

consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill  
From: Beaton, Neil  
Sent: 15 December 2008 13:44  
To: liz.kirk@forestry.gsi.gov.uk  
Subject: consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill

Dear Liz

With regards to the consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill document posted on the on the intranet, I'd like to express my views on allowing Scottish Ministers and Forestry Commissioners to offer leases and cutting rights over parts of the national forest estate.

I find it deeply concerning with this proposal. While tackling climate change is something we all view with utmost importance, plans to lease out 25% of our publicly owned land for a period of 75 years seems ill-advised and deeply worrying. The minister for the environment assures us that "not a square centimetre of public land will be lost" but a quick swift through the consultation paper reveals an option to transfer the land and assets to a trust. Further examination uncovers the option for the land transferred to be sold off without guarantee of how this money will be spent. The minister has also made it "crystal clear that there will be no job losses" but concerns must surely arise when considering how private companies would aim to maximise profit. I would imagine if cost's had to be reduced somewhere down the line the investment the Forestry Commission currently provides to the environment, employment and recreational facilities would be the first to suffer. If we take West Argyll Forest District as an example (which under the proposals would be one of the areas greatly effected), Rare species such as the osprey, sea eagle and red squirrels habitats are recorded, protected and preserved as are around 1500 sites of cultural heritage (approximately 100 new sites are uncovered annually). A trial is also due to begin in the spring for the European beaver , and a highly successful modern apprentice scheme and umpteen facilities available for walking, cycling and mountain biking are just a few examples of what it oversees and manages. Would the private sector have the same commitment? And what procedures would be in place to oversee they did?

Regards

Neil