Locally Important and finally Not Suitable for Development.
- e) Consider the type of customers and therefore trail type most appropriate for each site.
- f) Identify the potential for public investment in cycling infrastructure to encourage private sector investment in associated facilities.

#### **Issues to Consider**

- Public road access
- Requirement for additional facilities such as extra parking, Bike Shed, Café & Changing facilities
- Existing local infrastructure (catering, accommodation, bike-hire/ repairs)
- Social and economic benefit to the local economy
- Points of interest (views, variety)
- Forest structure (variety of species, age range, open space)
- Robustness of sites (terrain, soil types)
- Potential for variety of routes / abilities
- Linkage to other facilities in West Central Scotland
- Potential market and customer profile
- Relation to other cycling facilities in Scotland
- Potential conflicts of interest (other recreation uses, conservation, harvesting, neighbours)
- Refer to “Towards a Cycling Strategy for Scotland” [http://www.forward-scotland.org.uk/about\\_us/publications.cfm?uuidPublication=02C647B5-2B33-DE5E-DC88B604E987DF83](http://www.forward-scotland.org.uk/about_us/publications.cfm?uuidPublication=02C647B5-2B33-DE5E-DC88B604E987DF83)
- The strategic fit of cycling in partners wider priorities

#### **Key tasks to be covered in the report**

- I. Put the study into the context of the market for Scottish biking and other adventure activities. Consider the question of displacement and the impact this might have for the viability of existing facilities which FCS and others have invested in.
- II. Consider the scale and priority of development of cycling development in central west Scotland.
- III. Survey of the potential forests listed above, analysis and recommendations for the best location(s) with regard to the issues listed above.
- IV. There has been incredible growth in cycling and in particular mountain biking. The study should consider whether this growth is sustainable, are we missing potential customers and what the implications might be if there was some form of downturn in the activity and or the economy.
- V. Feedback on local consultations with regard to the proposals and, showing support or otherwise for the recommended location(s).
- VI. Developed outline options which could allow phased programme of project developments including facilities and related infrastructure with trails of varying, cost the construction of the projects in terms of capital and revenue and identify potential sources of income and other funding contributions.

#### **Timescales, Reporting:**

The proposed deadline for the final report is 30 June. The management of the study will be by Stuart Chalmers at Cowal and Trossachs Forest District. A contact list is provided in appendix 1.

## Appendix 1 – Contacts

### Main Contact for Feasibility Study

Stuart Chalmers  
District Forester Environment  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Cowal and Trossachs Forest District  
Aberfoyle  
Stirling  
FK8 3UX

Tel 01877 382383  
Mobile 07764 838 736  
Email: [stuart.chalmers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.chalmers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### Cowal and Trossach Forest District

Stuart Chalmers  
District Forester Environment  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Cowal and Trossachs Forest District  
Aberfoyle  
Stirling  
FK8 3UX

Tel 01877 382383  
Mobile 07764 838 736  
Email: [stuart.chalmers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.chalmers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### Lorne Forest District

Elaine Jamieson  
District Forester FM & E  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Millpark Road  
Oban  
PA34 4NH

Tel 01631 566155  
Email: [Elaine.Jamieson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Elaine.Jamieson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### Scottish Lowlands Forest District

Rena Tarwinska  
District Forester Communities and Environment  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Braxfield Road  
Lanark  
ML11 9BU

Tel 01555 660190  
Email: [Rena.Tarwinska@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Rena.Tarwinska@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### West Argyll Forest District

James Bickley  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Whitegates

Lochgilphead  
PA31 8RS

Tel 01546 602518

Email: [James.anderson-Bickley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:James.anderson-Bickley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Other FCS Contacts**

1. Alan Stevenson, Communities, recreation and tourism Manager  
Tel 01463 232811  
[Alan.stevenson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Alan.stevenson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)
2. Fiona Murray, Forest Tourism Initiative Manager  
Tel 0131 314 6140  
[Fiona.murray@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Fiona.murray@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)
3. Karl Bartlett, 7stanes Project Manager  
Tel 01387 272440  
[Karl.Bartlett@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Karl.Bartlett@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)
4. Steve Williams, Senior Information Officer  
Tel 0131 314 6508  
[Steve.Williams@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Steve.Williams@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Non FCS Contacts**

- Glasgow Mountain Bike Club (Peter Siebelt) [petersiebelt@ntlworld.com](mailto:petersiebelt@ntlworld.com) - 0141 563 3260
- Wheels Scottish Cycle Centre (Mark Schimidzu) - [scotcycle@](mailto:scotcycle@) - 01877-331100
- Mid Argyll Mountain Bike Club
- Stirling Mountain Bike Club
- North Ayrshire Council Arran Access Officer Andrew Fyfe
- Carron Valley Development Group (esp mountainbiking) – Niall Thomson Chairman  
[niallt@](mailto:niallt@)
- North Argyll Cycling Club
- Scottish Natural Heritage (Ross Johnston) [Ross.Johnston@snh.gov.uk](mailto:Ross.Johnston@snh.gov.uk) - 01786 450362
- Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley (Paul McCafferty)
- Argyll & Islands Enterprise (Steven Dott) - [s.dott@hient.co.uk](mailto:s.dott@hient.co.uk) - 01546 605426
- Sport Scotland
- Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (Bridgett Jones – Access Officer)  
[bridget.jones@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:bridget.jones@lochlomond-trossachs.org) - (01389) 722600
- Argyll & Bute Council
- Stirling Council (Robert Hunter Countryside Development Officer 01786 442751  
[hunterr@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:hunterr@stirling.gov.uk)) for Carron
- North Lanarkshire Council (Mark Forrest, Planning & Environment 01236 616251  
[forrestm@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:forrestm@northlan.gov.uk)) for Carron
- Fife Council (Economic Advisor in Tourism Development Services  
[alison.laughlin@fife.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:alison.laughlin@fife.gsx.gov.uk) 01592 413908) Also Donald Murdoch, Environment & Implementation 01383 852879 ext 29 [donald.murdoch@fife.gov.uk](mailto:donald.murdoch@fife.gov.uk).
- Dounans Scottish Outdoor Centre
- Benmore Outdoor Centre
- Ardroy Outdoor Centre

## 5. Appendix 2 – Main Issues with each site

Location	Issues
1. Trossachs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Bike report produced by Pete Laing in 2000 identified high potential for area.</li> <li>• Pressure from Glasgow Mountain Bike Club to develop site. Trail develop by club used annually for races.</li> <li>• Currently mix of uses in the area may lead to conflict.</li> <li>• Steep terrain give potential for technical cycling and excellent views.</li> <li>• 2.4 Million people within one hours drive.</li> <li>• Main cycling provision on forest roads</li> <li>• On route of National Cycle Route 7</li> <li>• Current customer base at David Marshall Lodge is mainly family groups.</li> <li>• Within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park</li> <li>• The recent strategic development framework produced for Callander, which identified the town's aspiration to be the activity centre of the Park</li> </ul>
2. Ardgartan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area already attracts outdoor pursuits lovers.</li> <li>• The Ardgartan peninsula already used for cycling</li> <li>• Area was identified as a potential cycle area, twinned with Glenbranter, routes identified.</li> <li>• Within one hours drive of a large population from Glasgow. High volume of traffic pass centre.</li> <li>• FCS looking at potential over next year to further develop the Ardgartan visitor centre. This has the potential to encourage people to visit FCS forests in Cowal, West Argyll and Lorne.</li> <li>• Within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.</li> </ul>
3. Glenbranter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First FCS mountain bike specifics route to be developed in next year.</li> <li>• Area was identified as a potential cycle area, twinned with Ardgartan, routes identified.</li> <li>• The development of mountain biking in this area was seen as a way to bring a new client base to the Cowal area – which is currently seen as the most under visited area of the National Park.</li> <li>• Within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park</li> </ul>
4. Dunoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of over 10,000 live in the Dunoon area.</li> <li>• Dunoon is seen as a priority area for development and regeneration.</li> <li>• Ferry links from Gourock to Dunoon, Portavadie - Tarbert &amp; bus service from Dunoon to Inverary which links in with Oban, Lochgilphead &amp; Dalmally.</li> <li>• Dunoon is the "Gateway to the West" and the marine gateway to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park</li> </ul>
5. Glen Orchy to Crianlarich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a strong community drive in Strathfillan (Tyndrum &amp; Crianlarich</li> <li>• Bridge of Orchy lost its primary school last year and so seems to be becoming more fragile.</li> <li>• Glen orchy is already a focus for outdoor activity drawing on the Glasgow area population. FCS have a cycle trail in the Glen which has further potential, car parking is an issue as is any mention of increased traffic through the glen.</li> <li>• The river is also well used by fishermen and paddle sports. The community has expressed an interest in a walking/cycling link through the glen.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last year saw an investment in mountain access to a Corbett in the Glen.</li> <li>• Part of the zone is in the NP and there are already plans in motion for a long distance cycle route.</li> <li>• Glen Orchy already has high and at times conflicting use. A focus around Crianlarich or Tyndrum would therefore be appropriate, with long distance trails linking to the Glen eventually.</li> </ul>
6. Oban Area (Fearnoch & Barcaldine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fearnoch has great potential but is not immediately associated with a population. To reach this site with bikes hired from Oban or Taynuilt would require travelling with bikes on cars. The village of Fearnoch is small and may be unable to support business opportunities.</li> <li>• Barcaldine is already the focus for the newly formed North Argyll Cycling club. A local issue of mtb / walker conflict at Beinn Lora has meant that FCS staff have had to put in a lot of effort to get them to this stage. A community project will develop a site in Barcaldine; this will not preclude further development.</li> <li>• Both of these areas are just off the main road and between 15 and 30 mins from Oban.</li> </ul>
7. Glen Coe & Glenachullish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an area which already attracts the outdoor type so developments here would prove very popular. However a top class facility already exists about 30 mins away at Fort William.</li> <li>• There is already a small local demand showing itself in unauthorised construction of jumps etc.</li> <li>• The community council is very active and Glencoe Development Company has recently been formed and are taking forward the 'Glencoe orbital' project - to allow low level, accessible path links around the village and safer access across the main road.</li> <li>• Brecklet forest design plan is close to approval and this is adjacent to an NTS site which already has a number of the facilities which would allow a project of this sort to flourish- Campsite with large turn over, parking, toilet facilities etc.</li> </ul>
8. Arran (Glenrickard)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popular island with good transport links</li> <li>• County roads often narrow, winding with stone walls either side; very busy in summer</li> <li>• Road cycling already popular with day visitors</li> <li>• Community group looking to develop cycling routes on island, including through forest.</li> <li>• Local bike club working with FD on small scale</li> <li>• Forest within easy cycling distance of ferry</li> <li>• Outdoor pursuits heavily biased towards walking; opportunity to diversify</li> </ul>
9. Carron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community group (CVDG) recently successful in getting £30K for development of mountain bike route.</li> <li>• Clanranald (historical re-enactment group) building replica medieval fort and toilet block at forest carpark</li> <li>• . Workshop January 05 of interested parties and agencies recognised potential for development for recreation &amp; tourism economy. List of short, medium, and longer term work in CV now being prepared.</li> <li>• 2.8 Million people within one hours drive</li> <li>• Carron Valley still to reach its recreation potential</li> <li>• Remote, highland atmosphere with hills surrounding large reservoir (Scottish Water) and river</li> <li>• Nationally important upland species present eg red squirrel, black grouse,</li> </ul>

	mountain hare
10. Kelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest from Fife Council to develop forest as part of economic regeneration project for Kelty area.</li> <li>• Within easy reach of Edinburgh, so potential to relieve pressure from Glentress</li> <li>• Assessment by 7stanes trailbuilder done Nov 04 saying scope for trail</li> <li>• Immediately adjacent to Junction 4 on M90</li> <li>• Potential to develop other forest-based interest eg history of coal mining from monks in 12thC via deep mines to OCC of today; designed landscape adjacent to home of Adam family world-famous 18<sup>th</sup> &amp; 19thC architects and designers</li> </ul>
11. Knapdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £34K CED Funding in place for feasibility study and trail development.</li> <li>• Pressure and support of Mid Argyll Cycle club</li> <li>• Wide variety of terrain types, outstanding views to the inner Hebrides creates a ‘wow’ factor much sought by riders.</li> <li>• Support infrastructure in the immediate area is good with a local cycle shop for repairs etc and a range of cafes, restaurants and accommodation to suit different budgets.</li> <li>• Community groups and Argyll and the Isles Enterprise are strongly supportive and see tourist infrastructure development locally a priority.</li> <li>• The scale of forests means that any user conflicts can and have been easily resolved through zoning.</li> <li>• The area is a Scottish centre for surfing and a UK centre for sea kayaking. There is cross-over between these sports enthusiasts. When conditions don't allow surfing/kayaking enthusiasts ride bikes.</li> </ul>
12. Kilmichael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As Knapdale</li> <li>• Facility development has been carried out already in Kilmichael in concert with Mid Argyll Cycle Club resulting in approx 5km of excellent single track.</li> <li>• New trails getting alot of use from local riders and also riders coming in from outwith the area. Trail development has stimulated increased sales of bikes locally. Any further developments and increase in visitor numbers would be of significant socio-economic benefit to the area and would be well received.</li> </ul>
13. Inverary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inveraray has good transport links and is a major tourist destination locally.</li> <li>• The FD has a deficit of recreation facilities in the Inveraray area.</li> </ul>





Forestry Commission  
Scotland

### West Central Scotland Cycling Feasibility Study



Cycling Locations by Forest District

-  Cowal and Trossachs
-  Lorne
-  Scottish Lowlands
-  West Argyll
-  Forest District Boundaries