

Speech: David Mundell addresses Cycle to Syracuse participants in New York

"As I said when we hosted a reception at Edinburgh Castle a couple of weeks ago, Colin and I met over a year ago at the King's Arms hotel in Lockerbie and to come from the King's Arms in Lockerbie to the centre of New York City is quite something. I'm sure they do have some similarities but I'm not sure what they obviously are at this moment.

"I am tremendously supportive of this initiative. I think it is really really important that not only do we respect and pay homage to the families of the 270 people who lost their lives on the 21st December 1988 and everybody else who has been caught up in those events over the last 30 years but also that we do look forward. That's very much what the Cycle to Syracuse has been about. It is about combining those two important elements, remembrance, respect and looking forward and strengthening and deepening our relationship and friendship with Syracuse University, with the wider community there and indeed with all relatives of the 270 victims. I'm really pleased this year to learn the ribbon ceremony which I am hoping to be part of tomorrow that there will be ribbon for each of the 270 victims because to me Syracuse University has become so much an emotional centre for those events. A place of comfort for relatives and a place where people can reflect on those events but also for new and positive relationships, new friendships and I think that is a really really important role that Syracuse is playing.

"I do feel a little bit of a fraud in relation to the efforts of the guys because I waved them off in Lockerbie on a very wet day and then I met them again at Edinburgh Castle never having set foot on a peddle. I'm here at this halfway point in the journey likewise never having set foot on a peddle and I know you've done the hard work. I know from the reports back from Oliver how well received you've been by relatives, by friends, by people who want to know more about these events and want to make sure that they are marked in a proper and respectful way.

"I think this Cycle to Syracuse will have been for many very cathartic in terms of just being able to deal with issues, of being able to speak about some of those events. I know back home in Lockerbie, speaking to some people before I came out, for some people this is the first time in 30 years they have been able to speak about events which happened to them that night or immediately thereafter. I think that that is a really positive thing, an opportunity for people really to, as I say, in terms of the Syracuse motto, look back but act forward.

"I think that the cycle has done something on so many different levels. It has been an appropriate and respectful marking of the 30th anniversary of these events. It has been an opportunity for the community in Lockerbie to move forward to a certain extent. It has been an opportunity to strengthen and deepen our friendship with Syracuse University. It has been an opportunity to celebrate the 58 young people from Lockerbie who have already

had the opportunity to come to Syracuse and look forward to many more coming to the university. I want myself without having any focussed thought to use it as an opportunity to strengthen those bonds between our community, Syracuse and indeed the friends and families of all of the 270 victims.

“On that basis it gives me a great deal of pleasure to wave the guys off on this next leg. I’m heading myself up to Syracuse but because we need to ensure that the UKG has a budget I will require to return before you arrive unless you’re extremely speedy and move ahead of schedule.

“I just want to conclude by saying it has been an honour and privilege and I know my son Oliver who is our MSP, Lockerbie member of the Scottish Parliament shares this, it has been an honour and a privilege for me to associated with this project. It really really has. So thank you guys. “