Northern Lands Presentation
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This presentation will cover,

Introduction - location, location, location.

Northern Lands - Kielder Water & Forest Park, singletrack trail development working with volunteers

6 Forest Districts across England provide over 40 million visits for the public, many of which are mountain biking/ cycling related.
Northern England has some of the best singletrack mtb trails in the country.

Kielder Water & Forest Park, 465,000 visits per annum of which it is estimated 84,000 bike rides take place per year.

Hamsterley Forest, 220,000 visits per annum of which similar numbers of 85,000 bike rides take place per year.

Hamsterley hosts the only manned Downhill Centre at Descend Hamsterley, where elite downhillers train and hone their skills.

Other iconic trail centres Include Whinlatter and Grizedale in the Lakes and Gisburn towards the midlands.

With Chopwell Woodland Park on the fringe of Newcastle City, we do have all aspects of mountain biking being undertaken within the forest management area.

In the North East, Forestry Commission England works with the following volunteer mtb groups. Kielder Trail Reavers, Thrunton Trail Builders, Chopwell Trail Builders and Hamsterley Trail Blazers. Each group having a formal committee, constitution and own public liability insurance in place.
Cycling seen as a major area to expand within Northumberland to develop all year round tourism.

Kielder Water & Forest Park mtb trail network (largest off road network in a single location in England at 169km) is seen as a key part of this success.

Volunteer trailbuilding has been key to the success of the Kielder singletrack trails over the last 10 years.

We are dependent on working in partnerships. Working with limited funds, it is key to not only work with mountain bikers, but to also seek out where the growth in the visitors is predicted to be. Dark Skies is another example.

Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust (made up of key partners who manage within the park incl FC and local authority) play a key role in championing the development of the park on all fronts. This allows for strong Kielder voice in tourism within the region.
Northern Lands
Defra invested £463,000 in six projects across the North Pennines AONB, Northumberland National Park, the Northumberland Coast AONB and the Durham Heritage Coast as well as Hamsterley Forest and Kielder Water and Forest Park. This was matched with £286,000 of cash and in kind support from the protected landscape organisations, Durham County Council and Northumberland County Council.

Sandstone Way Dark Skies Electric Bikes Kielder MTB Tasty Trails
Hamsterley Forest High Ropes Course

Kielder MTB Trails

Why?
The project was to enhance the mtb trail network and attract new events to Kielder Water & Forest Park,

Goals
3 new sections of singletrack were constructed giving a new challenge to riders coming to Kielder Water & Forest Park.

Impact
Increased visitors riding the enhanced trail sections, new events planned for 2015 including junior downhill events.

Case studies
7stanes in Scotland, mtb Wales
Campaign poster aimed at riders using the trail centre, a common issue is loads of people want trails, but don’t want to commit time and effort maintaining trails.

Riders look for the next new thing, not always maintaining what they already have access to.

This project across the North East allowed for joined up thinking between landowners and organisations who don’t normally work together on a day to day basis.

This assisted crossover into associated projects such as electric bikes.

Introductory mountain biking seen as important as singletrack difficult graded trails.
Corporate trail days, helped push the project on. Sometimes over 10 people on a day's build. Here a team of staff from Natural England in Durham work on Kersery Cleugh section of trail at Kielder.

In total some 46 people assisted in the trailbuilds at Kielder during 13 months and totalled 1148 hours, which is excellent given the rural location.

Kielder Trail Reavers turn out monthly to volunteer trailbuild, at present the team are focussed on trail maintenance on two trails this year.
At Kielder we delivered as part of Northern Lands Project,

- Upgraded 4 sections of singletrack (changed direction of trail on one section giving new flow following clear fell of former tree crop), giving 4km of upgraded trail across the network.

- Working with additional partner (Sustrans) we also maintained 1.6km of trail on a national cycle trail which comes through the park which had not been maintained fully through the forest for some 25 years!

- This unlocked underspend from the overall Northern Lands Project fund (in the last fortnight of the project) to get more trail work carried out.

- Surfacing material delivered to site, ready for 2015 trailbuilds.

**Funding**

- **£76,000** original total project
- **End of Project £109798**

  Breakdown
  - FC **£18000**
  - Kielder Trail Reavers (in kind value) **£13000**
  - Sustrans **£45000** Additional **£17798**
  - Northern Lands **£45000** Additional **£17798**

- This really demonstrates the power of working in partnership as land manager for Forestry Commission, the commitment was allocate the annual maintenance budget into this project.
- 16% of project costs from FC.
National Cycle Route 10, not maintained by route promoters for some 25 years!

Same route following works Nov 2014, Sustran’s funded, which unlocked underspend for additional singletrack works
What impact on 2015 so far?

**Adults**
2 Downhill competitions so far this year,

5 cross country races planned, including a return of 100 mile 1 lap race (only 1 in the UK) and a further 2 Downhill events planned this autumn/winter.

Day to day mountain biking visits increased since Northern Lands Project. Very busy Easter holiday break with cyclists.

8 Electrics in stock for hire at Kielder Cycle Centre (largest fleet of electric bikes in Northumberland currently).

These are mainly used on the iconic Lakeside Way by leisure riders.

Forrest Dive, Downhill Trail, upgraded via Northern Lands Project.

3 Junior Downhill events since January attracting over 90 young riders to Kielder
Forestry Commission has invested into a new self loading tracked barrow to assist moving material into the trail corridors, where it is difficult to access.

By having stone in place at key locations through the Northern Lands Project this allows us to continue the trail maintenance programme during 2015 at a great pace.

By moving gravel into place, we can maximise the trailbuild days, where volunteers can easily access the material close to the work site compared to tracking in stone for 1km to the worksite.

Project Manager puts in a weekly shift currently to move material, which aids the monthly trailbuild days. Also allows hands on.
and what you will find on the trails are...

Left, new section of singletrack.

Below, Lewisburn Bridge on Lakeside Way- Dark Skies some of the best in Europe.
Northumberland Dark Sky Park

Europe's largest Gold Tier Dark Sky Park.
visitnorthumberland.com/darkskies


Kielder Observatory, Kielder Water & Forest Park.
Why?
Hamsterley Forest has plans to attract a national company to install a Go Ape-style attraction in the forest and investment through this project could accelerate the realisation of this plan. The attraction in Hamsterley. Infrastructure such as way finding and physical improvements plus interpretation are the main areas for investment.

Goals.
A new bridge across the Bedburn Beck, new multi user trail linking into this and mountain bike trail construction will all link into this to give a better product for not just mountain bikers, but all visitors accessing Hamsterley Forest.

Case studies
7stanes in Scotland, mtb Wales
Project lead
Alex MacLennan
A new multi user bridge linking from the visitor centre/ main picnic area was only able to be funded by match in cash from Forestry Commission and match contribution in kind from the volunteer trailbuilding on the single track trail. The bridge gives a new access to the trails.

Forestry Commission Bridge Design Team and also project management examples of the expertise the land managers could bring to the project, which otherwise would be expensive to buy in.

This made the Hamsterley Forest Projects very cost effective to main funders.
Key to the success was creating a new multi user trail linking the forest and leading away from the main car park and onto the trails.

Wetter ground conditions were found and more foundation rock required - this led to higher construction costs.

The new trail has become the most used trail in the forest since opening in Sept 14.
Funding allowed for contractors to create the trail outline and the purchase of materials

This then left a trail corridor ready for completion by local volunteers who are passionate to put their signature to the trail corridor.

One section was overseen by trail designer as it was agreed the finish was beyond local volunteers.

Pikes Teeth, March 2014, during construction.
Pikes Teeth, a section of trail that followed fall line and exited onto the forest road at speed—much to the annoyance of horse riders. This replacement section of trail built by contractors working with well known GB trail designer Pete Laing (7stanes Glentress Scotland). Just out of photo was a section completed by volunteers.
Hamsterley Trailblazers, not only put in huge amounts of effort during the project, they also contributed £20,000 cash raised from mtb events, social events and membership fee’s plus a donation. Some 55 volunteers put in 1300 hours into the project over 13 months.

Local Forestry Commission Ranger assists with the monthly trailbuild days, taking tools and equipment to site.
We delivered as part of Northern Lands Project,
- Constructed New Multi User Trail 400m @ 3m wide specification.
- Constructed Multi User Bridge @ £150,000.
- Built 3 new sections of singletrack, some now the most iconic in the forest.
- Laid out material on a new section of singletrack trail (this is being worked on by volunteers currently) this will longest section through this project at over 1km.
- unlocked underspend from the overall Northern Lands Project fund (in the last fortnight of the project) to get more trail work carried out and add forest play trail alongside the new multi user trail (all in the last 2 weeks of the project)
- Surfacing material delivered to site, ready for 2015 trailbuilds.

**Funding**
- £ 162,000 total project
  - End of project £242,000
- Breakdown
  - FC £30000
  - Hamsterley Trailblazers (in kind value) £13000
  - Beamish Odd Sox (local mtb club) £2750
  - Hamsterley Trailblazers Cash £17250
  - Car Rally Club £2000
  - Northern Lands £97000
  - Additional £65,000
  - Additional £15,000 (underspend)

As land manager, the commitment was cover the additional costs on the multi user bridge, increased construction costs on multi user trail and also match fund play trail equipment.

In essence this was still a very positive outcome to maximise the funding grant.
In return all previous visitor number records have been broken during 2014, partly a result of this project. 39% cost of project from FC.
One of the iconic sections of singletrack within the forest.

Recent Enduro competition
Lessons learnt,
Having robust plans for trail corridors and planning permissions in place was key to so much success in the project. Get ecological plans in place and agreed with county Ecologist well in advance of any construction.

Work closely with the volunteer groups, do all the debating about the trail corridors well in advance of potential funding- this allows for a seamless delivery and buy in from the riders.

Break the project into sizeable chunks for the volunteers and agree in advance where contractors may do whole construction and not just the formation.

If possible, plan a legacy position for the project- at both forests we continue to upgrade the trails with material bought in during 2014 as part of the Northern Lands Project.

Why do it at all?
Mountain Biking and Cycling is still currently one of the fastest growing areas in the UK. Rural tourism economy such as Northumberland and County Durham rely heavily on the forest cycling provision.

The Public Forest Estate is in greater demand these days and by harnessing volunteer energy, working with funders and foresters we have created some of the must ride trail centres in the North of England, not just for mountain biking, but putting the destinations on the map for visitors to come and enjoy in some of the most tranquil areas of the UK.

Finally.
we have some fantastic bike trials in the NE part of North England FD.
We have worked hard to capture the enthusiasm of local trail riders and turn that into currency. The currency is hours of volunteer effort on building and maintaining trails.
3) We have worked hard to make our limited £ from core budgets go further by linking up with external funding opportunities. But this is further enhanced by converting the currency of volunteer hours into £ of in-kind cash contribution

PLAY THE VIDEO....