

Whinlatter Forest, Keswick, Cumbria

Mountain Bike Trail Business Plan



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Whinlatter Forest Mountain Bike Trail Project

1. Introduction

In the beginning there was a frustrated mtb-biker, a worried forest Recreation Manager, and a lot of illegal and dangerous trail development. The mtb-biker sought out the recreation manager to enquire why, having spent nearly £1,350 on a new bike, did he have to drive for three hours to find any decent purpose built single track when he lived so near to some of the best Forestry Commission terrain in England? The Recreation Manager explained that there was a lot going on with an Osprey development programme, the re-build of a visitor centre, and general forest management to find time to provide the concerted effort necessary to develop any mtb trails. In fact, there had been discovered a number of illegal trail building east of Cockermouth and in Whinlatter that appeared rather dangerous; any chance of taking a look and providing an expert opinion?

So, over the summer of 2002 generic research began into a mtb development programme based upon purpose built single track trails at Whinlatter Forest. Early in this process a meeting took place between the researchers, the Recreation Manager, the Recreation Ranger, and the Lake District National Park Authority Area Ranger. At that meeting clear agreement was reached on the potential of Whinlatter as a mtb trail venue, taking into account access and use constraints. This meeting informed the need for both a more detailed study and a phasing of any development process.

There is a well documented history on where, with whom, and how the expertise in other areas has been achieved, the lessons that have been learned, the expertise that has been acquired, and the proven benefits that such projects bring. The latest and largest illustrations of this are the Seven Staines Project across forests in Southern Scotland and the Dalby programme in the North York Moors National Park.

In essence, the development of purpose built mtb trails across Forestry Commission sites has been lead by a number of mtb enthusiasts who were, and in some cases still are, Forest Enterprise employees. They utilized volunteer expertise, opportunistic commercial sponsorship, and revenue from the noticeably increased visitor spend.

A successful model began to evolve, across a variety of forests over a number of years, where mtb singletrack trails, now designed to recognised national and international standards, were being constructed to allow mountain bikers of varying standards to co-exist safely with other users of the forest without adversely affecting each other's activities, enjoyment, safety, or the environment. The economic and social diversity, through retail to service, that this attracted to deeply rural locations has created new businesses and stimulated many moribund communities. This regenerative function is now the leading driver of recent mtb development programmes across the UK, as it most closely ties the three elements of sustainability together. Monies are now being made available, for strategic intervention projects using mtb trails, by the Welsh Assembly, European Regional Development Funds, and Rural and Regional Development Agencies.

The development of mtb singletrack trails in forests around the UK has identified the complexity of project management, financial planning, and multi-user access requirements. Wishing to benefit from these experiences, Forest Enterprise commissioned a Feasibility Study, in association with The Cumbria Rural Development Programme and the Lake District National Park Sustainable Development Programme, so that an in depth survey could be made of Whinlatter Forest to map a network of mtb trails, that would satisfy all design and constraint requirements, *prior to any decision to embark upon a development programme.*

The Whinlatter Mountain Bike Trail Feasibility Study (App'1) established the viability of creating a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable mtb trail development programme, designed around securing the appropriate levels of investment to support the following elements:-

- A Whinlatter Users Forum for participation, consultation, and support
- Sustainable singletrack trails, skills loop, and freeride sections
- Facilities at the trailhead with bikeshed, bike hire, spares, changing facilities, café and extensive interpretation

Following extensive consultation, the Forestry Commission endorsed the recommendation to proceed, acknowledging that further detailed impact assessments were required into:-

- the specific design requirements of a series of potential mtb trails of varying standards between 1km & 46km in length,
- the environmental impact of such trails,
- the traffic management options,
- the potential economic implications, and;
- the identification of all technical detail necessary to support planning, funding, construction, water extraction and disposal applications

This Business Plan presents the data and processes required for the development of the proposed mtb trails at Whinlatter Forest.

Sustainable development is characterised by suitably detailed planning, an inclusive consultation process that welcomes and values contributions from all interested parties, realistic impact assessments, adequate management, and risk minimisation.

2. Market need

By 2005 the UK cycle market is projected to exceed 3m units worth £5b (CTC/Bicycle Association/Association of Cycle Traders press release, April 2001) with 66% estimated (1994 statistics) to be mountain bikes (www.bikebiz.co.uk). According to the British Cycling Federation, in '98, there were approximately 10,000 mountain bikers who compete on a semi-regular basis growing to 20,700 registered participants in the 138 mtb events in 2002 (www.bikebiz.co.uk). Sustrans estimates that the demand for cycle tourism trips could increase by up to 10 percent a year for the next ten years (www.bikebiz.co.uk) with 72% of leisure cyclists considering that "traffic-free cycle routes are the most important facility..." (Transport Implications of Leisure Cycling, G. Gardner, Transport Research Laboratory, 1998).

The majority of riding demand is now seen to be taking place on purpose built mtb singletrack, at specialist mtb centres, providing the necessary range of infrastructure facilities; car parking, bikeshed, gender specific changing, café, &c.

The Forestry Commission is the leading UK provider of outdoor recreational opportunities and has successfully led the field in providing mtb singletrack development programmes. Their acquired managerial expertise, along with the land resources they hold, place them at the forefront of any location choice; providing a managed and contained environment, suitable terrain, and a primacy towards safe multi-use.

There is no state-of-the-art purpose built mtb site in the Lake District as a result of which mtb riding occurs in the area on wild trails, bridleways, or illegally constructed specialist routes often built to lower technical standards with inadequate safety requirements. This produces three particularly adverse features:-

1. a low level of coordinated mtb activity which leaves many visitors unsure or unaware of their options when they are not staying long enough to be motivated to acquire the necessary skills or knowledge to ride 'wild' trails
2. a consequential increase in illegal riding either through ignorance or frustration, which produces disproportionately high levels of civic disruption, erosion, and injury
3. an inability to introduce adequate managerial procedures to ameliorate the majority of these difficulties and increase the levels of social inclusion

Also, it has been graphically demonstrated elsewhere (App'2), that the market need is so great that it amounts to a continuing missed regenerative opportunity for the Lake District not to have used mtb trail development as a sustainable tourism offer. With the nearest purpose built mtb trails being located between two & three hours commuting distance from the area, many mtb-bikers are simply driving past or considering a visit elsewhere thus depriving the area of vital revenue.

This demonstrable need to have a purpose built singletrack mtb trail network in the Lake District where mountain bikes can be ridden to an approved challenging standard whilst not endangering the safety of other forest users or the natural habitat is now widely accepted as a major regenerative function across all major Strategic Authorities.

3. The Cumbria Strategic Context

The Government's Rural White Paper (RWP), published in 2000, sets out a vision for rural areas which incorporates a living countryside with thriving rural communities, access to high quality services, a working countryside with a diverse economy giving high and stable levels of employment.

Cumbria in particular was devastated by the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) which played havoc with rural communities and their economies. Following FMD, the recovery programme envisaged

through the Cumbria Rural Action Zone (RAZ) requires that due consideration be given to the principles of the RWP. There are a number of regional initiatives which support RAZ, for example; the Regional Rural Recovery Plan, which seeks among other things “to renew and strengthen tourism”; the Market Towns Initiative which seeks to “target resources on rural service centres and their hinterlands - to increase the regeneration impact where required”; The Rural Cumbria Economic Development Zone which contains four objectives, viz:-

- Assist the economic repositioning of rural businesses, including their diversification,
- Building on the interdependence of the rural economy by increasing the contribution to tourism in the rural economy,
- Stimulate the economy of market towns,
- Enabling the engagement of rural communities with the regeneration process.

Furthermore, a Vision for the Rural Action Zone “Next Steps” Strategy was proclaimed (which remains the same as that defined at the outset of the RAZ) and states:-

“To enable the rebuilding and development of a dynamic rural economy for Cumbria, which is financially, socially and environmentally sustainable”;

and, in order to remain consistent with the Regional Renaissance Framework, the thematic proposals were translated into strategy objectives. Amongst these objectives are the following:-

- To renew and strengthen recreation and tourism,
- To deliver social and community regeneration.

The proposals contained within this Business Plan study deliver on a *significant* number of the strategic objectives in Rural Renaissance, regional, and sub-regional programmes as outlined in the following Programme Matrix.

PROGRAMME	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE / AIM	OPPORTUNITY FOR WHINLATTER MTB TRAILS
RURAL MATTERS – AN UPDATE TO THE CUMBRIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2000	SA 1 – maintaining and increase the contribution which tourism can make to the area’s rural economy, jobs & income SA4 – stimulate active community involvement in the development and management of rural development initiatives	Direct & in-direct benefits to rural economy from creation of new tourism product that will promote repeat visits, open up a new visitor group and operate throughout the close season. Opportunity to engage the local community as part of the Whinlatter Users Forum & Trail Support Group and to partner with the Keswick Town Partnership
RURAL CUMBRIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE	Objective 2: To build on the interdependence of the rural economy, by increasing the contribution of tourism in the rural economy whilst at the same time enhancing the area’s natural heritage by; developing new forms of cultural, heritage and environmentally based tourism within rural Cumbria, which respects and enhances the existing environment for which Cumbria is justifiably world renown	Provision of a new environmentally based tourism activity within rural Cumbria which respects and enhances the existing environment
RURAL RENAISSANCE – THE REGIONAL RURAL RECOVERY PLAN (NWDA)	SO1 – A1.11 support woodland rural development programme SO2 – A2.7 extend sustainable tourism related to ...forestry, regional parks and woodland and countryside sports SO8 – A8.4 support community and social enterprise	New sustainable tourism product based upon woodland and countryside sports Opportunity to create a social enterprise via the maintenance of trails and provision of support services
CUMBRIA RURAL ACTION ZONE	RAZ Objective B – encourage income generation from direct and indirect woodland management RAZ Objective E – development of tourism product outside central Lakes and into the low season / strengthen existing brand and enable this to reflect local diversity	New tourism product outside central Lakes that will promote repeat visits, open up a new visitor group and operate throughout the close season.

In addition to the contribution that the project can make to the programmes set out above, it meets directly issues raised in the recent Locum Destination Consulting Study for Cumbria Tourist Board which identifies the need for a 'step change' improvement in Cumbria's tourism product and identifies a focus on 'high energy' tourism focusing on outdoor activities and adventure sports in the north of the Lake District.

The Northwest Development Agency has now produced its Vision for Tourism's Future in the Northwest which will make the best tourism offer in Britain by:-

- Persuading more British people to spend more of their leisure time in England's Northwest
- Persuading more people from overseas to visit the region
- Making the region an increasingly important business destination in Europe

Furthermore in its Strategic Framework for Action the Agency intends to "Focus on Star Brands" using key marketing principles of Winning Themes, Making Access Easy and Celebrating and Growing Excellence.

Within the Framework it is recognised that the Lake District is:- "One of the strongest destinations in the Country and a world-class attraction for residents and visitor alike. The Agency's vision is that the Lake District will improve still further to become the premier National Park in Europe, with the same sense of distinctiveness as that of Yellowstone or Yosemite" (NWDA 2003)

3.1 Forestry Commission

It is important to state that the development of this project is not a new or "bolt on" proposal to existing Forestry Commission activities at Whinlatter, but rather an extension of the existing operations and activities carried out there. This extension fits comfortably within the Forestry Commission's stated Mission, aims and objectives for the diversification of forest activities, and is grounded in its policy document, the Strategic Plan, an extract of which is as follows:-

North West England Forest Strategic Plan 2003 – 2008

Mission:-

To sustainably manage the North West England Forest District estate to maximise public benefit and achieve a balance between social, environmental, and economic objectives.

Aims:-

- To contribute to the delivery of the Regional Forestry Framework and England Forestry Strategy.
- To help deliver other key government priorities and agendas in the North West through existing and new woodlands and associated habitats.
- To maintain the highest standards of woodland and land management with independent certification against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.
- To achieve the District business plan.

Objectives:-

- Overall the aim is to achieve a balance between objectives, working in partnership where appropriate.
- Biodiversity – Biodiversity Action Plans, HAPS, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, SAM plans, Special Areas of Conservation, general conservation value of estate.
- Landscape – design forests in ways which respond to the individual character of each woodland and its setting.
- Recreation – high quality visitor experience, wide ranging opportunities for the public to enjoy healthy outdoor pursuits in an attractive, sustainable and safe environment.

- Education – high quality environmental education programme for all ages.
- Regeneration of derelict land – through creation of new community woodlands
- Local economy and jobs – through tourism, timber and other forest operations and other uses of the land.
- Community – involve local communities, businesses and farmers.
- Heritage – safeguard archaeological and heritage interest.

Promote FC woodlands and their management as an exemplar of good practice.

In order to take this Strategy forward, the Forestry Commission has developed a specific NWEFD Cycling Strategy which states:-

Summary

Cycling is an important activity on Forestry Commission land with over 2600km of waymarked routes and 12000km of forest roads and tracks available to the public across the Country. An increasing number of sport routes including, downhill, bmx and skills areas have developed over the last five years and continue to expand.

Introduction

Since the introduction of mountain bikes in the late 1970's forests have provided access for a multitude of users. In response to the early demand for off road access Grizedale, Delamere and Whinlatter provided waymarked routes along forest roads and rides. This in turn led to hire facilities at all three centres and further increases in numbers. More recently the hire centres at Whinlatter and Delamere have failed due to the lack of specific provision for users and also at Delamere on the back of inappropriate location of the hire facility. At Bowland the provision came later with the creation of a series of waymarked trails in the late 90's.

There has always been there has been a significant divergence of the different strands of off road cycling from the novice family users through to very highly competent down hill cyclists. In between these two extremes are to be found single-track enthusiasts, BMX style jump users and the more experienced family riders. More recently these differences have received significant publicity encouraging a wider range of users to get involved.

Current Position

Due to its wide geographical spread North West England Forest District plays host to virtually the full spectrum of bike users in a variety of ways. However the greatest proportion of this provision being waymarked routes along an ad hoc arrangement of combining forest roads, public rights of way and other permissive routes. In a number of instances the inappropriateness of this type of provision for the specialist user has led to users creating unofficial trails and jumps.

Due to the unmanaged nature of many of these self build areas they are often built without due consideration to other users and often in an unsustainable manner.

The situation at Bowland is somewhat different due to the more recent introduction of purpose built routes. The level of provision is to a higher standard which is reflected in its usage although areas of self-build do occur but to a lesser extent than elsewhere.

Policy

As already mentioned unmanaged mountain biking can cause significant environmental damage, conflict with other forest users and be a major health and safety risk so our policy will be to continue to encourage responsible cycling in appropriate areas of the forest district.

Positive management is an important tool in ensuring a balanced approach is maintained between all interests. The creation of cycling centres through the concentration of cycling within designated areas on purpose built waymarked trails, forest roads and public bridleways allows active zonation of the activity. This can be used to separate users groups to minimise conflict, draw usage away from important conservation sites and ensure that cycling is safe and sustainable.

It is anticipated that these centres will need to develop in response to future changes in the cycling market and consultation with partners and stakeholders will be an integral part of this process.

Although we have the power as landowner to grant cyclists access to public footpaths this should only be considered where there is clear justification and after consultation with user groups. The path must be suitable for cyclists and wide enough to accommodate all users and will usually where the footpath coincides with a forest road.

Cycling centres should be developed to create 'honey pots' to allow the focus of resources and to concentrate sport cycling away from other users. Current centres where cycling will be encouraged are

- Grizedale where there exists a long history of mountain bike use for both families and enthusiasts.
- Whinlatter where there is currently limited provision but significant demand for the serious cyclists
- Bowland with its purpose built trails is a well-established destination for users from Lancashire and Yorkshire.
- Delamere is heavily used as an area for families and enthusiasts looking for riding routes. In addition it is a major venue for BMX/jumps with a significant area set aside for self build.
- The community forest areas where newly created green areas close to major conurbations are important for all types of quiet recreational use including cycling.

Beyond these areas there are no plans to expand the cycling centres within the forest district.

Management

Three main cycling areas can be identified although they will obviously overlap:

- *Family Cycle* routes for less experienced cyclists and families. These should generally have limited gradients (up and down) and be restricted to waterbound surfaces with few loose stones.
- *Sports and technical* routes and areas include downhill, bmx, technical single track and trailquest. These will generally be more challenging although trailquest may be designed for family groups. Conflict with other users may be high so zoning and warning signs need to be in place. It is critical that the family group does not accidentally wander onto these specialist areas.
- *Trail bikers* will probably stick to forest roads and rights of way so provision of access is the main consideration. They will be able to use a map so waymarked routes are less important. Many of these routes may be part of wider cross county or country networks and the FC will seek to incorporate these into access plans such as sustainable transport links wherever possible.

Local cycle groups and enthusiasts should be used wherever possible to assist with development and maintenance of routes. They can also help with informal inspection and act as "voluntary wardens" as they will often be riding routes on a regular basis.

Grading and route assessment is important to ensure that routes are safe and enjoyable for the visitor. Guidance will be provided for the visitor on all official routes. For areas of self-build signage will be used to highlight the importance of the user making an assessment of whether they have the equipment, skills and ability to use the area/route. Waymarking of routes will be re-assessed in light of the development of sports routes and commercial sponsorship.

Marketing of cycle areas is important to maximise income and encourage cyclists to use the facilities provided.

Charging

The main opportunities for charging will be through additional facilities and services provided. These might include bike wash, cycle hire, retail opportunities, café and car parking. There is a presumption against charging for access.

Organised events

All requests for events will be considered against the objectives for the area chosen. The aim will be to accommodate the event but not at the expense of the other objectives so in some instances relocation or refusal may be necessary.

A number of cycling events also span different land ownership. Where this is the case we will aim to co-operate with our neighbours although the use of FC land will be considered on the same basis as above.

Charges will be made for organised events and competitions on FC land.

Recreation Managers should use their discretion in setting charges dependant on the nature of the event and the costs incurred. There is a presumption against charging for small groups and sponsored charity rides using existing infrastructure.

4. MTB Project Development Aims

It can be fairly argued that Cumbria has lagged some way behind the development of dedicated technical mtb trails when compared to other regions of the UK. There has been a history here of rather simple waymarked trails exploiting existing forest roads, an ad hoc development of some technical loops, and a recognition of the area's outstanding network of bridleways which supports a reputation for unregulated trail riding. In addition, there has grown a number of unauthorised trails constructed by mountain bike enthusiasts. This has been exacerbated with a growing public resentment of a highly visual minority of irresponsible mtb riders who use sheep tracks, footpaths, and ridgeways.

Notwithstanding the detrimental matters referred to above, mountain biking, as a focus for participation in sport, environmental access, and tourism has matured over recent years into a distinct activity enjoyed by a cross-section of society. The provision ranges from novice and family trails to highly technical competition programmes at international standard. A lot has been learned about the variety of rider motivation, the necessity of support services, and the management of user conflict. In addition to this, construction techniques are now so well refined that they provide safe riding while contributing to the range of local biodiversity.

Some time ago North West England Forest District recognised that the strategic management of mtb provision was becoming a necessity. In so doing, it has sought to understand the diverse requirements of the mtb market and the necessity for risk and conflict minimisation. Across the District there is now a coherent Strategy for the development of various forest locations to satisfy the requirements of certain user groups. The market definition for Whinlatter Forest Park is outlined in more detail in the Economic Impact Assessment (App'2) but in general, it has the following aims:-

- To provide an opportunity for mtb skill development from novice to expert
- To increase access to the forest environment for new audiences
- To maximise safety and manage user conflict
- To introduce educational and training elements of trail construction
- To contribute to the social, economic, and environmental diversity of the immediate area and supporting hinterland

4.1 The tourism offer

The Lake District has been a jewel in the crown of the UK tourism offer for a considerable period of time and has consequently developed and adapted a wide range of products to support this demand. While doing so, the range of national and local authorities given responsibility for protection or promotion have tried to work in harmony. Mtb riding, as a particular product, has been systematically less well developed in the Lake District than in other areas or National Parks. The emergent strategic context for tourism, as outlined in section 3 above, following the constraints imposed on the area during the recent Foot & Mouth outbreak, has identified the North Lakes and adventure sport as a key focus for sustainable tourism. This Whinlatter Forest mtb Trail Project considers itself to be a contributor to this overall programme; simply forming a discreet and well defined offer in the overall context, as well as the Project being an extension of the existing activities and pursuits within the forest.

Across the Lake District National Park, the Forestry Commission is working closely with a wide range of partner organisations to provide a coherent compliment to other offers. This means that the development programmes for a variety of locations are tempered and informed by the very local as well as the regional context. It is considered here that this Whinlatter mtb Project will support a particular offer in a well managed way.

It is worthy of note, that the Lake District National Park has a number of tourism offers which are directly linked to seasons; either of climate or holiday period. The analysis of mtb activity, across a range of existing provision, clearly demonstrates that there is a preference of use outside of the busy seasonal periods. This has the effect of both spreading and extending the tourism attraction, reducing the pressure of use during high visitor volume periods and increasing use during more traditionally low visitor volume periods. For the social, economic, and environmental use of any provision this is universally accepted as a more sustainable pattern of use.

4.2 National Park considerations

The Lake District National Park exists to support two purposes which require a duty of care; these are:-

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public

This Business Plan has been explicitly researched and constructed to compliment these purposes and support this duty of care. There is a growing body of evidence that the establishment of dedicated mtb trails promotes safer riding, greater environmental understanding, and an enhanced appreciation of access constraints.

4.2.1 Conserve & Enhance

There are two important aspects of this project which need to be clearly stated:-

1. that the provision of dedicated mtb trails *will not* lead to the removal of the legal status of access to existing rights of ways for mountain bikers, e.g. bridleways;
2. that the less than adequately experienced or adventurous riders will be *more* attracted to ride safely on purpose built managed forest trails with all the support facilities these groups desire.

Existing evidence strongly suggests that the net outcome has a dual benefit:-

- those who are less skilled or knowledgeable on how and where to ride in open country are more likely to utilise the dedicated, purpose built trails; with a subsequent reduction on fell usage,

- those who are capable of skilled and responsible riding on legitimate routes on open fells will still be able to do so; reducing cross-use conflict and damage to the sport's reputation.

Many adventure enthusiasts, mtb riders included, are noticeably articulate and environmentally sensitive on the impact of their sport. Self-regulation, of route choice, event numbers and locations, and use of shared trails (notably bridleways), is exercised if not always appreciated. It therefore does not follow that the provision of dedicated, structured mtb trails in a managed environment will lead to increased problems across the National Park. In fact, the contrary is seen to be the case.

4.2.2 Access & participation and Interpretation

It is a central feature of this development programme that the implementation of this trail network is a key component in the Forestry Commission's overall aim of increasing access, particularly to new audiences. Designed to introduce, enthral, and educate, the Interpretation Project (App'3) is to be specifically crafted to take account of the area's overall heritage.

The heritage of Whinlatter is described in terms of:-

Landscape - both the natural & managed environment
 Social - historic use & influence
 Economic - as used for mining, farming, charcoal & timber production

The main focus of this project will be to maximise visitor appreciation of the location's unique heritage, in a safe multi-use environment. This dovetails with The Forestry Commission's Core Objectives and emphasises the principle that the Project is an extension of the existing use of the Forest rather than a policy departure.

The Cultural Heritage of the area is defined in the Schedule for the Interpretation Project (App'3). In this aspect of the mtb programme the objective to increase access to new audiences is a core motivation and attention has been paid to how educational resources can play a part in this initiative. In this context education is taken to be both formal (key stage support and interpretation) and informal (family outings).

4.3 Mtb as a sporting and healthy activity

Mtb riding is one of the fastest growing *participation* sports across the UK. It is taken up by the greater numbers of new cyclists turning or returning to cycling with 72% of leisure cyclists considering that traffic-free cycling routes are the most important facility to encourage cycling. (www.cobr.co.uk)

It is estimated that the demand for cycle tourism trips will increase by 10% over the next ten years and that regular cyclists will enjoy a fitness level equal to that of a person ten years younger. Also, cycling at least twenty miles a week reduces the risk of heart disease to less than half that for non-cyclists who take no other exercise. (ibid)

Already featured in the Commonwealth Games at Manchester in 2003, and to appear in the 2004 Olympics, together with Fort William having now hosted two World Cup events, the public image of the sport as high energy fun at all skill levels is becoming well established. New centres are developing with an eye on their urban catchments. In addition to this, there is an unofficial league of 'centres of excellence' now emerging.

This Business Plan recognises that the Lake District is under-represented in any high quality dedicated mtb trail facilities listing and aims to establish Whinlatter Forest Park as the premier location within that league of sites.

4.4 Regeneration

Socially and economically viable tourism, which is environmentally sustainable and which is focussed on sport, is now recognised as a leading growth generator among Strategic Authorities worldwide. The harmony of conservation and responsible economic development is now given pre-eminence as the leading stimulator across a number of national programmes from Australia, through the USA, and now in the UK. The supporting impact assessments that accompany this Business Plan set out the case in some detail.

The National Park's economic profile has been particularly damaged by the Foot & Mouth outbreak, the recent fall in intercontinental world travel, and the growth in tourist expectation that cheap European airline flights has established. In order for the sort of 'step change' that recent development agencies have called for there needs to be significant 'high impact' projects upon which to build the confidence that will attract the levels of funding required.

This Business Plan outlines the case for supporting the Whinlatter mtb Trail Project as one contribution for the strategically managed regeneration of the North Lakes.

It will:-

- provide a visitor attraction that enhances the existing provision
- attract new audiences to enjoy the special heritage of the National Park
- create new businesses and sustainable jobs
- promote education, skill acquisition, and responsible environmental use
- provide a focus for a re-branding of the tourism offer, and
- protect and secure the investment of future initiatives

4.5 Accredited trail build training

As a key objective of supporting social and economic development, this mtb programme will initiate the creation of the first bespoke designed course in mtb trail building. It will be a modular programme supporting volunteer groups, labourer positions, trail builders, and supervisors. In association with the University of Central Lancashire, this course will provide independent accreditation at each level and support the creation of new businesses and sole trader employment.

The curriculum will be submitted for IMBA-UK and Forest Training Services endorsement so that it becomes the first nationally recognised transferable award.

5. Whinlatter MTB Project Objectives

This Business Plan outlines a complete package of developments that result from the extensive research undertaken during the Feasibility Study, Impact Assessments, and Best Practice analysis. It has become evident across a number of similar development sites across the UK that if any one of the elements is missing, the mtb 'scene' tends to either reduce its use or create an unofficial facility. If this relates to a car park or changing facilities, for example, the consequences tend to be less than desired.

Consequently, this programme has been designed to provide a holistic provision that *does not* introduce one element and ignore either the constraints or impact effects in any other area. For example, hard lessons have been well learned that the provision of trails without adequate car parking facilities causes untold havoc; the provision of parking without facilities produces an unsightly outdoor changing room; and, the lack of any interpretation resources diminishes a range of access and appreciation measures.

The overall objective of this mtb development programme is to enhance the Whinlatter Forest Park provision whilst reducing any actual or perceived adverse impact in a multi-use environment. By increasing access to new audiences in a well managed and responsible manner, the facilities associated with this programme are designed to enhance the existing heritage offer.

5.1 Mtb centre

A thorough onsite survey of all possible locations on the periphery and within the forest boundaries produced the clear recommendation that a designated mtb Centre or “trailhead” should be located at Revelin Moss. This provides a dedicated location that utilises an existing car park, provides good access links to the skills loop, freeride location, and trails network away from the quiet zones. It minimises multi-user conflict with the Visitor Centre clientele, Osprey Project visitors, and the main recreational walking routes. The facilities will include:-

- an initial new car park for 100 vehicles in screened ‘lagoons’ to supplement the capacity at Masmill. The projected facility capacity (defined by the traffic & economic assessments) will be staged over time and demand led. Electronic counters will be installed to register car movements and rider numbers to provide this necessary data
- a designated ‘trailhead’ where users can obtain information on the trails, cycling competency and safety codes, multi-user impact regulations, interpretation materials, and care notices on use of the forest environment

A building will be installed to provide:-

- a café providing 50 indoor covers and a covered outdoor area
- generous gender specific toilet, changing and showering facilities
- bikeshed for bike hire, spares, on-site repair, and bike wash

[building specification App’4
spatial specification App’5]

The inclusion of each and all of these elements is now widely recognised at existing mtb sites to be a *necessity* rather than a luxury. While these facilities do not need to be large or sophisticated, they do need to be unobtrusive places where the mtb audience can meet and be suitably catered for.

One important additional feature of these facilities is that they provide a valuable source of information and education on all aspects of mountain biking and the forest environment, early identification of trail problems, and a central location to report issues of concern or conflict. Information and education material will appear not only at the “trailhead”, but also at the entrance to the Skills Area and at the start of the waymarked trails. The information will include tips on mtb riding as well as Codes of Conduct for activities in the forest.

5.2 Trail network

The design of the Whinlatter mtb trail network subscribes to a number of key principles, is built on an analysis of best practice both internationally and across the UK and based upon the acquired expertise of a leading UK trail designer. A full method statement is provided at App’6.

These principles of ‘best practice’ are:-

- construction quality that takes account of environmental impact and maintenance requirements (sustainable trails) at accepted international trail standards
- trained and accredited trail builders and volunteers
- the zoning of ‘quiet areas’ (cycling discouraged) to support multi-user diversity
- concentric trails of increasing technical difficulty with riders needing to travel further, to more remote areas, as they progress through the grades

5.3 Multi-use management

The Forestry Commission is the single largest provider of outdoor recreation facilities in the UK and the leading provider of open access and purpose built mtb trail networks. Their professional expertise in multi-use management brings an abundance of social and environmental benefits enjoyed by in excess of 50m visits per year.

In order to maintain adequate programme management and safe multi-use, Forest Enterprise has listened carefully to the range of contributions coming through the consultation process and impact assessments. As such, a significant number of additional constraints will be voluntarily placed upon the overall management policies. The range of options will include:-

- Promotion & marketing - maintained to support an adequate web presence, leaflet distribution, and facilities location for information and educational purposes
- Events - limited to one annual event which will be valley based and professionally organised and managed to limit traffic intrusion
- Guiding - licensed guiding franchises regulated by industry standards
- Club involvement – a local club supported to adopt adequate governance and self-regulation of irresponsible riding and/or trail building
- Volunteering – an untapped resource in volunteer assistance on trail build and environmental monitoring will be harnessed and managed

In addition, there will be the opportunity to provide feedback on the Project by several methods:- firstly, by posting feedback forms on the Project website; secondly, in person at the Trailhead; and, thirdly, in writing to the Recreation Manager at the Visitor Centre. The purpose of the feedback is to collect and collate all intelligence on the Project that will inform all programme management meetings.

6.0 Impact Assessments

The Forestry Commission is aware of its wide range of social responsibilities and has structured this overall development programme to be as open and inclusive as time and resources will allow. Having committed itself financially and taken almost two years to introduce and design this programme, it has allowed for significant research, consultation, planning, and expert analysis of key factors.

This development programme is a consistent extension of existing Forestry Commission Policy Objectives to increase access and amenity use of forests as a social resource. As such, it does not represent a change of use, rather a coherent and well managed implementation of Forest Enterprise's Strategic Vision. This can be clearly seen in the extract from the Forestry Commission's Policy Documents quoted above.

It is recognised that this Business Plan proposes an additional but complimentary resource at Whinlatter to promote increased access for new audiences which will impact upon the social, economic, and environmental enhancement of the area, contributing to the overall regeneration offer. Forest Enterprise recognises that no development can ever be universally endorsed but maintains that it has made every effort to ameliorate any adverse features.

Consequently, following the publication of the Feasibility Study Report, the subsequent consultation exercise requested feedback from site visits, public meetings, and presentations to a wide variety of Authorities, Agencies, Groups, Businesses, and Clubs. The Development Agency, praxis-grasmere.com which has been contracted to undertake this programme, in recognition of the significance of the Project, has engaged a range of expert consultants to analyse the specific concerns expressed during the consultation period. What follows are the executive summaries of these Consultant Reports with the complete reports contained in appendices as indicated.

6.1 Economic Impact Assessment

The full Economic Impact Assessment report prepared by Rural Innovation is at App'2.

In summary, the proposals to develop a dedicated Mountain Bike trail network with supporting trail head facilities at Whinlatter Forest Park meet a range of regional Strategic Objectives, in particular SO1 & SO2 of Rural Renaissance, support the ongoing development of the highly successful national leisure offer from Forest Enterprise, as well as meeting the Tourism Vision of the North west Development Agency.

The proposed development comprises:-

- Way marked single track mountain bike trails (novice to severe)
- Trailhead Car Park
- Changing, Showering & drying room facilities
- Café
- Bike shed with hire and repairs facility

Research from other Mountain Biking Centres demonstrates that activity continues all year round, and that the additional spend generated from visiting riders is concentrated locally to the facilities. Forest Enterprises existing Mountain Bike Trail Centres in Scotland are experiencing consistent increase in demand year on year, and are generating valuable surpluses for reinvestment in the conservation and recreation resource of the local forest.

The Rural Innovation Study demonstrates that the development is likely to attract in the region of 65,000 riders annually, generating in the region of £1.3m worth of net additional economic outputs for the local economy each year and directly supporting 6 – 10 new jobs. The construction phase of development will generate contracts worth in the region of £3.5m for local contractors and materials suppliers. Over a fifteen year investment projection, this will generate a likely net addition to the local economy of £23m.

6.2 Environmental Impact Assessment

The full Environmental Impact Assessment report prepared by David Crowley, Dip T & CP, MRTPI is at App'7.

The following is a summary of that report. Set in a key location in the Lake District National Park, as the proposed Whinlatter Forest Mountain Bike Trails development is, any such proposal requires careful consideration as to its impacts, be they environmental, economic or social. The full document looks at the key environmental elements within, and in proximity to, the Forest, and assesses the development's potential to impact on them and makes recommendations for mitigation measures where appropriate.

The broad conclusion to be drawn is that there will be little impact if a number of principles are adhered to, both in trail construction and subsequent management. Indeed there are opportunities for positive environmental impacts to be derived from the trail developments.

The elements examined were as follows:-

- Archaeology - desk study only
- Ecology - part desk, part field study
- Geology and geomorphology - desk study
- Landscape - field study
- Water environment - part desk, part field study

The proposals in their present form would not impact on archaeology, geology and geomorphology. There is potential for impact on aspects of biodiversity, in particular moorland habitats, wetlands/watercourses and raptors. Appropriate recommendations are made on these issues.

In addressing the protection of habitats within and adjacent to the forest has been addressed in the planning of the trails. This has been achieved by several methods, firstly by accessing the unique wildlife database which Forest Enterprise holds on the forest, secondly by introducing a physical survey of bird species in the forest and on its fringes, and thirdly by a process of survey which will be undertaken along the proposed trail routes at build time, when appropriate protection measures will be taken dependant on the circumstances.

In carrying out the assessment, the Consultant is confident that natural habitats will be protected and in some cases there are clear opportunities for additional habitats to be created as a result of the Project. Where these opportunities arise, they will be introduced.

There will be little or no landscape impact, as with very few exceptions the trails are contained well within the forest edge and hence within a visual barrier. With respect to the water environment, the main concern involves issues around run-off and siltation in the Bassenthwaite catchment. Again recommendations are made with respect to mitigation and prevention measures.

6.3 Traffic Impact Assessment

The full Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Brian Campbell Associates is at App'8.

The following is a summary of that report. Almost all traffic generated by the proposed development would approach the site on the B5292 from the A66 and pass through the village of Braithwaite. The available traffic flow data shows flows on the B5292 of around 1110 a day with peaks of 145 vehicles per hour (vph). It is forecasted that the proposed development would generate between 150 and 400 car visits with a corresponding peak of 90 to 210 vph.

These flows of generated traffic would not have a significant impact on the A66 which carries an annual average daily traffic flow of 13400. The increase on the B25292 would be significant but the total flows would remain well within the practical capacity of such a road, except at a 90m long narrow section through Braithwaite village which has sharp approach curves and the carriageway reduces to around 4m. At present the free flow of traffic through this section is affected during the passage of large vehicles or when car drivers find it difficult to deal with passing oncoming vehicles because of the narrow carriageway. This existing transient problem could be overcome by installing signal controlled one-way working at this section.

However, the baseline traffic flow data analysis does not support the need for signalling to be installed as part of the proposed development. Indeed, the data reveals that of the traffic passing along the B5292 only 12% enters Whinlatter Forest Park.

The proposal includes a final total of 100 pay and display parking spaces which will meet the expected demands. The access to the proposed car parking and trailhead facilities at Revelin Moss will be located to ensure that sightlines onto the B5292 meet appropriate standards. The low flows on the B5292 mean that the access junction can accept generated traffic flow without there being any significant impact on the free flow of traffic or highway safety.

Various safety measures will be incorporated into the design of the trails and full account taken of guidance on good practice for road crossings on cycle routes. In particular the points where the links between trails cross the B5292 have been located where there is good visibility to approaching traffic. In addition the trail alignments at the entry and exit from crossings will be designed to slow riders down where necessary barriers will be used to force cyclist to dismount as they cross the road.

The promoters of the proposed development will be seeking to establish a mini-bus service with a trailer for bikes to run between Keswick and the trailhead in order to encourage travel to and from the Forest by other modes. It is envisaged that the shuttle service would operate between the trailhead and Keswick with 3-4 round trips an hour.

6.4 Ornithological impact assessment

The full Ornithological Impact Assessment prepared by Peter Ullrich is at App'9

This report follows a breeding bird survey of the forest edge and adjacent Forest Enterprise upland. The survey effort was targeted at the following species:-

Merlin
Red Grouse
Ring Ouzel

Skylark

These species were chosen due to conservation concerns countywide and/or nationally.

MERLIN

In Lakeland many former haunts remain unoccupied, however there is some room for optimism with some traditional sites having been re-occupied recently.

Merlin is a schedule 1 species and is accordingly afforded the highest conservation protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981* making it an offence to knowingly disturb a bird at the nest. Human disturbance in such a busy area as the Lake District could have an impact on re-colonisation; it could also be a factor in nest failure or desertion.

Merlin nest on the ground in heather, and increasingly in old crows' nests either in conifer plantations or trees such as hawthorn. They require open ground, preferably heather moorland where they hunt small passerines such as Meadow Pipit. Birds return to the upland breeding grounds in early April.

RED GROUSE

The situation in Lakeland is worrying, with several scattered and isolated populations having died out due to loss of habitat over the last forty years. Some of the remaining peripheral Lakeland sites run a very high risk of going the same way. Red Grouse numbers at many of these sites are at dangerously low levels. It is only when positive management is carried out to improve habitat for Red Grouse that populations stand a chance of being safeguarded.

Just as Merlin, Red Grouse depend on heather moorland for nesting and feeding. Birds are relatively sedentary and very hardy. They are one of very few birds capable of surviving winter in the uplands.

RING OUZEL

About 280 locations are documented as having held breeding Ring Ouzels in the Cumbrian High Fells of Lakeland. No full survey has yet been undertaken. The Lake District population could well be higher than this. It is the most important area in England and still one of the main strongholds in Britain.

Birds nest above the 250m contour on crags, in gullies and on the ground of steep-sided valleys. The nest is well concealed, often by overhanging heather. Pairs are best located in April when the males sing from prominent rocky outcrops or the Tops of small trees. However they can easily be overlooked as they can be silent and inactive for long periods. Two broods are often reared with birds being particularly vocal at the end of May when second broods are started.

SKYLARK

In the Cumbrian lowlands, agricultural intensification such as silage production and loss of winter stubbles has had a significant detrimental impact on the breeding populations over the last thirty years. Conversely, agricultural intensification in the uplands has been beneficial for Skylark. This paradoxical situation can be explained by the increased stocking levels of sheep on the fells since the war. The resultant overgrazing has converted large tracts of heather moorland to grassland, ideal habitat for breeding Skylark. It is therefore not surprising that Skylark is one of the commonest breeding birds of the fells.

Birds return to the fells in spring. Their presence is easily detected by the males' characteristic song-flight. Nests are located on the ground hidden amongst grass.

Methodology

A readily repeatable method was devised which was considered to be a practicable and effective way of surveying the four target species. Upland forest edge for the purpose of this survey was defined as that bordering upland heather or upland grass moorland. Forest edges bordering roads, forest rides, forest clear-fell and lowland forest were excluded from the survey.

Birds were located by walking, listening, scanning by eye and with binoculars. Timed vantage point counts were particularly useful for locating Merlin and Ring Ouzel. In addition Red Grouse droppings and feathers were noted and their location mapped.

Findings

No Merlin were located during the course of this survey. There is no shortage of potential nesting habitat given that extensive areas of tall shrubby heather still exist and all the sites have a history of nesting Merlin.

A total of 5 pairs of Red Grouse were located at Whinlatter during the course of this survey, with the possibility of another pair in Grisedale Gill.

2 Ring Ouzel territories were located, at an altitude of approximately 600m, 500m from the forest edge. A pair feeding young at a were foraging on ledges on the crags at a similar altitude to the nest site. However, it is likely that when the chicks have fledged the adults will accompany the juveniles to feed at lower levels on the sheepwalk below.

12 displaying male Skylark were noted on Forest Enterprise land, or within 100m of the Forest Enterprise boundary. A displaying male was taken to indicate the presence of a pair of Skylark.

Summary

Evidence of breakout from existing tracks was recorded and it was noted that there are already small numbers of “adventurers”, who want to experience the “freedom” of the fells on a mountain bike. Breakout is likely to occur more regularly given the increase in mountain bikers attracted to the site. The challenge will be to minimize breakout and resultant disturbance to breeding and foraging birds. The design and management of the mountain bike trail will be the important factors here.

Routes along the Forest Edge would result in some increased disturbance to nesting and foraging moorland birds, however every effort has been taken in the design of the route to take this in to account, with most of the route away from the Forest Edge.

The proposed Mountain Bike Trail at Whinlatter is undoubtedly a defining moment in the development of Whinlatter. Decisions made now will effectively map out the future of Whinlatter, not only recreationally and economically, but also ecologically. Nature conservation as an integral part of the project would assure the enhancement and protection of Whinlatter’s natural environment. Forest Enterprise, as one of the members of the Lake District Osprey Project, has already demonstrated what can be achieved through positive management for wildlife. This project offers Forest Enterprise a unique opportunity to further enhance its reputation as a leader in both recreation and nature conservation.

7. Organisation & Management

The development programme contained within this Business Plan is scheduled to run over a three year period. A fundamental aspect of the management procedure is to provide a series of method statements, protocols, and partnership agreements which shall be submitted for comment, refinement, and endorsement with all interested external agencies and authorities.

As has been discovered by the Forestry Commission through mtb initiatives across the UK, trail development programmes are an inexact science and prone to a range of unforeseen circumstances.(see Options & Risk analysis). The extensive Best Practice analysis undertaken to

inform this Business Plan has drawn extensively from the evidence from these programmes. In particular these will include:-

- A Whinlatter Forum, meeting twice a year, for continued consultation
- Forest Enterprise, acting as Lead Agency, will award contracts, by open tender, which meet all government procurement and protocol requirements

In addition, consultant support will be provided to establish a Whinlatter Bike Club, with appropriate governance, training and resources to adequately and responsibly represent the mtb sector. Although the format of this initiative will be subject to consultation with that Sector it is envisaged that this will provide a focal point for cross-initiative programmes that may emerge as the development programme proceeds. The programme will form an independent mtb Club as a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable status.

8. Finance, Contracts, & Management

8.1 Contracts

The funding submission states that the development programme has a headline figure of £3,514,967 From this initial investment, projected over a fifteen year period index @ 2.5%, the project generates a net addition to the local economy of £22,991,514.

The portfolio of funding sources for this development programme and the budget breakdown is as follows:-

- Forestry Commission
- Rural Regeneration Cumbria
- European Objective 2
- Heritage Lottery Fund

The budget requirements over a three year contractual period will be in accordance with normal contractual processes and divided between capital and revenue (operational) processes :-

Capital processes		£
trail build & maintenance	1,783,841	
car parking		78,000
construction of buildings	1,560,000	
services (electricity, phones)		24,564
[figures include 20% contingency]		
Operational		
promotion		29,375
accredited & imba-uk endorsed trail build training	18,800	
club development programme		19,387

& all will be subject to VAT at the prevailing rate

The trail build contract will include:-

- Waymarking of routes
- Promotion of trails during build phase
- UCL & IMBA accreditation
- Training of work force/volunteers
- Club development (volunteer help for trail build)
- 3 year trail build & maintenance

Forestry Commission will manage:-

- Building of Car parks (FE to carry out the works)
- Buildings and services (by competitive tender)

- Franchise of Bike hire/workshop and café (tendered as a package)
- Production and sale of maps including logos and other merchandising (in conjunction with franchisee)
- Promotion of trails after trail building complete as well as Events (in conjunction with franchisee)
- Interpretation & signage

It is proposed that a Franchisee would control, as part of their businesses:-

- Skills proficiency certificates/courses/guided rides/corporate events
- Organise and run a users club

8.2 Management

The entire Whinlatter mtb development project will be contract managed by the Recreational Manager for the Forestry Commission at Whinlatter. This will include both site visit quality control and a rigorous Management Information System (MIS) to monitor progress and ensure contract timescale compliance. Regular, formal, management meetings will be a specification schedule of the contract as will the defined MIS reporting system required. These systems will be consistent with Forestry Commission procedures and cleared through the internal audit process.

These financial allocations represent the capital and revenue installations costs (@ 30/1/04 fixed until 30/7/04); detailed budget projections will be contained in each funding submission. All contracts will be awarded in line with public funding procurement rules and tendering procedures and will include all reporting and management requirements.

8.3 Workplan

The three year development programme has the trail installation projection front loaded for the first year; ie. a three trail build team in year one, two teams in years two and three. This allows for early and simple construction to commence prior to opening, with maintenance, refinement, and increased technical provision to progress with the trail build teams' increased expertise. The cash flows of the contract will therefore taper over the contract period.

It is calculated to take 18 months to create a 'critical mass' of infrastructure and trails before the project could be declared open and viable, based upon establishing:-

- Car parking
- Services
- Bikeshed, café, changing facilities
- Kids area & skills loop
- Green & Blue south trails
- Hospital plantation freeride & red loop
- Interpretation & promotion
- Club development

9. Options & Risks

There are a number of clear options that had to be taken into account in addressing the decisions that were made in relation to this Development Programme. These options have been given careful consideration in drawing together this Business Plan. The options which were considered were as follows:-

9.1 Do nothing

This is taken to be a less than desirable principle for the range of missed opportunities and inherent problems it causes.

The lack of purpose built mtb trails has led to the building of illegal and unsafe trails by groups of local enthusiasts frustrated at the distances needed to travel to access any other provision. These, in turn, produce multi-use management problems with a lack of environmental sensitivity. And, as is accepted across virtually all statutory agencies, this misses the massive regenerative opportunity much needed in the follow-up to the Foot & Mouth outbreak and the Lake District tourism offer into the next decade.

9.2 Utilise existing forest infrastructure for local recreational use

A main attraction of this approach is that it appeals to the notion of 'quiet enjoyment' and limited development. However, it stimulates a body of interest which produces the frustration identified above. In addition, it tends to attract a range of use that is difficult to manage, for example, large groups of joy riding alpha males intent on brash and competitive riding.

The shared use of forest roads that this option favours produces very significant dangers in a multi-use environment, and historically, has often been the very indicator of need for purpose built dedicated trails.

9.3 Develop an ad hoc provision as internal Forestry Commission resources and opportunistic funding become available

This has been the traditional approach adopted by the Forestry Commission over recent years particularly at the Welsh sites and in the Tweed Valley.

Overwhelming evidence suggest that the net affect of this is that all development programme run substantially behind the demand they generate. In turn, this place massive pressure on the trail network and all the support facilities. The time necessary to ameliorate the difficulties leads to continuous multi-use management issues and unsustainable pressure on the infrastructure facilities.

In fact, it is the accepted and recognised disadvantages of this approach which has persuaded the Forestry Commission to adopt a much more strategic project development model.

9.4 Acknowledge the learning from previous mtb development programmes and existing Forestry Commission mtb sites

It has become apparent that unless a holistic approach to mtb development projects is taken it is less likely that they will subscribe to any sustainability principles, whether social, economic or environmental. This body of evidence is now the accepted as the only manageable procedure for safe multi-use provision, increasing access to new audiences, and infrastructure management.

This approach had now been adopted by the Welsh Assembly, across the whole province in Northern Ireland, by European Regional Development Funds with Seven Staines Project in the Scottish Borders, and by the Regional Development Agency in the North Yorks' National Park.

There are, however, risks involved in securing the level of resources necessary to embark upon this development programme. These are:-

- **Funding**

There are large sums of money, identified within this Business Plan, that are required to build a suitable provision. There is always a danger, with any multi-funded programme, that any source may not provide the additionality required by another.

The majority of the funding however, is necessary for the infrastructure capital build of car parks, buildings, services, and trail network with revenue cost maintained by facility charges. So, while the resource allocations are high for the initial build phase, spread across the fifteen year timeframe, there is projected a significant return on investment.

- **Project management**

The skills and expertise necessary to see the project through to completion assumes substantial and varied management requirements. It is important in any development programme that the management provision is suitably experienced and supported.

The Forestry Commission has robust internal public sector management procedures and personnel experienced in bringing to conclusion projects of this nature. This holds true of the local structure which is well supported by national expertise.

- **Contract creep**

Often a risk overlooked in recent years, the danger of project creep into extended time requirements or additional cost has produced much project stress. The need for adequate planning, costing, and procurement procedures is now well established. These difficulties can be experienced by funding sources, project management procedures, and contractors.

There is a need here for robust and tested contractual rigour to satisfy both liability and contingency requirements. These can be easily demonstrated and tested through audit. In addition the detail produced to support this Business Plan is, to date, the national benchmark.

- **Disproportionate demand**

Probably the biggest danger in respect of multi-use management and impact assessments is that the attractiveness of the facilities is greater than the infrastructure can sustain.

There is much evidence to suggest that the 'critical mass' supported by any infrastructure soon becomes self regulating and demand flattens. This has been seen across the Tweed Valley and Welsh sites. Furthermore, taking into account the special aspects relevant to a National Park, there are additionally management and contractual policies proposed for self-regulation by the mtb development programme; annual event limitation, regulation of franchisee promotion, etc. which will manage this potential problem.

- **Conflict management**

This project will be achieved by design and management of zoning which constrains certain activity. All developments will be compatible with Forestry Commission Objectives, take account of forest users, and have minimal impact on the environment and normal forest operational activities. The project will reduce existing conflicts between multi users and the environment.

10. Exit strategy

As the leading UK provider of outdoor recreation and supported provision, the Forestry Commission considers its social responsibility to be for continued access and managed development. This places the mtb Development Project at Whinlatter as an ongoing development programme that has a range of requirements, some of which need clear completion dates and others that endure.

All Capital requirements are designed to last for a minimum of fifteen years with *all* maintenance requirements met by revenue generated through the infrastructure facilities and franchise contract allocations. This means that there will be a range of contracts which meet closure in different ways.

- Capital contracts:-
To close on completion of the designated requirement.
- Maintenance contracts:-
To run with generated revenue.
- Franchises licenses:-
To produce revenue over and above requirements.

Structuring the Business Plan in this way ensures that the Project is financially sustainable in the short term during the Capital Works, and in the long term during the required maintenance and ongoing development processes.

In this way the Project is sustainable into the future and does not rely on grant aid beyond the initial Capital phase. The revenue for the sustainable financing into the long term is generated by car parking and royalty income from the franchises, with events and accessories being self financing.

11. Appendices

- 1 Feasibility Study
- 2 Economic Impact Assessment
- 3 Interpretation Project
- 4 Buildings drawing
- 5 Spatial drawing
- 6 Trail method statements
 - 6.1 CTC Trail Standards
 - 6.2 Mtb trail: route summary
- 7 Environmental Impact Assessment
- 8 Traffic Impact Assessment
- 9 Ornithological Impact Assessment
- 10 Map