

SERVICE PARK "BOOST"



The construction of a purpose-built service park for this weekend's Merrick Forest Stages Rally has been hailed as a "great boost" which will help breathe new life into the Glentroll area. South of Scotland MSP and Environment Minister Michael Russell was speaking at the opening of the Glencaird site, north of Glentroll Village, on Saturday.

A former civil engineering depot has been transformed into a parking area of about 11,000 square metres, with improved access and a one-way system for the safe arrival and departure of cars and support vehicles. Mr Russell praised the rally organisers, Forestry Commission Scotland

and the local authority for investing in the project. "It'll draw people in, and so help towards the much needed regeneration of the community", said Mr Russell, before cutting a ribbon at the entrance to the site.

In his remarks, Merrick Rally Manager Allan Marshall thanked Piotr Lewicki of Dumfries and Galloway Council for helping to secure £5000 funding through the European-backed Community Economic Regeneration Fund – a sum matched by the rally organisers. Mr Marshall also paid tribute to the Glentroll Residents Association, Cree Valley Community Council and Newton Stewart Business Association for their support in getting the project off the ground. He said as well as the Merrick, it was hoped other events - such as the annual Lombard Revival Rally - would use the base. When not in use for rallies, the facility will be available for a wide-range of outdoor activities – from orienteering to mountain biking.

Speaking on behalf of Forestry Commission Scotland, Galloway District Tourism Manager Sandy White said the development demonstrated what "a few active minds with a common objective can achieve in a relatively short space of time" – a reference to the tight schedule faced by his engineers in clearing trees and shrubs and levelling the site in time for Saturday's event.

