



The Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493 942

By email to stepehn.murphy@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Stephen Murphy
Planning Forester
Cowal & Trossachs Forest District
Aberfoyle
Stirling
FK8 3UX

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Dear Stephen

BEINN BHAN LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN: REVISION AND SCOPING

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the LMP. Our response focuses on two areas of interest to our members, landscape and access.

Landscape

Whilst we appreciate that government policy dictates re-stocking predominantly through Sitka Spruce in order to meet future production targets, we would welcome greater diversity in planting through initiatives such as age-diversification, a long-term increase in the planting and the resultant proportion of native species, the lowering of tree lines and a commitment to improve the visual impact of the forest from prominent viewpoints. We also wish to see a general approach to forestry which seeks to increase the biodiversity of the forest estate.

Access

We note and welcome the intent in the plan objectives 'to protect and enhance the public right of way linking forest road to the Ben Lomond hill path' and we look forward to receiving further detail on the related proposals.

In terms of more general comments, The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides for 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). While it is helpful to acknowledge the potential impact on public access, we ask forest managers to consider the following points:

- Visitors to the forest 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 intention to maintain existing public access routes open should be stated in final proposals.
- Where deer and other fencing is included in proposals, consideration should be given to appropriate siting of gates and stiles to enable access.
- During forestry operations, clear signage should be used, including at access points where there is the need for people to be directed to use a particular or alternative route. Signage should be removed promptly after the conclusion of operations.
- Staff undertaking forestry operations should be 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.

We also wish to encourage consideration of potential new access routes through provision of green walkways and the feasibility of re-establishing legacy paths where appropriate.

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

My thanks again for the opportunity to comment and I hope that you will take the above points into account, and please do contact me if any of the above requires clarification.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
CEO, Mountaineering Scotland