

From: peter lupton
Sent: 27 January 2009 18:50
To: liz.kirk@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Cc: largfarm@hotmail.com
Subject: Climate Change and the National Forest Estate

Dear Ms Kirk

I am the Secretary of Kirkmabreck Community Council, a small village in South West Scotland and I am responding to Michael Russell's invitation to community councillor's to comment on the proposals to hive off the forestry.

In preparing this response I have spoken to a number of current and former forestry employees as well as a number of local residents.

As our community is on the edge of Glentrool Forest Park and surrounded by Forestry land there is obviously a great deal of concern about what is going to happen not only to local jobs but also to the local economy and the environment should any or all of the proposals go ahead.

When I was a young boy, some 40 plus years ago, the Forestry was a major employer of local labour. Many lived in small communities built especially for forestry workers. Today most of the permanent jobs have been lost and replaced by contractors none of whom offer the same terms or conditions. Although the houses still remain they are no longer occupied by Forestry workers they too have been replaced by holiday makers many of whom contribute little if anything to the local economy.

There are also concerns about whether the new proposals would mean the end of the many examples of the Forestry and local communities working together to use the Estate to benefit the health of the local population and to help local tourism to grow as well.

Unemployment in Dumfries and Galloway has always been way above the Scottish average so anything that could threaten the jobs that remain is always viewed with suspicion.

Another major concern for the locals is whether the local roads, particularly the more rural ones, are capable of accommodating the lorries which would be required to support any felling operation. There are incidents virtually every day on the lesser roads involving the drag and bar lorries as they career along at speeds much quicker than is suitable for the narrow lanes. It is bad enough for the locals who have come to expect such driving but for the unsuspecting tourists it can come as a major surprise.

In addition to the above concerns there is of course a good deal of cynicism about the proposals. People I spoke wondered why a) if the Forest Estate is likely to free up so much cash are the Forestry not taking the necessary steps to achieve this themselves b) with the demand for timber being at an all time low is this the time for a sell off c) will any of the money being brought in be spent on/in the areas it is raised from or as usual will the equivalent of the family silver be used for other politically motivated ends.

So to sum up the people of this part of Dumfries and Galloway are not in favour of the Executive allowing the Forestry to enter into joint ventures nor to offer leases and cutting rights to companies whose only loyalty is only to the bottom line rather having any regard for the local community.

Peter Lupton
Secretary

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