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Dear Mr Taylor,

**Forestry Grant Scheme: Ledgowan Forest
Case reference: 16FGS09795**

Thank you for the final layout maps for the above scheme, together with a summary agreement on access that was prepared with comments from the Ramblers Association and ourselves (Mountaineering Scotland). I understand that the consultation is now over, but nonetheless pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the scheme.

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.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 enshrined a right of responsible access on users and the associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) details how land and water should be managed responsibly for access. Access rights should be respected when managing land or water by "taking access rights into account when planning and implementing any major land use change or development" (SOAC, 2005).

The area to which the plan relates is situated to the southwest of Achnasheen in the Ledgowan Forest, on the lower slopes of the hills bounded by Loch a' Chroisg to the north and the A890 to the south. Although unlikely to impact on those exercising their statutory right of responsible access to any Munros or Corbetts, there are nonetheless a number of lower hills close to the proposed scheme to which the right of responsible access should be maintained.

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. It is noted favourably that, in addition to conifers, native broadleaves, native low density broadleaves, native Scots pine and native upland birch are to be planted.

Visitors to this area have a statutory right of access so long as they are acting responsibly and in compliance with the SOAC, and this right of access is not restricted to built roads and paths.

The "Public Access Statement" is encouraging in that it endorses the estate's commitment to the SOAC, particularly with respect to deer management activities, signage, and taking dogs onto the estate. It is also noted that the erection of any new deer fences will be done to allow for public access, and gates are to be provided at a number of points.

From the information provided, it is not stated how public access will be managed during forestry operations. For example, clear signage and the need for people to be directed to use a particular or alternative route will need to be provided at car parks or other access points. Staff undertaking forestry operations should also 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 completed.

Mountaineering Scotland is happy to publicise revised access arrangements, assuming the alternatives fulfil all relevant guidelines and comply with the SOAC.

I hope that you will take the comments above into account, and please do contact me if any of the above requires clarification.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
CEO
Mountaineering Scotland