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In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



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Thank you for your e-mail of 11 August to John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, about potential support for Lowther Hills Ski Club in your constituency. I am replying as policy for the economic development of Scotland's five commercial snowsports centres falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

While Lowther Hills' ambition to expand is laudable, with such club's fulfilling an undoubtedly important role in encouraging snowsports activity, I should make clear that we have not written to the five snow sports centres offering them support in the way suggested by Lowther Hills. I hope the following helps in setting out the current position.

A strategic approach to replace ski tow and uplift infrastructure at Scotland's five commercial snowsports centres – Cairngorm, Glencoe, Glenshee, the Lecht and Nevis Range - is currently being developed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise. This follows on from the 2011 Scottish Snowsports Strategic Review, which identified the need for consideration of the case for funding, replacement and reconstruction of the infrastructure as being a high priority. The researchers engaged in the Review process were instructed to analyse the present state of the industry in Scotland and recommend actions to put it on a more sustainable footing. Full details can be found at:  
<http://www.hie.co.uk/search/google.html?q=Scottish%20Ski%20Review> .

I can appreciate the disappointment Lowther Hills' members will feel at being ineligible for this support from the enterprise agencies but I am keen to see such an ambitious club supported where possible through other potential routes. You, of course, know that Business Gateway offers a first point of contact for all publicly funded advice to business in Scotland, which can cover a number of aspects including help with creating a business plan. Although Lowther Hills is a club rather than a business, it may be worth exploring what support might be available. Full details of Business Gateway services can be viewed at:  
[www.business.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.business.scotland.gov.uk) .

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Lowther Hills might also wish to be aware of the Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund, which supports the Scottish Government's legacy ambitions to encourage more people to be active and take part in sport. Physical activity can help people become healthier and fitter. The Fund will do this by providing funding for capital projects which create or improve places in local communities where people can go to get active. Grants of between £10,000 and £100,000 are available for a very wide range of community-led projects such as new bike or skate parks, outdoor adventure facilities, walking routes, or new projects within school estates. In total, £10 million is available until 2015. Further information can be found at: <http://www.sportscotland.org.uk/funding/legacy2014activeplacesfund> .

For projects that require funding of less than £10,000, Awards For All Scotland helps improve local communities and groups with the opportunity to apply for grant of between £500 and £10,000 for projects. Further information is available at: <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/awardsforallscotland> .

Finally, as Tourism Minister I am always keen to explore the benefits that businesses, community groups, third sector organisations and clubs might accrue from linking into our tourism industry. I feel therefore that there may be potential for a discussion on how Lowther Hills members can publicise their club, when it's new facilities open in December, by engaging with the local VisitScotland Regional Manager. It is unclear whether Lowther Hills' intermittent nature of activity would justify a permanent entry on the ski section of VisitScotland's website, but Paula McDonald, Regional Director, VisitScotland, will be able to advise. Ms McDonald can be contacted at VisitScotland, 64 Whitesands, Dumfries, DG1 2RS or by e-mail at: [paula.mcdonald@visitscotland.com](mailto:paula.mcdonald@visitscotland.com) .

If Lowther Hills is considering running an event for its opening season, perhaps there might be some potential for the club to submit an application for support for future festivals via EventScotland's National Event Programme. The next round closes on 3 October for events from May 2015 onwards. Should funding be unavailable, there might be scope for free access to the National Events Calendar. I would suggest discussing possible options with one of EventScotland's event managers. More information can be found at: <http://www.eventscotland.org/funding-and-resources/national-events-programme/> .

Similarly if the Club is thinking of some opening gala during 2014, it might consider joining the Homecoming partner programme. While there is no financial support, the event would benefit from VisitScotland marketing and promotion. Further information is available at: [http://www.eventscotland.org/partner\\_programme](http://www.eventscotland.org/partner_programme)

I hope that this reply provides you with clarity on the position with regard to the support currently being considered for Scotland's five snowsports centres and the other types of support that could be available for skiing clubs. I hope that Lowther Hills give consideration to some of the options for support mentioned above and would like to take this opportunity to wish the club, its members and the local communities in the area well for the inauguration in December and the club's future success.

*Yours truly*  
*Fergus Ewing*  
**FERGUS EWING**