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By email to NNR@snh.gov.uk

Ian Sargent
Reserves Manager
Scottish Natural Heritage
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8 March 2018

Dear Mr Sargent

**Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve
Management Plan 2018-2028 – Consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

We found the consultation leaflet to be rather brief, but appreciated the provision of background information on the website to inform comment. There are a couple of topics that we wish to comment on, which may fall under the General Comments section of the consultation leaflet.

As was mentioned in the accompanying context documents, Ben Wyvis is a very popular destination for walkers due to its location close to Inverness and the main trunk roads, and the open vistas from the summit plateau, along with the natural heritage interest. We agree with your vision statement for the reserve to maintain a high-quality environment while encouraging recreational access to the summit.

Access

Footpath management is an issue in a number of places from the roadside to the summit, especially with the important montane heath communities on the top. No-one likes to see erosion scars on hillsides and sensitive path restoration and maintenance is essential.

The provision of quality path construction to blend with the landscape is an important consideration and will help with managing the access routes.

The consultation leaflet states that the intention is to encourage visitors to stay on the main path to minimise erosion on adjacent areas. We trust that such encouragement is done through explanation of the issues and appeal for understanding as the means to manage walkers rather than notices to stick to the path, as some walkers may wish to pursue alternative routes up and down.

The provision of interpretation is beneficial for the understanding of the natural heritage and for access management as noted above. We expect that interpretive boards will not intrude into the landscape and are sited close to existing infrastructure.

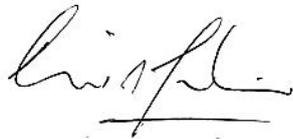
Management of the land requires annual deer culling and we trust that stalking will be arranged in ways that do not impede the enjoyment of access to the summit.

Landscape

An issue which is not directly within the NNR but which has an impact on visitor enjoyment is the management of the forest below the open hill. We urge SNH to maintain liaison with Forest Enterprise and its successor body to address the management of plantation forest through which visitors walk. This for two reasons: to ensure the maintenance of the car park and lower trail experience is of high quality and does not become eroded or overgrown; and for the upper edge of the plantation to be softened when restructuring to create a more natural looking tree-line that blends in with the landscape.

We hope that you find these comments useful, and please do contact us if you think we may be able to assist in any of the matters noted.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Gibson', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

David Gibson
CEO, Mountaineering Scotland