



## INVERNESS ORIENTEERING CLUB

Please reply to:  
David Summers  
5 Aspen Place  
Culloden  
INVERNESS  
IV2 7LF

26 January 2009

dws@rdplus.net

Liz Kirk  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Sylvan House  
231 Corstorphine Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH12 7AT

Dear Ms Kirk

### **CONSULTATION ON FORESTRY PROVISIONS IN THE SCOTTISH CLIMATE CHANGE BILL**

Inverness Orienteering Club has considered the above consultation. Our views are:

- 1. What are your views on allowing the Forestry Commissioners to enter into joint ventures, with the intention of participating in renewable energy programmes on the national forest estate?*

We support this in principle, provided that the renewable energy programmes are appropriate to the land used for them, taking into account the importance of existing land uses and landscape value.

- 2. What are your views on allowing Scottish Ministers and Forestry Commissioners to offer leases and cutting rights over parts of the national forest estate?*

As a club we make use of a wide variety of forests for training and competition. These include both Forestry Commission and privately owned venues, and we make efforts to maintain good relationships with landowners. We would be concerned if the leases resulted in (a) land being managed by large, possibly foreign-based companies which had little community presence or involvement, making it more difficult to negotiate access for competitions, or (b) changes in land management practice which reduced the attractiveness of forests for the sport. We believe if leases are to be offered, they should be awarded on the basis of a demonstrated ability in management of sustainable forestry production, with accommodation for other interests.

Major events require planning around two years in advance, so a stable and effective relationship with the landowner or tenant is essential. Events such as the Scottish Six-Day, with around 3500 competitors from over 20 countries, contribute a sizeable amount to the local economy. Due to the quality of terrain, many of these larger events are held in this club's area or in neighbouring areas.

Orienteering is different from the majority of recreational activity in forests in several ways:

- it largely takes place away from paths and tracks;
- it does not depend on infrastructure constructed by the landowner (although availability of space for car parking and an event assembly area is important);
- forests which are not generally used for recreation can be very suitable for the sport;
- clubs invest significant sums of money in specialist maps, which would become useless if significant changes are made to the forest.

Land management practices of reducing monoculture and large areas of clear felling, and increasing diversity of species and habitats, which are beneficial for environmental reasons, also tend to improve the attractiveness of forests for orienteering. Having said that, any reasonable mature forest plantation can be suitable for the sport if there is reasonable variation in the terrain and contour detail. We make use of many working commercial forests.

We agree with the statement that “there would need to be rigorous selection of appropriate areas (i.e. where the timber production function is dominant)”. However, given the nature of the sport, we see it as important that safeguards for recreational access should be built into the terms of the leases.

We are aware that possible leases of around 75 years have been discussed in the Press, and have some concerns about the length of leases proposed: while recognising that forestry production is a long-term process, will there be provisions to ensure that community and environmental commitments are fulfilled, and an ability to terminate the lease as at least an ultimate sanction if they are not? Will the lease terms enable account to be taken of changes in both demographic and commercial circumstances which are likely over such a long term? In other words, although timber production may dominant in these areas now, it may well not still be so in, say, 50 years’ time, and will there be flexibility to adapt, or require adaptation, to changing circumstances?

3. *What are your views on (i) transferring the proceeds from leases and cutting rights to a not-for-profit trust, for investment in woodland creation; (ii) transferring the landlord’s interest in this land to a not-for-profit trust; and (iii) Ministers stipulating the constitution of such a not-for-profit trust?*

- (i) It is difficult to comment when the consultation paper does not describe detailed proposals, but we would see this as a potentially interesting and useful option. We certainly welcome the aim of encouraging woodland creation.
- (ii) Again, this could be a positive step but we would want to see a more detailed proposal before forming an opinion.
- (iii) Voluntary and community projects succeed best when they arise from within the community. The paper implies that there would be only one trust, but a number of area-based trusts might be more in keeping with the aims of transferring control to the voluntary sector. There would seem to be little point in Ministers stipulating a constitution; we would propose either that Ministers retain the landlord’s interest in (or direct control of) the estate, or that Ministers define the broad objectives for the trust(s) but without stipulating a constitution. (It would be reasonable requirement for constitutions to be submitted for Ministerial approval.)

4. *Are there any other actions which need to be taken ... to contribute to Scotland’s target of reducing emissions ...?*

We have no comments.

Yours sincerely,

David W Summers  
President