

Michael Russell MSP
Minister for the Environment
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Our Ref: MF/rm
Date: 27 January 2009

Dear

Sunart Oakwoods Initiative

I am responding as Chair of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative to your consultation on Forestry Provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill. I have had a very active interest in forestry, woodlands and community ownership for 30 years in the Highlands.

I very much welcome the opportunity for the Forestry Commissioners to enter into joint ventures with developers and local communities to develop renewable energy projects.

I would ask that you seriously consider extending these joint ventures to joint ownership of forestry plantations between FCS and the local community. I have raised this in the past. This combines the experience of FCS with local knowledge and requirements.

I am opposed to the large scale leasing of Forestry Commission Plantations to a single private company or small group of companies. In hard times, as we have at the moment, private companies fail to fell or replant. The Forestry Commission continues to do so.

In addition, FCS Officers are now extremely enthusiastic about multi-benefit forestry. They are a very welcome and active member of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative, which is an outstanding example of how areas can be replanted with commercial forest whilst a major native woodland regeneration programme is underway, as well as the creation of walks, cycle routes, wildlife hides and local interpretation.

I do favour the leasing of forestry plantations to local community groups or to aid the establishment of forest crofts.

I would be very happy to meet to discuss these concerns further, if you should find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Michael Foxley
Leader of the Administration

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