

News story: Scottish Secretary to Welcome 100-Plus Lockerbie Cyclists to Edinburgh Castle

This Saturday [13 October 2018], Scottish Secretary David Mundell will welcome more than a hundred cyclists from the south of Scotland to Edinburgh Castle as part of a nearly 700-mile cycle to mark the 30th anniversary of the Lockerbie bombing.

The cyclists will ride en masse from Lockerbie to Edinburgh, as the second stage of a 672 mile Lockerbie – Syracuse cycle which started with visits to local schools around Lockerbie. A group of five local cyclists will then travel on to the USA to complete the Arlington – Syracuse leg of the journey.

On 21 December 1988, 259 passengers on board Pan Am Flight 103 from London Heathrow were killed by a terrorist bomb which detonated in the skies above Lockerbie. The aircraft wreckage crashing on the town killed 11 residents on the ground.

Thirty years on, 'Cycle to Syracuse' aims to complete the journey on behalf of those who could not. It will remember the 270 lives lost in the air and on the ground, the work of the emergency services, and the response of the townspeople in the aftermath.

A core of five cyclists will represent Lockerbie Academy, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the Scottish Ambulance Service and the RAF Mountain Rescue Service. They all have strong links with the town and the bombing.

The core group of cyclists are:

- Colin Dorrance: On the night Colin was an 18-year-old off-duty police officer (three months into his career in the police service and at the time Scotland's youngest police officer). He saw the plane crash and was immediately recalled to duty. Colin was involved in the search and rescue and recovery operation for a month. He is also a former pupil of Lockerbie Academy.
- David Whalley: David led the RAF search and rescue team on the night.
- Paul Rae: Paul was an 18-year-old Lockerbie resident in 1988. On the night he volunteered to help search the hills.
- David Walpole: David is now a paramedic in the Lockerbie/Annan area. In 1988 he was a bank manager in Dumfries.
- Brian Asher: Brian is the head teacher at Lockerbie Academy and responsible for building the school's links with Syracuse.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

I was brought up in Lockerbie, and know how deeply the air disaster

has impacted on the town. But I have also seen the very positive links which have grown between Lockerbie and Syracuse University over the years since. As we approach the 30th anniversary of the bombing, it is fitting that five local men are making the journey to Syracuse to remember those lost, and to raise money for a local youth mental health charity. I wish them good luck for their journey, and look forward to meeting them again in Syracuse for the University's 30th service of remembrance.

Colin Dorrance said:

Our journey to Syracuse started in the primary schools around Lockerbie. We have had the opportunity to tell the children about the bombing, but also about the wonderful opportunity that they may have to study at Syracuse in the future.

It has encouraged them to speak to their parents about the bombing, learning something of how it affected the older generation in 1988. We are all reminded of just how selfless and heroic so many people were, and how widely it is still talked about today. Of course, for some, the journey will never end.

My teammates and I are looking forward to being joined by our friends, neighbours and colleagues on the Lockerbie-Edinburgh leg this weekend. And then we focus on the 600 miles we will cycle in the USA to Syracuse University. The prospect is exciting, humbling and moving all in one.

As well as marking the anniversary, the cycle will celebrate the strong links between the town of Lockierbie and Syracuse University, where 35 of the victims were studying. Since 1990, a 'Syracuse Scholarship' has allowed young people from Lockerbie Academy to study in the USA. Fifty eight students have now studied at the University, forging strong bonds and friendships between families on both sides of the Atlantic.

The cycle group will also raise money for local youth mental health charity Soul Soup, to employ a dedicated worker within Lockerbie Academy.

On their journey the team will carry a specially-crafted Shepherd's Crook, sourced from wood in the Tundergarth area, and a book of commemoration. They will be presented to the Chancellor and President of Syracuse University as gifts from the town of Lockerbie.