

From: D and A Steel
Sent: 17 December 2008 23:29
To: liz.kirk@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: Consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill

Dear Ms Kirk

I am responding on behalf of the Gatehouse Development Initiative, a community group, which seeks to promote the sustainable development of Gatehouse of Fleet and the surrounding area. In the field of alternative energy we have promoted the local use of solar panels, have installed a community wind turbine and are keen to explore other forms of alternative energy. In partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and other stakeholders we are seeking to maximise the benefits of the Designed Landscape of Cally, for which we have prepared a management plan.

The Gatehouse of Fleet area is very dependent on tourism and the national forest plays an important role in the provision of recreational facilities. Forestry continues to provide some local employment. We are therefore concerned that any changes to the national forest estate should be beneficial to rural communities such as ours.

Question 1

We welcome the references in the consultation paper to making more use of sites with potential for generating power from wind, hydro and micro power. We welcome the proposal to allow Forestry Commission to enter joint ventures with local communities. We believe that there is potential for more imaginative developments in this area.

Question 2

We welcome the references in the consultation paper to the importance of the state forest in terms of recreation, conservation and community involvement. We also note the highlighting of the safeguarding of 'national forestry treasures.' We are concerned about what would happen to important local hardwood plantations such as Cally Woods which lie on the outskirts of Gatehouse of Fleet, if the more commercial woodlands in the area were leased. The Cally Woods form part of the Designed Landscape of Cally. They comprise an area of largely deciduous woodland but, more than that, the area comprises both woodland and farming interests, roads, paths and watercourses, archaeological features, commercial and residential interests. The Gatehouse Development Initiative is working with all the stakeholders to enhance this important resource. We seriously wonder how the recreational, conservation and community aims can be safeguarded at the local level, if large areas of national forest are leased.

Question 3

We are concerned about the ability of a not for profit trust to secure the public benefits in terms of recreation, conservation and community involvement and wonder how this body would fit in with other countryside bodies.

Question 4

In the Gatehouse area we have seen the problems which can arise, particularly in terms of acidification and habitat loss from insensitive planting over the years. We would hope that any measures to assist the forestry sector to reduce emissions will not lead to insensitive planting and harvesting.

David Steel

Chairman, Gatehouse Development Initiative