

8/3/36

GORDON DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

Bailies of Bennachie - comments on draft document - 28th Jan. 1987

The Bailies of Bennachie are grateful for the opportunity to make comment on those aspects of the plan which are relevant to the interests of the Bailies, notably the policies outlined in chapter 6) Countryside and Coastline, and chapter 7) Recreation and Tourism. Although our concern is specifically the Bennachie range, we feel that our comments are of relevance, in a broader sense, to recreation and the countryside throughout Gordon District.

Management Plan for Bennachie.

The District Council is to be congratulated on its farsighted proposal to prepare a management plan for the Bennachie area. Bennachie is under considerable pressure both from the need for landowners to maximise the income from their land and from the general public who have a genuine right to resort to the Hill for the purpose of recreation in its many forms. The Bailies of Bennachie look forward to participating in this venture.

Upland Tracks

In its Local Plan, the District Council undertook to "bring the construction of tracks and footpaths in landscape conservation areas under planning controls" We are disappointed by the proposal that, "the District will not seek to control the development of tracks in upland areas", especially in the light of recent developments on Bennachie, which is within a landscape conservation area. In this case, the landowner has constructed a

bulldozed track onto the summit ridge of the hill at a height of over 400m. The area through which the track passes, was until recently moorland with regenerating pinewood, but which was allowed to be converted to sheep pasture. The purpose of the road was not clear and only two years later an application was made to the Forestry Commission to plant this ground with trees. The necessity of this track is still not obvious as it would be of little benefit to the process of afforestation. Indeed the Forestry Commission has no tracks on the Hill at this height to service its own forests.

This particular track makes an unsightly scar, on an area of undoubted beauty, which can be seen from considerable distances. A pre-existing track, used by pedestrians for access to the hill, has been obliterated, leaving an unstable and badly eroded surface which will take many years to recover. The benefits of such a track to the landowner are, at best, minimal and surely its existence devalues the Hill's landscape significance.

We would urge the Council to consider bringing all such tracks in upland areas under planning control, involving consultation with interested bodies, and where such a track was considered necessary, to insist on an adequate standard of construction and maintenance.

Rights of Way

In its Local Plan, "The Council undertook to record all rights of way in conjunction with the Community Councils" and "to encourage the improvement of known footpaths in the District in towns and countryside" It is regrettable that the Council now feels that they do not have the resources to prepare a map of rights of way.

Walking is probably the most important form of outdoor recreation in this country and therefore deserves at least as much attention from the council as pastimes such as skiing, swimming, football, etc. Walking requires no specialised equipment (except on

