

WORK TO START ON "MERRICK" SERVICE AREA

Work is scheduled to start on transforming a derelict area of land in the Galloway Forest into a purpose-built service park for next month's Merrick Forest Stages Rally.

At other times of the year, the ground will be available for a variety of large-scale outdoor events – from mountain biking to military exercises.

Once planning consent is granted, engineers will have ten days to level out the one-hectare site at Glencaird, on the edge of Glentroll forest, in time for the rally on September 8th.

When completed, the site will have a hard-standing area for parking, as well as improved access, and a one way system to allow for the safe arrival and departure of vehicles.

Rally manager Allan Marshall said: “By creating a central service area close to Glentroll forest, we have been able to greatly reduce the road mileage between stages – making the Merrick one of the most compact events on the Scottish championship calendar”

A former civil engineering depot, the ground has been used in the past as an exercise base for the MOD.

However, Forestry Commission Scotland is keen to make all-year use of the facility as part of its tourism strategy for Galloway Forest Park.

Recreation Manager for the Galloway Forest District, Sandy White, said: “This is an ideal site for the Merrick rally, since it sits on the edge of the Glentroll forest close to the main stages. Beyond that, there is the bigger picture as we try to encourage more visitors – and particularly repeat visitors – to the forest park”.

Mr White went on: “Organisers of large events – such as mountain bike endurance races – look for large areas of ground which can be used for parking, administration and other functions. This purpose-built area will be absolutely ideal”.

Ends

Robin Wyllie /07/08/07