

Blengdale Forest Management Plan Review

Summary of Consultation Event - Gosforth 21st June 2006

Background

On the 21st June thirteen people from the local community gathered in St Mary's church hall in response to an invite by The Forestry Commission (FC) to be involved with deciding the future of Miterdale & Giggie Alley. The invite by the FC was made through the Parish Council and circulated through the Parish magazine and via posters in the village shop and on the Parish notice board.

The event was facilitated by Gareth Browning (GB), the Forestry Commission Beat Forester responsible for Blengdale.

The event was organised around short sessions where using yellow sticky notes participants shared their views on both negative and positive aspects of both forests and had the opportunity to ask any questions about the Forestry Commission's management proposals. Gareth Browning grouped together common negative and positive themes and then through discussion priorities were agreed and questions answered.

Detailed on the attached pages are bullet point summaries of the comments made by the participants

Summary

In summary it is clear from the greater number of positive sticky notes as against much smaller number of negative notes that the people present had a positive view of the Forestry Commissions management of Blengdale. It is clear from the number of sticky notes that those present saw the state of Blengdale bridge as the most negative feature. The bridge has recently been fully repaired with new railings on both side. A list of the positive and negative features along with questions asked and answers given are detailed on the following pages

Gareth Browning
Beat Forester
September 2006

Summary of Key features and priorities

(number in brackets indicates number of sticky notes quoting same feature)

| Positive Features | Negative Features | Questions (Q) & Answers(A) |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice place to walk, on the doorstep, easy access, good circular routes on foot or bike (6) • Variety of trees, really mature trees, different structure of trees and species variety (3) • natural feel of feel of felled trees left for moss to grow on and wildlife use. • Lack of vehicles and people (3) • The River Bleng, walks are close to the river, views of the river (3) • Good for wildlife (2) • Wild(ish) • Peaceful and quiet (2) • Great views when you emerge from the forest • Deer • Wildflowers, flora and fauna (2) • Clear areas, more open aspect after selective felling (2) • New path around river breakthrough v good (3) • V sheltered in most weather • Interesting natural undergrowth near path • The new footbridge • Easy walks which les able can manage • Much more natural than Dodd Forest • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blengdale road bridge in poor state of repair (6) • Fly tipping at entrance to forest (2) • New path unsuitable for wheelchairs (2) • Change of course of River Bleng – lack of work to provide access around this • Un thinned areas • No access to forest at Lowcray Bank • No stiles connecting access land and footpaths outside forest (NW Side) • Wild flowers damaged by felling • New path away from river prevents families playing in the river • There is nothing I don't like about the forest! • V muddy path between scale beck and Hollow Moor (Not FC land) • Lack of seats • Potholes in car park • No signs to direct visitors to car park • Insufficient passing places on approach road to forest • While felling there is a lot of mess • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q)Can path be developed further up rive than footbridge A) happy to consider extending path if money became available. • Q)Is it possible to Improve access along forest track leading to Guards Lonning as locked forest gates make it difficult to access by bike or with a push chair A)Yes will erect kissing gates. • Q) Will repairs be carried out upstream to preserve the present road A) Public access will be maintained up the valley bottom however in time the road may need to be replaced by a path further from the river • Q)Can you agree access to forest on the farm road by Lowcray. A) Happy for people to access but it is up to neighbouring landowner to grant access. • Q) What is the story of the eucalyptus stand A) Research plot planted in the 1970's to see how well this species grew. • Q) Will the log piles in the forest be removed. A) Yes , markets are sometimes slow and Blengdale is far from most markets so despatch is slow. • Q) Why are trees cut in oct/nov when if done later could be given to schools as Christmas Trees. A) Most forest grown trees not upto Christmas Tree standard. We do give a |

Christmas tree to Gosforth School each year.

- Q) Why do you cut so much wood out. A) Blengdale all planted at the same time, all trees matured at the same time. Whilst tried to spread felling out inevitably large areas felled on Hollow Moor at same time due to risk of windblow. We aspire to Increase area of Continuous Cover where regular thinning rather than felling and retention of large trees as in valley bottom thus reducing phases of significant felling.