

Merrick Forest Stages

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MERRICK RALLY TOWN CENTRE START GETS “GREEN LIGHT”

Organisers of the Merrick Forest Stages Rally in Newton Stewart have been given the go-ahead for a town centre start/finish, following a u-turn by council officials.

Last week, it looked as though the plan - which had the overwhelming support of local traders and townspeople - had come to a halt, after officials said they would not close off Victoria Street on the day of the event, Saturday September 6th.

However, after meeting roads officials in Stranraer on Thursday, rally manager Allan Marshall emerged to say the decision had been reversed and they had now been given the green-light.

“I’m absolutely delighted at the outcome”, said Mr Marshall, “this is a case of people power winning the day and I would like to thank Newton Stewart Business Association and the local community of Newton Stewart for their support”.

Also at the meeting was Mary Prince of the Business Association, Steven Marshall of the Merrick organising committee, and representatives of Dumfries and Galloway Police and the Area Management Committee.

It was argued that a town centre start and finish for the rally – the penultimate round of the County Saab Scottish Championship - would give an added boost to the local economy.

Each round of the championship is being filmed for broadcast on BBC Scotland, and Mr Marshall said: “Hopefully with the media and television coverage, it will help put Newton Stewart on the map and attract more competitors, visitors and holiday makers to this beautiful part of Scotland and assist the failing economy”.

It was agreed to have the road closure this year on a one year trial to be reviewed after the date of the event.

The closure of Victoria Street will apply from 6am-6pm on September 6th.

The "Merrick" was awarded the Chairman's Cup as "best event" in last year's Scottish Championship, with competitors praising the quality of the stages.

The organisers are aiming to build on the success of the 2007 event by following a similar format, but with even fewer road miles between stages.

With both scrutineering and signing-on based in Newton Stewart, the event will become even more compact.

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