

By email to: fiona.chalmers@zuluecosystems.com

Fiona Chalmers
Woodland Projects Manager
Zulu Ecosystems

21 March 2024

Dear Ms Chalmers

Consultation on the Long-Term Forest Plan for Barrisdale Estate, Knoydart

Introduction

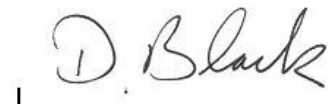
1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposals for a Long Term Forest Plan for the woodland in Barrisdale Estate. Our interests lie generally with the effect of proposals on mountain landscapes, especially National Scenic Areas and Wild Land Areas, and along routes to mountain summits and climbing crags.
2. Firstly, Mountaineering Scotland supports the creation of native woodlands as a means of addressing the climate and nature crises, where the land can naturally support them. We encourage initiatives that result in greater habitat diversity and connectivity.
3. Secondly, our preference is for natural regeneration of tree and shrub species, which has a landscape and genetic fit with the area and can enhance wild land qualities. We also advocate that infrastructure used for land management in the uplands, specifically fencing and tracks, be avoided where possible and be kept to a minimum where it is demonstrated to be necessary.
4. We welcome your intention to extend woodland cover across the hillside, and to achieve this in the longer term through sustained culling of red deer to reach a density that allows for natural regeneration of trees in the landscape.
5. We do understand that populations of herbivores on Knoydart may not be at a level that allows this at this time to be achieved without deer fencing, and that deer fencing may be necessary to enclose the SSSI until a new generation of trees and shrubs become established. We ask that the deer fencing be removed once it has achieved its purpose.
6. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code advises that putting up a high fence over long stretches of open country without providing gates, gaps or other access points might be considered unreasonable (section 4.9, bullet point 4).
7. Our specific interest here lies with the placing of deer fencing that may cross the main access routes to the summits of the Munro Luinne Bheinn and the Corbett Sgùrr a' Choire-bheithe.
8. There are routes described in the SMT Munro and Corbett Guides and the Walkhighlands website, which most walkers will follow, but some walkers will choose to follow their own routes. We suggest looking at the Strava Global Heatmap to get an indicative feel for where walkers go, and to provide crossing points where the intended deer fence crosses walking routes.

9. We recommend that self-closing gates be provided where the fence crosses paths or tracks, or informal routes used to walk or cycle to summits and tops. Away from the main routes stiles with an animal flap would be adequate for crossing, especially where the terrain is rough or remote.

10. Regarding the proposed access track for extracting deer carcasses, we would expect the estate to construct this sympathetically with the landscape – to a width of 2m maximum and to follow the guidance set out in the document 'Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands' (SNH 2015) in order to avoid scarring the landscape in this wild and beautiful part of the Highlands.

I hope these comments are helpful to you as you develop your proposals.

Yours sincerely



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