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THE WOODS ARE WIRED

Scottish Mountain Biking Festival trials TV White Space technology

One of Scotland's major mountain bike events will score a first this weekend as it gets a major digital boost that promises to transform the competitor and spectator experience.

Scottish Enterprise has partnered with the Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland and Microsoft to equip Glentress Forest with cutting edge "TV White Spaces" technology. The trial will allow live coverage of the gruelling international Enduro event at the Tweedlove Bike Festival, which attracts 600 riders from around the world.

Moir Forsyth a Project Manager within the Innovation Directorate of Scottish Enterprise said: "TV White Space technology has the potential to provide a major boost for Scottish tourism.

"Like many rural tourism businesses the majority of mountain biking locations have no or very poor connectivity - whether mobile or internet access. This lack of connectivity to stream live events also significantly limits the international viewing opportunities when Scotland hosts global events such as the Enduro World Series (EWS), which bring significant income into rural locations.

"This is just one of many technological advancements spawned at the Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland. Since it opened a year ago we've welcomed the first clothing range for female mountain bikers from Findra, a Pro-Tow patented device which converts button ski lifts to mountain bike uplifts, an app which shows 3-D models of some of our most popular trails, and a multi-purpose oil and cleaner in one which is taking the market by storm. We're also supporting many products which are still at the development stage and are encouraging a global outlook in these businesses by taking a stand at Eurobike, Europe's largest trade show.

Danny Cowe, Business Development Manager for The Mountain Bike Centre of Scotland, added: "Scotland is currently seen as a global superstar for mountain biking and the Centre for Scotland is an incubator of bike brands. We give these businesses the platform they require to test their products as well as the exposure required to get them off the ground. And it's through the adoption of new technologies such as TV White Space we can revolutionise the growing mountain biking market.

"We're acutely aware that the visitor experience can be negatively impacted by poor connectivity - shutting down their ability to share their experience on social platforms. Beyond this they cannot use smart phones or other mobile devices in order to view or look

and book with local businesses – for example local restaurants. We can see how this clever new technology could hugely improve both the spectator experience and improve their time at centres such as Glentress.”

Jim Beveridge, Senior Director, International Technology Policy, Microsoft said: “Microsoft is right at the forefront of TV White Spaces technology because enabling high speed and low cost data in remote locations changes so many things not just in the UK, but around the world. We’ve successfully trialled it in everything from lifeboats to businesses and now in sport. It brings people together in a way that just wasn’t possible five years ago and it just might bring some of the superstars here this weekend direct to your mobile.”

Ian Reid, chief executive of CENSIS, said: “We’ve worked closely and quickly with the entire consortium to get the project up and running – bringing innovative, indigenous SMEs together with a multinational, world class organisation like Microsoft. This is another instance where sensors are a key enabler for making Scotland and its businesses more competitive on the world stage.

“This project could deliver a significant boost to Glentress’s profile, while also developing infrastructure and services which local businesses can use to take advantage of the adventure sports market. If rolled out across other remote attractions, it could have a significant positive impact on Scottish tourism and the companies which rely on this trade.

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Scott McEwan, Chief Executive, Boston Networks added: “We are delighted to lead the design, installation and commissioning of the TV White Space solution to support the EWS event, especially given the challenging terrain. Glentress is fairly remote and hilly, so designing and delivering a system that will enhance the visitor’s experience, and that could have a transformational effect on both the event and the local area, is an exciting opportunity for us.”

The idea of adopting TV White Space technology to provide connectivity in a remote location was first discussed by Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Mountain Bike Centre for Scotland and Microsoft. The idea quickly captured the interest of two innovative local companies – Boston Networks and IndigoVision and the sensors innovation centre CENSIS, who are all lending their support to the pioneering trial. Boston Networks is also taking the technical lead on the project.

This trial in Glentress Forest aims to test the concept in a densely forested, mountainous rural environment. If successful the hope is that it could be used as one of a number of ways to deliver communications services into rural areas - bringing with it the considerable business benefits connectivity provides.

The concept could also potentially be applied to other important tourism areas such as golf, marine sports and outdoor activity sites where broadband access is currently challenging. The introduction of this technology could make significant economic impact. This Scottish Enterprise initiative supports the Scottish Government's *Digital Ambition for Scotland* on three fronts: the digital economy; digital participation and broadband connectivity.

Ends

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Picture Caption

Competitors and spectators will benefit from innovative TV White Space technology at Scottish mountain biking festival this weekend in Glentress Forest

Notes to Editors

Scottish Enterprise is Scotland's main economic development agency and aims to deliver a significant, lasting effect on the Scottish economy. Our role is to help identify and exploit the best opportunities for economic growth. We support ambitious Scottish companies to compete within the global marketplace and help build Scotland's globally competitive sectors. We also work with a range of partners in the public and private sectors to attract new investment to Scotland and to help create a world-class business environment.

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