

Sir,

I have studied the draft proposals for the removal of woodland for Lowland Heathland Restoration, and have read and fully endorse the response made by ConFor.

I wish to add my personal comments to the debate.

It is my opinion that the driving force behind this proposal is well funded and motivated NGO's and Government bodies who lack the resource to defend their position.

The removal of these plantations to replace them with heathland, which is in itself a stark example of mans destruction of a natural habitat, is in my mind a criminal proposal and a depletion of the environment.

The proposal for removal is staggering even at the lower estimates, and should not be allowed without compensatory planting. We as a developed country can not allow de-forestation, and the Forestry Commission should be defending this position. I would question if other European states are pushing through such proposals.

In the natural order heathland habitat would be small fragments within a generally wooded landscape, the vast prairie heathland we see now is as unnatural as the conifer plantations and in most cases supports less flora and fauna than a well structured multi age conifer plantation, and is significantly more susceptible to climate change.

It has been demonstrated that any type of woodland, particularly in the more mature stages is appreciated by the public and it has the capacity to absorb large numbers of people in a healthy environment. It has always been the case that the public hate commercial forestry but enjoy Kielder, Thetford, Cannock Chase etc, in large numbers, thus exhibiting a lack of understanding of commercial forestry, and all its potential benefits.

The Forestry Commission as a public body and custodian of these areas some of which will take the brunt of the removal should question whether the public would endorse the proposal to use tax payers monies to support the proposals if they knew all the facts fully and not what was fed to them by the NGO's.

There is no real examination of the true cost of the proposals, which should include loss of timber production in perpetuity, and the extra import burden. Nor any consideration that if the conifers were to be removed; allowing nature to take over would result in an eventual restoration of these area to what nature desires. This would require significantly less monetary intervention to achieve, whilst benefitting far more species than the few which heathland truly supports.

Yours,

(See attached file: eng-openhabitats-infaboutyou.doc)



Anon 05.06.09C