

RHU & SHANDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Response from Rhu and Shandon Community Council to Luss Estates - South LTFP Renewal Consultation

Thank you for your consultation letter of 18 October 2023 regarding the Long Term Forest Plan for the next twenty years for Luss Estates land in Glen Fruin and Arden (Luss Estates South). In compiling this response, the Community Council recognises the help provided by our ex Convener Fiona Baker. We note the list of consultees and primary stakeholders and trust that they have provided valuable feedback. We were surprised that HMNB Clyde was not included on this list.

The Concept Map suggests there will be new planting and restocking. Details of the new planting do not appear to be mapped and we trust there will be consultation in advance of any new afforestation proposals. We note the information box advising that additional surveys and consultation will be carried out going forward. We assume the LTFP Concept map is to help ensure that any new planting proposals take cognisance of existing environmental, heritage and access constraints and will seek to protect and enhance the existing situation and integrate any new planting into the landscape in a sensitive manner.

The main concerns of the Community Council are protection of the environment (control of INNS, and protection of watercourses and peatland), protection and enhancement of core paths and recreational access, and minimising the impacts of forestry traffic and operations on residents.

We welcome the annotations indicating that any interventions in Ancient Woodland Inventory sites will be restricted to removal of INNS, Rhododendron Ponticum is mentioned but attention also needs to be paid to Sitka Spruce, Western Hemlock and Lodgepole Pine, all of which are invasive. Sitka Spruce escaping from plantations is a recognised problem that is detrimental to biodiversity and peatland. We hope that attention will be paid to limiting its spread by planting native broadleaf species around the edges of plantations. Not only will this have the desired effect of softening and integrating stands of commercial forestry into the landscape – as noted on the Concept Map - it might also reduce the capacity of Sitka to spread. We hope that the new NBL planting around the edges of commercial conifer plantations will be a permanent feature to be retained when the commercial conifer is felled. Removal of escaped Sitka and

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commercial conifers that have colonised areas outside of the plantations would also be welcome.

This area has a limited number of woodlands in the AWI due to the current criteria that woodlands should be shown in Roy's map indicating they were present in 1750. Roy's mapping of this area is lacking in detail and it is likely that there are other AW sites that are not in the current inventory. The new Ancient Woodland Inventory seems to be interminably delayed and we hope that foresters will apply their knowledge to ensuring native and semi-native woodlands are afforded the same protection and remedial action as AWI sites to remove INNS. We would also hope to see increased efforts in the forestry industry to protect native woodland understory and woodland floors, and indeed to support natural regeneration and increase native woodland planting overall.

We welcome the annotation that core paths will be protected and we hope that these may be enhanced and attention is given to increasing and improving recreational access opportunities. We also welcome the restructuring of riparian zones on Fruin Water and its tributaries to improve water quality and salmon habitat.

We note that the agreed timber transport route is the A817 Haul Road and that the old road through Glen Fruin will not be used whenever an alternative is possible. In order to avoid the old road it seems likely that new forest tracks linking to the Haul Road will be required. While we expect these will need to have an EIA we hope that any such developments will also seek to enhance public access for recreation. Timber transport on unsuitable narrow roads is a problem across Scotland and we are pleased to see that the problem of utilising the old Glen Fruin road for timber transport and operations is a recognised constraint.

Finally, we very much welcome the long term retention of native broadleaf woodland. We hope that increased planting of native broadleaf woodland will be incorporated into future forestry planting on the Estate and management of invasive species will also be increased to help strengthen biodiversity and resilience to climate change.

We will look forward to updated information on the LTFP following this consultation.



Jean Cook
Secretary, Rhu & Shandon Community Council

Copied by
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