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First sod turned on Forrest's Barwon Flow Trails

Council today welcomed Secretary for Regional Victoria Danielle Green to Forrest for the turning of the first sod on the Forrest Barwon Flow Trails, which is supported by \$500,000 from the *Regional Infrastructure Fund* and will be designed and constructed by Australian company and world-leading trail builder Dirt Art.

The development of the Barwon Flow Trails is the initial phase of a broader Forrest Mountain Bike Trail Revitalisation project and will help to open up the area for a wider range of mountain bike enthusiasts, including all-ability riders and as a family-friendly trail riding destination, alongside an increased offering for the more experienced riders.

Two down-trails and one up-trail will be established as part of this first stage, with a 1.6km beginner flow trail and 1.2km intermediate flow and jump trail. Machine built, then hand-formed, the new trails will be built to accommodate adaptive hand cycles.

"The Forrest Mountain Bike Revitalisation Project is a significant investment toward the future of Colac Otway, so it's a rewarding day to be launching the first phase of the project and we thank the Victorian Government for their investment in our region," said Colac Otway Shire Council Deputy Mayor, Cr Graham Costin.

"The project will enhance Forrest's reputation as one of Australia's premier mountain-biking destinations, adding to the local nature-based attractions and supporting our tourism and hospitality industries as they bounce back."

The Forrest Mountain Bike Trails opened in 2005 and have since hosted a number of significant mountain bike events, including the Otway Odyssey.

"We're excited by the prospect of all-ability and all-ages mountain biking events in the future, especially for families," said Cr Costin. "Being able to create inclusive sporting events will be fantastic."

Forrest was one of Australia's first mountain bike towns, using mountain biking as a driver for tourism and economic development following the slow-down of the forestry industry in the region. When completed, the revitalisation of the Forrest Mountain Bike Trails will re-establish Forrest as a nationally-significant mountain bike destination.

The Forrest Mountain Bike Revitalisation Project has been made possible by \$2.07M from the Victorian Government and \$250,000 from Colac Otway Shire Council.

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