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To: niall
Subject: Official Report extract

Hi Niall

Cathie asked me to send you the following extract from 11th May's Official Report, for your information.

Recreation and Tourism (Forests)

7. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what recreational and tourism opportunities are being encouraged in Scotland's forests. (S2O-9784)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): Our forests are an important part of the Scottish countryside, which appeals to many of our visitors. To build on that appeal, a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities are encouraged in forests, including walking, cycling, picnic sites, camping, wildlife viewing and water sports. Art, sculpture, music and theatre are additional attractions for visitors.

Cathie Craigie: Obviously, a lot more is going on in our forests than just taking care of trees, which is a good thing.

The minister will be aware of the tremendous work that is undertaken in my constituency by a group of volunteers in the Carron valley forest, who work with Forestry Commission staff to provide an excellent mountain bike trail. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to come to the launch of the trail, but I look forward to receiving her written response to the event.

Will the minister ensure that positive partnership working exists at every level of the Forestry Commission? That is important with regard to not only local authorities but voluntary groups that are willing to get involved. The Carron valley mountain bike trail is in an excellent location in central Scotland and is well placed to exploit the beauty of that area and encourage tourism. It would be an ideal location—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Is there a question, Ms Craigie?

Cathie Craigie: It would be an ideal location, should Glasgow be successful in its bid for the 2014 Commonwealth games, which I am sure it will be. If mountain biking is in—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but there must be a question.

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Cathie Craigie: Will the minister promote the Carron valley as a venue?

Patricia Ferguson: I, too, was disappointed that I was unable to attend the launch of the trail. I look forward to meeting the volunteers and the agencies that are part of the partnership that made that biking experience possible. I hope to visit the Carron valley mountain bike track during the summer recess. Such partnerships are important.

Although most of us would accept that a certain amount of rough and tumble will be involved in mountain biking, there have been a number of serious accidents recently on Forestry Commission land. It is correct that the Forestry Commission, local authorities, volunteers and others working at those sites should be conscious of the risks and give all due consideration to them when promoting the sites.

I am delighted that the Carron valley mountain bike route is now on the Forestry Commission website and I am sure that it will prove to be a great attraction to people from around the country and abroad. It is something else that we can add to our portfolio of places where people can mountain bike, all of which have contributed towards Scotland being accorded global superstar status by the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

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