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By email to
Gareth Phillips (gareth.phillips@forestry.gov.uk)
Forestry Commission Scotland
Highland and Islands Conservancy
"Woodlands"
Fodderty Way
Dingwall
Ross-Shire
IV15 9XB

4 May 2018

Dear Mr Phillips,

Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS): Glen Loyde & Ardochy LTFF
Case reference: 17FGS18678

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Glen Loyde & Ardochy Long Term Forest Plan.

Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains, and acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering. Mountaineering Scotland also acts on behalf of the British Mountaineering Council on matters related to landscape and access in Scotland, and provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

Mountaineering Scotland wholly supports the principle of woodland regeneration and in particular the development of native woodlands and the replacement or removal of non-native species in areas that would benefit from native woodland. It is noted favourably that a range of tree species are proposed, with the long-term retention of Scots Pine in places.

The use of native broadleaf tree species to soften edges and riparian zones is noted and is a welcome feature in modern forestry. Native broadleaves will be planted along the watercourses and adjacent to the loch SSSI. This should also aid landscaping if the intention to restructure the larger, more angular coups are viewed from higher ground and not just from the main A87.

The plan is generally supportive with respect to managing public access stating that recreational access will be maintained by ensuring laybys are accessible and routes to the hills are available during operations, and that appropriate signage will be used to inform the public of forest activities.

However, it is particularly important that these appropriate measures are in place and maintained during and following periods of forestry operations. Staff undertaking forestry operations will be required to be fully briefed regarding any diversions that may need to be put in place.

It is assumed that all measures put in place will adhere to industry-approved good practice guidelines with respect to managing work sites where people are exercising their access rights, in particular the "Managing woodland access and forest operations in Scotland" leaflet. This should

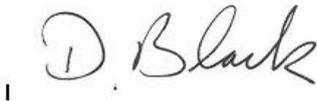
include removal of warning signs when works are suspended or completed, as we have experienced issues with non-removal of signs which have effectively and unnecessarily prohibited access.

We note the statement in Section C.2.9 that improvements to the forest road network should benefit recreation. This is a helpful consideration in multipurpose forestry. Section A.6.7 states that there are currently two disused waymarked trails and that any associated paths are now overgrown.

However the Plan states that one of the old waymarked routes will be upgraded to a proper forest road. It is a moot point if an upgraded haulage track is a recreational benefit, but if it is necessary then we would hope that a softer edge of broadleaved tree species be planted to avoid the hard, dark green corridor that develops after about ten years.

Likewise with the remaining waymarked trail, a recreational benefit would be to reduce the appearance of being overgrown without creating a hard route. Footpath retention and drainage would be helpful, with a sensitive softer edge of broadleaved species being instated along the route. This broadleaf edge is proposed for riparian areas, and we would expect similar treatment for the main recreational access routes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Black". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'D'.

Davie Black
Access & Conservation Officer
Mountaineering Scotland