

Michael Matheson MSP



The Scottish  
Parliament

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007

Mr Niall Thomson

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*Dear Mr Thomson,*

Please find enclosed a copy of correspondence received from the Minister for Environment, Michael Russell MSP on the issue of the mountain bike trails at Carron Valley Forrest.

You will note from their response that the new Government together with FC Scotland and the various agencies are currently developing a strategic framework for the development of mountain biking in Scotland.

The Minister fully appreciates that you wish to develop the plans at Carron Valley as quickly as possible. With this in mind he has asked FC Scotland to meet with your group in order to see what can be done to move your project forward and they should be in touch with your group in the near future.

I hope this is helpful.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Michael Matheson MSP  
Falkirk West Constituency



## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Minister for Environment  
**Michael Russell** MSP

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*Handwritten initials*

- 2 JUL 2007

Dear 

### **MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS DEVELOPMENT AT CARRON VALLEY FOREST**

Thank you for sending me the e-mail you have received from Mr Thomson on behalf of the Carron Valley Development Group. I have looked into the concerns which have been raised.

I very much concur with the views expressed by Mr Thomson regarding the success which the advent of the mountain bike and the development of specialist mountain bike trails in Scotland has brought to tourism and those seeking to participate in recreational activities. This fits very well with our desire as a government to develop Scotland as a wealthier and healthier place.

FC Scotland has been at the forefront of the development of bespoke mountain biking facilities and is very conscious of the desire of the mountain bikers to have more such facilities across the country. Success in mountain biking has brought new challenges to FC Scotland, particularly around the issue of balancing mountain biking requirements with their responsibilities for managing all types of recreation and other aspects of management of the national forest estate. The question of liabilities under the landowners' 'duty of care' is a particularly important issue for FC Scotland and of course resources are not unlimited. There is a need therefore for prioritisation of new investment and to ensure that developments are sustainable into the future in terms of maintenance and economic benefits.



The future success of the activity depends on joint working involving a range of public bodies and representatives of the mountain biking fraternity. A group of public bodies comprising the Scottish Executive Sports Division, VisitScotland, EventScotland, SportScotland, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise is working with FC Scotland and the sports governing body, Scottish Cycling, to develop a strategic framework for the development and future success of mountain biking in Scotland. The group anticipates completing its work by the end of the year and I expect that one of the outcomes will be a clearer strategy for development of mountain biking facilities.

In the meantime, of course, I fully appreciate and understand the frustration felt by members of the Carron Valley Development Group who want to get on and develop something new. I understand that this group is not alone in seeking the development of more mountain biking trails on the national forest estate.

Development of trails on the estate by other parties is something which FC Scotland is happy to consider, but needs to do so in the context of legitimate concerns about integrating this activity with other activities within the forest, ensuring that the trails are of an appropriate standard, that there are rigorous health and safety management procedures in place and that the developer will be able to provide assurances about future funding, management and maintenance of the trails. If the Carron Valley Development Group can satisfy these requirements, then FC Scotland will be happy to work with the group to make this happen.

I have asked FC Scotland to meet with the group and to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the opportunities and constraints and a clear pathway for moving things forward in a constructive way which recognises the aspirations of the group, while respecting the legitimate concerns of FC Scotland.



MICHAEL RUSSELL

