

Consultation Title: The Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019-25

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Introduction

Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) is a member organisation that represents the interests of both land managers and land-based businesses in rural Scotland. SLE has members with interests in a variety of land uses and we recognise that landowners have an important role to play if Scotland is to reap the full benefits of mountain biking. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy for mountain biking, 2019-25.

The Vision

SLE is supportive of the strategy's overall vision which recognises Scotland's potential as a European leader in mountain biking and the desire for its continued success to be managed safely and sustainably.

Overall SLE is content with the three specific goals identified to deliver on the vision (page 7). However, we feel the strategy should also include a fourth goal on 'sustainable development' reflecting the overall desire to see the safe and sustainable growth of mountain biking in Scotland.

We also feel sustainable development should be included as a key objective within the overall strategy aims (page 4), currently key objectives are increased participation in mountain biking, achieving sporting success, and increased tourism and economic growth. Creating a sustainable future for mountain biking in Scotland is clearly a strong and important theme which runs throughout the draft strategy, so it would seem appropriate that this is better highlighted from the outset.

Key themes

SLE welcomes the linkages the strategy makes with existing Scottish Government strategies and policies which are key delivery tools in achieving many of the target outcomes contained within the draft strategy.

SLE views the document as a positive development and welcomes the strategy's inclusiveness which seeks to bring together different interests at a national, regional and local scale to work jointly in realising Scotland's' mountain biking ambition.

We are pleased to see a commitment made towards fully resourcing the five Clusters. The initial appointment of two regional co-ordinators has already been useful in helping encourage and facilitate dialogue between mountain bikers and landowners – particularly around helping address problems to do with unauthorised trail building via the recently developed unauthorised trail guidance.

As the strategy recognises, broadly speaking two categories of people in biking benefit from support: riders and businesses. SLE recognises the important role regional co-ordinators have played and continue to play in enabling and supporting rural businesses and communities to recognise and realise new infrastructure development projects and tourism opportunities – supporting existing business and connecting new ones to help them all thrive.

SLE recognise and embraces the important role landowners have in helping mountain biking in Scotland grow sustainably. However, challenges remain in ensuring funding and encouraging the uptake of new opportunities, particularly in respect to supporting ongoing trail development. While public funds are made available to develop paths and other access infrastructure, the more onerous costs for maintenance of high adrenalin trails are not covered and can be difficult for private landowners to financially offset, depending on the nature of associated facilities such as car parking, bike hire, café, shop, accommodation, etc.

Future Action

The action framework on page 21 of the draft strategy helpfully sets out the breadth of activities which will deliver the strategy's objectives. For those tasks which remain to be completed it would be useful if these actions were made SMART (specific, measurable, realistic and time based). This would help keep wider stakeholders focused and engaged as the strategy moves forward.

In terms of ensuring successful delivery of those actions yet to be completed, it might also be appropriate at this stage to identify potential main delivery partners.