



Carsphairn Community Woodland Ltd (CCWL)

Rebecca Carr
[REDACTED]

Forest Enterprise Scotland
Silvan House
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

21st January 2019

Dear Rebecca

Many thanks for the representation letter and our opportunity to respond to it.

At the Carsphairn Community Woodland Community Open Day on 5th October 2018, Mr [REDACTED] made us aware that he was the owner of the fishing rights along part of the river adjoining Muirdrochwood and expressed concerns that he believed that the proposed outdoor education centre might affect the fishing club. We have since requested and received more information from him and have assured him that we will take this information into account with any project going forwards. (Letters attached). We are of the opinion that the proposed outdoor education centre would be able to make use of the local waterways with minimal or no impact on fishing in the area. We believe that the positive effect of allowing young people to experience various watersports as part of their experience at the proposed centre would be a valuable contribution to their wider education.

Although FES provided details of the Sporting and Mineral rights to CCW, they could not advise who had retained fishing rights. CCW contacted Scottish Power to try and determine these, but had not had a response prior to our community engagement. As neither our Forest Plan nor our Outdoor Education Plans include any fishing provision we did not feel the community engagement should be delayed. It is unfortunate that we were not aware of Mr [REDACTED]'s interests earlier and were therefore unable to assuage his concerns.

CCW are committed to working closely with stakeholders to ensure that we protect private interest wherever possible, while ensuring we fulfil our delivery on community benefits.

To respond to the specific points made in the letter:

The proposal would interfere with the Angling Club's rights of fishing on Kendoon loch. i.e. the policing of poaching would be impossible:

By working with the angling club Carsphairn Community Woodland would take seriously any issues of misuse of public access and provide guidance of responsible access in line with the Outdoor Access Code. It is felt that the presence of more people walking in the area will help reduce poaching opportunities and the proposed additional footpath alongside the loch will improve access for fishermen too. Public access alongside fishing is a common situation in Scotland and is not generally seen as a reason to prevent public access. We are confident that the project can provide a huge community benefit for all, alongside the private fishing.

There is a large area of larch disease within the existing forest which requires ongoing management to prevent it spreading to the private woodlands in the Carsphairn area.

Muirdrochwood is part of the Phytophthora ramorum Management Zone, created due to the widespread infection in South West Scotland. Although it is recognised that there is little that can be done to stop the spread of the disease within the zone, FES are currently undertaking a large scale felling programme to address this issue. The vast majority of larch will be felled prior to sale and, as part of the on-going forest management by Carsphairn Community Woodland after acquisition, any remaining larch trees showing the disease will be felled and used for community benefit (building or firewood as appropriate).

It is a commercial forestry block of too large an area for the production of firewood. Firewood production is more suited to the coppicing of hardwoods and requires to be seasoned before it can be burnt.

As outlined in the business plan, the aim will be to manage Muirdrochwood partly as a commercial forest for community benefit, either selling or using timber and then replanting as indicated by an agreed forest management plan, partly as an enhanced community woodland for walking, cycling, biodiversity and a range of activities run in the community hub and partly for an outdoor education centre for young people, but also available to the community. Firewood production for the community will indeed form part of the forest activities, using wood (both hard and soft) unsuitable for timber production, and fulfilling a requirement for the local community. Our firewood plans account for approximately 14% of timber produced over 25 years (10,000m³ of 70,000m³) and will support local employment and maximize value available from the forest.

On 28/5/1968 [REDACTED] took up the Lease of the shootings on Marscalloch and following him, I did also. One of the main reasons I did not renew my Lease was that the Forestry Commission required proof of adequate culling and control of the deer population in the forest. I assume one reason being that the Deer Commission acquired more powers and became more pro-active in wishing to control the increasing deer population in Scotland. I therefore question whether the above proposal fits in with this management issue.

The figures provided by FES indicate that actual cull levels are well below the 10 animals set (2016/17 - 3 Roe Deer, 2017/18 - 5 Roe Deer). As detailed in our Business Plan, CCW are fully aware of the requirement to make adequate provision for deer control as part of our plans. We are fortunate to have a very able person on the management team who is an experienced and insured marksman able to oversee and undertake control of the deer.

I have concerns also for the long-term outlook: my family have been landowners in Carsphairn for 314 years. If the current enthusiastic proposers sell up and move away from the area, would there be anyone willing to carry on with this massive investment?

1. This would indeed be a massive, but much needed investment in this area: It has suffered from historic loss of agricultural and mining jobs and current land use in the area of farming, forestry and wind farms, contribute very few local jobs. This acquisition would provide the community with an opportunity to create a number of new local jobs through forestry, community activities and activities and the outdoor education centre.
2. Bringing in new families could help regenerate the community and provide pupils for the village school: At a PTA meeting held on 19th December 2018 a well attended meeting was held to discuss the future of the school, which has existed for 295 years and is now under threat of closure. There was a united determination to prevent this from happening and retain the school for future pupils. The possibility of new jobs resulting from the acquisition of Muirdrochwood was welcomed by those present at the meeting as a significant part of the hoped for regeneration of the area.
3. The woodland would become a significant and sustainable community asset, owned by the community, for the community and is currently the only land potentially available to the community. The intention is that new families are attracted to Carsphairn through the jobs created and increased vibrancy of the community and that some of the new residents would be among those taking the project forward in years to come. Land will always be a valuable asset to a community and woodland is recognised as a strong investment, likely to always provide a source of income.

4. Carsphairn and its residents have a long tradition of managing community owned property such as Lagwyne Hall and the Village Shop premises. CCW believe that ownership of Muirdrochwood will build on this, involving local people on both a voluntary and professional basis.

The sale of Muirdrochwood was notified under, what is now, the New Woodland Investment Programme. If CCW are not successful in purchasing the forest it will be sold on the open market to a private investor. CCW strongly believe that the most secure future for the forest, its neighbours and the local community is in our hands, and not under the control of those primarily motivated by profit.

We trust that the above will help clarify matters and ensure Mr [REDACTED] has confidence in our capability to deliver this project with the minimum of disruption to others, while benefiting the wider community.

Regular updates have been made at Community Council meetings and via our website throughout the history of the project. CCW are determined to involve as many local people as possible in our project, and welcome any who wish to join our membership or become part of the management committee. If Mr [REDACTED] feels he would like to be more involved, we would be very pleased to discuss this with him.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Secretary, Carsphairn Community Woodland