



Ian Pyrah  
Partnership Director  
2 Oswald Court  
Edinburgh  
EH9 2HY

[www.scottish-orienteering.org](http://www.scottish-orienteering.org)

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

27 January 2009

Dear Ms Kirk,

### **Forestry Provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill**

The Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) welcomes this consultation and the opportunity to contribute to the debate on options for making better use of the national forest estate in the fight against climate change, while safeguarding the important public benefits that the estate generates for communities throughout Scotland.

Our response focuses on the latter aspect and comments on the specific questions posed in the consultation paper are appended to this letter.

Please find below a summary of our views and, to provide some context for our response, a brief outline of the sport of orienteering and its contribution to communities throughout Scotland.

### **Summary of response**

SOA welcomes the consideration of new and innovative solutions to tackle climate change and to deliver enhanced benefits to communities. Having followed the debate, however, we are not convinced that the proposals are sufficiently robust to safeguard current sporting and recreational activities, activities that play an important role in helping Scotland achieve its Strategic Objectives<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst acknowledging that public access per se is now enshrined in law, our concern is that the proposed changes may result in a shift from pro-active encouragement to passive acceptance of legal requirements. This would have a considerable impact on the staging of sporting events that currently benefit national and local communities through participation and sports tourism<sup>2</sup>. It should be noted that different forest-based sports & recreational activities do not have the same requirements with regards paths, vegetation, terrain etc.

If leases are to be offered, we believe they should be awarded on the basis of a demonstrated ability to manage forestry production in a sustainable way that accommodates current, and future, recreational and sporting activities.

<sup>1</sup> The Potential of Sport : Maximising sport's contribution to national and local outcomes. **Sportscotland** (2008).

<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that orienteering's biennial festival generates over £2 million for the Scottish economy

## **The sport of orienteering**

Orienteering is an outdoor sport in which participants use a specially prepared large-scale orienteering map and a compass to find a series of control points. It is essentially a running sport, offering significant physical challenge as well as exercise for the brain. For the recreational orienteer, it provides an opportunity for a walk or jog in the countryside with the additional interest of a navigational challenge. At a competitive level, it involves route choice, technical skills, speed, stamina and concentration to maintain navigational accuracy.

Events are usually held in forests, preferably with height variation to provide contour detail; good liaison with rural communities, landowners and conservation bodies is essential. To this end the governing body (SOA) & clubs work closely with private landowners and organizations such as the Forestry Commission, SNH, RSPB, SRPBA and NFU Scotland. The SOA has access agreements with these bodies and works in partnership with them in staging events and in assessing the effects of orienteering on habitat; studies have shown that orienteering has a low, and transitory, environmental impact.

Approximately 400 events are held across Scotland each year (ranging from local events to national Championships) and other major competitions, such as UK national and international events, are held regularly. During the last twenty years four world championships have been held in Scotland; the World Schools Orienteering Championships (2008), the elite World Orienteering Championships (1999), the World Masters Orienteering Championships (1994) and the World University Orienteering Championships (1992). Such events are many years in their planning and good, long-term working-relations with landowners are essential.

A weeklong International Orienteering Festival, which has been held in Scotland every other year since 1977, typically attracts 3,500 to 4,000 competitors with approximately one quarter from overseas. Each festival generates approximately £2million for the local economy and the festival is moved around the country over a 12-year cycle. This spreads the benefits to different regions and rural communities.

SOA and its clubs also work with landowners in developing permanent courses in woods and parks throughout Scotland; these are available to local communities, holidaymakers and sports-tourists throughout the year. A particularly popular scheme is that based in forests around the National Orienteering Centre in the Cairngorm National Park. The quality of the terrain is such that it attracts local, club, regional and international squads to the area for training camps.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Pyrah

Partnership Director  
Scottish Orienteering Association

## Scottish Orienteering Association response

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

**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?**

Support in principle provided that the renewable energy projects are appropriate to the land used for them, taking into account the importance of existing land uses and landscape value. Profits could be reinvested in new afforestation.

**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?**

Our member clubs make use of a wide variety of forests for training and competition; these include both Forestry Commission and privately owned land. We strive to maintain our good relationships with landowners and our concerns are:

(a) forests managed by large, possibly foreign-based companies with little community presence or involvement, would make it more difficult to negotiate access for sporting and recreational activities which are of significant benefit to the health of the nation

(b) the potential threat to major forest-based sporting events which bring substantial benefits to the national and local economy through sports tourism

(c) changes in land management practice that would reduce the attractiveness of forests for sport & recreation; it should be noted that forests not suitable for some sports may be suitable for others.

If leases are to be offered, we believe they should be awarded on the basis of a demonstrated ability to manage forestry production in a sustainable way that accommodates recreational and sporting activities.

(We are aware that one of our clubs, Inverness Orienteering Club, have submitted a more detailed response and can confirm that we are fully supportive of their views.)

**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?**

We welcome the aim of encouraging woodland creation and look forward to further details being published.

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

No comment.

Ian Pyrah

Partnership Director  
Scottish Orienteering Association

27 January 2009