

MSP LAUNCHES CENTRAL SCOTLAND'S FIRST PURPOSE BUILT MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

Central Scotland's first purpose built mountain bike trails were opened at Carron Valley, near Kilsyth, North Lanarkshire, today (27 March) by the MSP for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, Cathie Craigie.

Over 9km of trails catering for all abilities of rider have been constructed by volunteers from the Carron Valley Development Group (CVDG) working in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council, Stirling Council and Forestry Commission Scotland. The professionally designed and constructed trails located within Carron Valley Forest offer an excellent recreational opportunity to the local community as well as thousands of residents living within the Central Belt.

Opening the trails, Mrs Craigie said:

"I am delighted to be opening the Carron Valley mountain bike trails. Mountain biking is an increasingly popular sport in Scotland, encouraging people to pursue an active lifestyle whilst enjoying the wonderful countryside around them. The sport is also attracting many tourists to the country who come to enjoy the many challenging and exciting trails we have to offer.

The Carron Valley trails are ideally positioned to ensure that both the local community and visitors from further afield will benefit from them. Excellent transport links, coupled with a variety of other attractions nearby, will help drive the economic development of the area.

Given the tremendous work that has been done in partnership in their development, I am confident that the trails will become a firm favourite with all who use and visit the forest."

Local biking volunteers formed the Carron Valley Development Group in 2003 to develop sustainable mountain bike routes in Carron Valley and have been the lead group involved with the project. As a recognised Scottish charity, the group has worked relentlessly to secure over £90,000 funds and engage support from a range of organisations to make their primary goal a reality.

David Russell of CVDG said:

"We are delighted with the new trails and look upon our achievements over the last three years with immense pride. We have invested literally thousands of hours in this project – from clearing and preparing areas in the forest to securing funding and contractors to help us achieve our primary goal. The trails are superbly designed and constructed and offer "big country" biking without the travelling often associated with other MTB centres. We hope this is just the beginning of something big in Carron Valley that will bring lasting economic and health benefits to the population of the Central Belt.

Of course, all this would not have been possible without the support of the partnerships we have formed with North Lanarkshire Council, Stirling Council, Forestry Commission Scotland and our funders.

Personally, the icing on the cake is the look on people's faces when they ride the trails for the first time – invariably its smiles all round! "

Mark Ruskell, Green MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife and Convener of the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Cycling, added:

"I am delighted that all the hard work has paid off and the trails are now going to be officially launched. There is a dearth of mountain biking facilities in the Central Belt and the Carron Valley is going to be a great hub for the development of the sport close to where the bulk of Scotland's population actually live. I am looking forward to trying out the trails on my mountain bike at the launch, in particular the fun park."

The Carron Valley trails comprise red-graded trails for intermediate riders and an ungraded 'fun park' trail, located near the Eastern car park of the Carron Valley Forest. The forest is situated close to Kilsyth and Stirling, within one hour of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Perth. It is also on the doorstep of areas with the poorest health records in Scotland. Another asset of the location is that the forest is readily accessible from nearby transport links from Kilsyth, Denny and Stirling.

To find out more about CVDG visit www.carronvalley.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1) A range of organisations helped the development of the Carron Valley trails. Supportive quotes are listed below.

"Scottish Cycling is delighted to support the launch of the Carron Valley mountain bike trails. Cycling in all its forms can play a key role in improving the health of the people in this country. And facilities such as this can play a key role in that. They are also important for the development of young riders as we seek to build on Scotland's success at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and bid to host the Games in Glasgow eight years from now."

"We wish the volunteers who have worked so hard to bring the Carron Valley project to fruition every success with the venture and hope that it will succeed in its aim of attracting new riders - whether social or competitive - to our sport."

Jock Shaw
President Scottish Cycling

"We are delighted to have been able to support this fantastic project which will provide such exciting exercise opportunities for people of all ages, enabling them to keep fit and active, and gain a range of important new skills and experiences."

Dharmendra Kananito
Director for Scotland, Awards for All

"SNH has been really happy to support this project which has created a great place for getting active in the outdoors in the Carron Valley. We've been particularly impressed by the commitment and drive of the Carron Valley Development Group volunteers, whose efforts have turned a good idea into a first-rate mountain biking facility."

Alan McDonnell
Scottish Natural Heritage

The project was supported by the Lomond & Rural Stirling LEADER+ Programme, a European programme of funding to support pilot and innovative projects.

"We were delighted to contribute funding towards the bike trails in the Carron Valley as we could see how the project would connect businesses and communities to the natural assets of the area, which is one of our LEADER+ Programme's main objectives. We have been extremely impressed with the Carron Valley Development Group's management of the project and the quality of the completed trails, and wish the group well for their future plans for the Carron Valley."

Anne-Michelle Ketteridge
Lomond and Rural Stirling LEADER+

"North Lanarkshire Forward is delighted to support the development of this ambitious new facility. We have been impressed by the dedication of the development group in driving the whole process. The trail is a much needed facility that will be appreciated by all those that currently enjoy active outdoor pursuits in the area but may also encourage others to embrace a more active lifestyle."

Frazer Scott
North Lanarkshire Forward, c/o Forward Scotland

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