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Dear Colin,

2006-09-19

Response to Consultation on Glenmore Forest Design Plan

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on this plan. It is clear that you and your colleagues have done a great deal of work to prepare it and we welcome and strongly support FC's has attempt to integrate the needs of recreation, landscape, biodiversity and timber production and the linking of this to a long term view of the future the forest. We have few comments to make on the details of felling coups, etc but would make mainly a few basic points.

1.3 Vision and Brief – Strategic Overview.

This section does not really set the FC's Glenmore Estate in its full context. We have responded to the FC's consultation on the proposal to purchase the HIE Estate on Cairn Gorm and we attach a copy which lists aspects of the context that we strongly believe are relevant to the Glenmore Forest Design Plan(GFDP).

Chief among the implications of the points we make in that submission, and which we re-emphasize here is that the GFDP applies only to the lower half of the Forest Park – that is the section under FC's management. A single unified plan is needed for the whole area from the summit of Cairn Gorm down, well integrated with those for Rothiemurchus and Abernethy. As far back as 1985, the Scottish Select Committee, after its investigation of the situation, made such a recommendation. It is not possible for example to efficiently manage deer numbers, outdoor recreation, or the restoration of the whole ecological gradation including restoration of the natural tree and scrub line, except on such a basis. As another example, the issue of management of water quality is best approached on a catchment basis, as much recent research has shown and the catchment is largely defined by the Forest Park boundaries.

We therefore strongly urge that this GFDP be published as such a unified plan!

Under *Environmental Issues* in this section, we are puzzled by the lack of reference to the Cairngorms Biodiversity Action Plan and the support and guidance that could be obtained from this. The proposal in section 3.3 for example to create an aspen woodland is welcome, but parallel to this is the need to create an aspen woodland of sufficient size that also permits the development of the insect and other lifeforms unique to aspen as a species.

Under *Economic Issues* we also welcome the intention to consider the potential for productive hardwoods as this has been much neglected. Even limited supplies of good hardwood timber can support a significant local industry producing hardwood based goods that reflect the area and are appealing to tourists.

1.FDP Area –

1.4 Objectives

We support the wide range of objectives and attached priority levels laid out in this table, but with the following caveats.

- a) Recreation – Returning to the theme of a unified management plan, the area has presently two interpretive centres – one at the FC's centre and the other run by Cairngorm Mountain Ltd. Frankly, only one is needed and the FC's is the best placed to meet the needs of most people. Secondly the FC's center tends to interpret the lower half of the full ecological zonation and the CML's the upper half, when it is the completeness and continuity of the zonation that is a key feature of it. This situation really needs addressed.
- b) Soil – Again this relates to the question of unified management. Much of the past and potential problems of soil management and soil erosion, are situated in Coire Cas. Excessive soil erosion there in the past badly damaged the Abhain Ruigh-eunachan and its biodiversity on FC land and indeed the outflow area into Loch Morlich. Soil management therefore requires that high standards of erosion control are observed at these higher altitudes and this needs taken into account in the plan.
- c) Community – We agree that close connections between FC and the local community are important, but would point out that, given the national significance of the area in its own right, and with respect to its gateway and other roles in the National Forest Park, an interface with the national community is also important. This could perhaps be through NGO

representatives of the communities of interest in recreation and environmental protection.

These points apart, within this very detailed plan, we would offer only one or two additional comments.

Under Section 4.2.3 we note the areas denoted as of important recreational value but the road from Aviemore does not seem to be among them. We feel this is an important omission. Apart from the fact that there are many walkers and cyclists on this route, most people arrive in the Forest Park by car along it. This part of the day, the "*journey to play*" is recognized through research as an important part of the overall experience of holiday makers journeying to a destination like the Forest Park. At present, the vegetation and tree growth along this route lack diversity. The relevant US Forest Service Handbook on the management of road verges demonstrates how well such margins can be diversified, and indeed it has been shown that average car speeds drop by up to ten miles per hour through such measures. The current roadside vegetation and other features need to be diversified, giving experiences such as fine autumn colour or spring blossom.

Lastly, in section 4.9, we note from the maps that there is an intention to retain some small areas of Norway Spruce (Denoted as NS) and Douglas Fir (Denoted as DF). We urge that no Norway Spruce be retained. This is not urged from a "purist" point of view, but because of its capacity for prolific seed production and dispersal, constantly leading to problems elsewhere. It can regenerate under quite dense stands of Scots Pine and the seed is windborne to surprising distances. There are many NS seedlings for example regenerating and growing well right to the summit of the Kincardine Hills and which will need removal. This "weeding" is a steady expense and the aggressive colonization a constant problem which could be avoided by elimination of NS.

We would be happy to discuss any of the above issues and repeat our support for the wide focus taken in developing this plan and detailed design accompanying it.

Yours sincerely,

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