

Dear Peter,

Further to our telephone calls in February and March 2012 and your email to Colin Parson dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2011 I have now concluded my discussions about the Fernaig Plantation with members of our community.

I approached my discussions by referring to each of your headings on the LTFP scoping map and here are the views of the local people.

### **Fernaig Wood & Existing Native Woodland Areas.**

As per a discussion I had with you on the telephone all the local people know the term Fernaig Wood to refer to the old oak wood located on the North bank of Fernaig Road. As I suggested to you on the telephone and as others in the community have said to me, this would be better named the Braeintra plantation. This would avoid any confusion, if someone from outside the area asks a local for the Fernaig Wood they are going to be directed to the wrong destination.

We are encouraged by your intention to remove non native species and to enhance the area using a combination of new planting and open space to encourage natural regeneration. Our community welcomes having less densely planted spruce etc on the hillside as they are visual ugly and environmental damaging. They do nothing to enhance our tourist trade; in fact they detract from the natural beauty of the hillsides. We note that 150 ha of the 187 ha will be retained as a commercial conifer core crop and during one of our telephone calls we discussed 'softening' the edges of the plantation to make it look more natural and get away from straight lines, this would be most welcome.

### **Harvesting**

The community understands that this will be undertaken in a manner which is sensitive to the natural features of this area.

### **Archaeology & ATV track**

We wish to bring it to your attention that the ancient route between Fernaig and Auchertyre, which was superseded in 1813, runs through this area. Part of this old route, we believe may be what you refer to as the old Drover's road. Have you sourced documents which show this route to be a drover's road, if so could you please send them to me? We wish to stress that the old [pre 1813] route is of historical importance to our area and therefore would you please clarify exactly where the proposed ATV track will be constructed?.

### **Public Access**

Tillhill have recorded little or no public use at present. Many in the community disputed this and stated that, apart from local people, visitors from outside our immediate area drive here; park and then take a walk through the area. Thus exercising the public's right of access through the 'right to roam' while being respectful of the owner's property and rights. If this area is to be enclosed, we wish to have a discussion about entry and exit access points. Thus we can maintain access for walking and cycling in and through the plantation onto the Achnadarroch section.

### **Deer**

One of the Guest House's in the area obtains most of their winter income from the stalking syndicate that lease the stalking rights, and they wish to know how the proposed works will impact the syndicate? The B & B owners told me that they have noticed a drop in the number of stalkers since Achnadarroch hill had been fenced. What type of fencing is going to be erected around the Fernaig Plantation? Is it Tillhill's intention to remove all the deer from Achnadarroch and Fernaig?

### **Overhead Power Line**

No comment. Beware!

### **Vehicle Access**

No Comment.

### **Birds and other wildlife**

Tillhill say 'little recorded history of wildlife due to lack of activity on this property'. We would be interested to see the research that was undertaken to arrive at such a conclusion. There is a know

badger set just outside the S W boundary of this plantation and there is another badger set close to the dam on the other side of the A890 and we note that no special reference has been made to a badger run with the appropriate badger 'access' into and out of the plantation.

We also take this opportunity to let you know that most the burns around this area eventually run into the Ascaig river which is home to many species, including food for the herons and fresh water bathing for the otters, and as you are aware conifers acidify our water ways and alter the natural balance of our wildlife's habitats.

### **Road Improvement**

Once again we want to reiterate that part of the ancient, pre 1813 road may pass through this area.

### **Conclusion.**

We all welcomed the opportunity to comment on the scoping map and as a community we care about our environs whilst respecting the right of others to land ownership. But as we live here all year round it is our wish to have our hillsides reflecting the natural contours and beauty of the area, not resembling some patch work quilt, bounded by straight edges, where the only colour available is 'dark green'.

Even if areas are not designated Archaeological sites, they are still of major interest to local historians who are still in the process of investigating them, and therefore we would prefer they were left undisturbed, as much as possible. These remnants are mainly of old building and routes that are hundreds of years old and they represent Achmore's history. We accept that land use changes over the years but if the opportunities arise to work around earth mounds and obvious 'old' tracks then obviously this would allow us to further explore and document the underlying social history of the area.

It has been explicitly brought to my attention that a similar request was made prior to the undertakings on the Achnadarroch section of the hill and it transpired that the contractors made little or no effort to adhere to this request. An example being, an old route was dug up and left with mounds of debris on it obscuring its historical value and use.

The points of access onto the Achnadarroch area were discussed and we are not fully aware of the location of the exit and entry points on the 'Plockton' facing boundary of the Achndarroch hill. This could result in people having to walk miles along a fence to exit the hill ground. Could you please provide us with a map marking all the access points for the Achnadarroch area?

With this inward investment to the area being managed by Tillhill, you are in an ideal position to demonstrate your commitment to the local community. The local community can benefit if you ask local contractors to tender for work and if you encourage any contractor from outside the area to use local facilities e.g B & B for accommodation. Our Community council will assist with providing information and contacts.

We understand that you will comply with UKWAS management standards but would welcome regular updates from you, as all of the hill ground on the south side of our valley is managed by Tillhill.

Yours Sincerely,

Mary MacBeth, Secretary Stromeferry and Achmore Community Council.