

By email to: [forest@knoydart.org](mailto:forest@knoydart.org)

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Dear Grant

### **Consultation on potential new woodland creation at Kilchoan, Knoydart**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposals for two new woodland creation projects at Torcuilleainn and Torr a Bhalbhainn.

Mountaineering Scotland supports activities that lead towards creating a richer and wilder environment which address both the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis, and for the benefit of people. This includes native woodland management and expansion, and especially the regeneration of native woodlands and scrub where the land can naturally support them.

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.

We 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.

We welcome your intention to extend woodland cover across the hillside. Our preference would be for this to be achieved without deer fencing, by managing deer in the local range, but we understand the challenge of achieving this.

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). We therefore welcome your intention to provide numerous crossing points on the fence line.

Mountaineering Scotland suggests the following general guidance: -

Gates should be provided where the fence crosses paths or tracks, or informal routes used to walk or cycle to summits and tops.

Crossing points need to be provided at places where people are likely to need to cross the fence, such as hilltops, ridgelines, side ridges where they meet the main ridge, and places where the fence changes direction.

Away from paths or tracks stiles would be adequate for crossing, especially where the terrain is rough or remote.

Crossings should be provided at regular intervals so that the public do not have to make unreasonable detours. Where use is relatively infrequent it would be reasonable to provide crossings every kilometre or less.

Crossing points should be clearly visible to the public. Arrows on the fence, indicating the direction to the nearest crossing would make it easier for them to be located, and especially in poor visibility.

### **Specific comments**

**Torcuilleainn:** We note that a route to Ladhar Bheinn crosses up through the proposed woodland area to the col at Mam Sudheig, then along the ridge. This route is mentioned in the Munro Guide and on the Walkhighlands website. It is not a path as such and walkers tend to find their own route up, as can be seen from the Strava heat map: <https://www.strava.com/heatmap#13.81/-5.59303/57.04795/hot/run>

It is a fairly rough ascent, with two main start points seen on the Strava map, one of which seems to coincide with your proposed gate. Currently walkers appear to take their own line up the hillside, but if this is planted up, you may wish to consider leaving a clear route for walkers through the woodland, rather than trampling through the planting scheme. If you do provide a gate at the track and a more-or-less defined route through the planting, then you may wish to consider another self-closing gate on the top of the fence to allow walkers through, rather than a more informal stile crossing. This would be a public benefit and it is certainly easier to use a gate in a deer fence if walkers have a dog with them. The stiles are fine for those who wish to take their own line up or down.

The descent from the Corbett Sgurr Coire Choinnichean appears to be further west of your fence line, although the Strava heat map may indicate that some walkers take a route down from Mam Sudheig, so stiles here would be beneficial.

**Torr a Bhalbhainn:** The proposed crossing points for this woodland block seem appropriate, with the main routes to the Corbett above starting from Inverie.

I hope that these comments are useful to you as you develop your proposals, and please do get in touch if there is anything further you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely



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