

# RHU AND SHANDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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22 March 2017

Dear Mr Harper

## **Felling at Highlandman's Wood, Rhu.**

Thank you for your email and attachments of 8 December 2016 regarding the harvesting of Highlandman's Wood plantation proposed for Autumn 2017. Our apologies for taking so long to respond. Fiona Baker and Peter Knox are representing Rhu and Shandon Community Council on this matter.

We appreciate that Scottish Woodlands and your contractors are professional people who do this all the time and you will have many procedures in place, and good project planning is evident from the Darleith Road, Cardross plan.

The main questions and concerns we identify are noted below but the proposed felling has raised quite a lot of concern in the village and we think it would be appropriate for Scottish Woodlands to host a community event in Rhu Hall where residents could ask questions. We could advertise this for you and also do a fact finding operation via our social media in advance to gather resident's questions and concerns. However, before the public consultation event we invite you to come and meet the Community Council as we think the majority of the points noted below could be addressed before broader community consultation and engagement. We think it would be better to present a draft plan to the community for comment that has already considered and addressed all these questions.

## **Roads and Traffic Management**

- Station Road and Pier Road connect at a mini-roundabout with a sharp, almost blind bend. The timber lorries will need to pull right over to one side of the road in order to get around the corner. We think it will be necessary to have traffic lights in operation in order for the lorries to safely navigate this corner.
- There is a problem with an eroded culvert in the small garden, the Barge Memorial Garden, at this corner. This has been reported to the Council and ACHA (November 2016 and followed up on more than one occasion) who are currently sorting out its repair. The lorries will need to pull right over to the west side of the road to get around the corner and this will place additional stress near the eroded edge and there is a possibility of the road collapsing with the additional weight of frequent 44 ton lorries.
- The times of day the lorries will use the road needs to be carefully controlled. We are particularly concerned about local children going to school and coming home as the bus stop

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is at the bottom of Pier Road on Gareloch Road and the children walk to / from home so there will need to be a good half an hour on either side of the school bus times and primary school home time so the children are not placed in undue danger.

- We note that the timing of lorries will also need to be co-ordinated with the rush hour bearing in mind that HMNB Clyde employs 6800 people and about 3000 people travel to and from Faslane every day and the Gareloch Road is very busy with people travelling to and from work. We recommend a traffic survey is carried out to determine the lorry schedule.
- There is no pavement the bottom of Pier Road and a pedestrian walkway is marked on the road with a white line. The lorry drivers will need to pay particular attention to this.
- The load bearing capacity of the railway bridge at the top of Station Road / Torr Farm Road needs to be considered and we expect you will consult Network Rail regarding this.
- We note that the Lineside Walk / Station Road corner is a sharp left hand turn at the top of a steep hill and traffic control measures might also be appropriate here as it may be difficult for cars to turn if a lorry is coming down the hill. Station Road is also rather narrow in places, e.g. at Torr Crescent and it might be too tight for a car and a timber lorry (loaded or unloaded) to pass each other. It might be appropriate for the whole of Station Road from the mini roundabout up to the Lineside Walk / Torr Farm Road / Station Road junction to be controlled by traffic lights or if a light system at the main junctions advising if a lorry was on the road or not might be the answer.
- A number of driveways, particularly ones on the W side at the bottom of Pier Road, have poor visibility on to Pier and Station Roads so it is important there is a well-advertised timetable that is adhered to for lorry movements.
- A number of residents have expressed concerns about the impact of the 44 ton lorries on the road surface of Pier Road / Station Road. We believe financial arrangements may be negotiated with the local authority to address the additional wear and tear on the roads and we would appreciate further details on what measures would be in place to ensure the road is maintained to its current good standard.

## **Recreation**

- Highlandman's Road is a popular walking route and well used. It is a core path and of historical significance as a drove road and coffin road (see attached note below). Clear signage will be required and the harvesting team aware that walkers and dogs will be using the road and tracks. We suggest a timetable detailing where the harvesting teams are working and lorry times is posted on the gates at Torr Farm and it would be useful to have this information displayed further down the road too at the mini roundabout and bottom of the hill. The Community Council can also post this information on our website. It might also be useful to have a leaflet drop with all the information delivered in the village. The easiest way to do this might be via a flyer the Community Advertiser magazine.

## **Environment and Historic Environment**

- We note that there are several areas of long term retention marked on the M7 Felling Phases map and these relate to native woodland. There are some veteran trees and pockets of native woodland in the forest as you are aware (see native woodland map below). We don't think the map has quite covered all of them (e.g. on the E side of the NE-SW aligned track between Phase 1 and Phase 2 felling areas) and would like to be reassured that the pockets of native trees, particularly the ancient beech trees, will be fully identified and protected. We would also note that there are several banks and drystone dykes relating to earlier agricultural practices on the hill and it is important the historic environment is identified and protected.
- The eastern part of the Phase 1 felling area at Drumfad Wood overlies or is immediately adjacent to a 1732 designed landscape, please see maps below, and care must be taken to avoid the earth banks here as these are significant historic environment features.
- We note that the cup and ring marked boulder in the firebreak at the SE part of Drumfad Wood in the Felling Phase 1 area is avoided but care must be taken that machinery does not disturb the cup and ring marked boulder area and fencing it off may be appropriate.

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- We also have some concerns about the impact on wildlife and particularly birds and would like details of what mitigation measures will be taken to protect nesting and resident bird populations.
- The indicative borrow pit location does not appear to have any adverse environmental impacts but we would appreciate details on the size of the proposed borrow pit and if only this one is proposed for the whole project.

## **The Aftermath**

- Previous timber operations on Highlandman's Road have damaged drystone walls and drainage. We would like an assurance that any damage to walls, drainage ditches, culverts, burns and the track would be made good.
- We would appreciate details of the proposals following felling. We do not want to be left with the wasteland of stumps and brash that follows clear felling and would appreciate details of reinstatement / replanting proposals. Highlandman's Road and the woods and hillside is a main recreational area for residents and there is considerable concern that it will be accessible after the felling.

This is rather a long list! However, we are trying to cover all the concerns and questions that we are aware of and to highlight the perceived difficulties. We hope these comments are useful to your project planning. We look forward to arranging a suitable date for a community engagement event in Rhu in the next few months.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Baker and Peter Knox

Rhu and Shandon Community Council

cc. Members of Rhu and Shandon Community Council

Helensburgh Community Council

Councillor Robert McIntyre

Councillor Maurice Corry MSP

Councillor George Freeman

Gerry O' Hare, Argyll and Bute Council

Callum Robertson, Argyll and Bute Council

Campbell Divertie, Argyll and Bute Council

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## Highlandman's Road notes

Highlandman's Road, described as a cart road by Battrum in 1864, was refurbished by the Dowager Duchess of Argyll in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Ann, d. 1847). Obviously if it needed to be refurbished it was already old by 1850 – it is older than Helensburgh.

Highlandman's Road is an old drove road and linked Glen Fruin to the Gareloch at Rhu, it runs from Torr Farm (Rhu) to Drumfad Farm (Glen Fruin). It is not a major droving route but a minor and more local drove road.

Also note that cattle and horses were swum across the Gareloch from Rosneath to Rhu point / Rhu Ferry and also transported by ferry. This is the most southerly Argyll drove route and the main southern route was generally Mark to Portincaple and then via Whistlefield to Strone in Glen Fruin. It was normal practice for drovers to swim the beasts across narrow crossings and note there was a major cattle fair (Dumbarton Tryst), held latterly at Carman hill above Renton and it attracted around 8000 cattle each year in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was also a horse fair at Drumfad, Glen Fruin.

Rhu Parish Church was the only church in Row parish (parish 1646 and present church (third one on the site) c.1854). (St Brides in Glen Fruin being much older and a ruin before the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the inhabitants of Glen Fruin walked over Highlandman's Road to the church at Rhu on Sundays. This suggests Highland Man's road was used since mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and it is also known as a 'coffin road' and mapped as such in 1820 when coffins were carried from Glen Fruin to the church and cemetery at Rhu.

Maughan notes that in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Highlandman's Road led 'directly from the church, past the front of the manse, in a line which can be still faintly traced, with old trees on either side, and took a somewhat steeper line than at present through the Laggarie grounds.....(p108)

Sources:

**Battrum's Guide to Helensburgh and Neighbourhood** 1864 William Battrum, Helensburgh

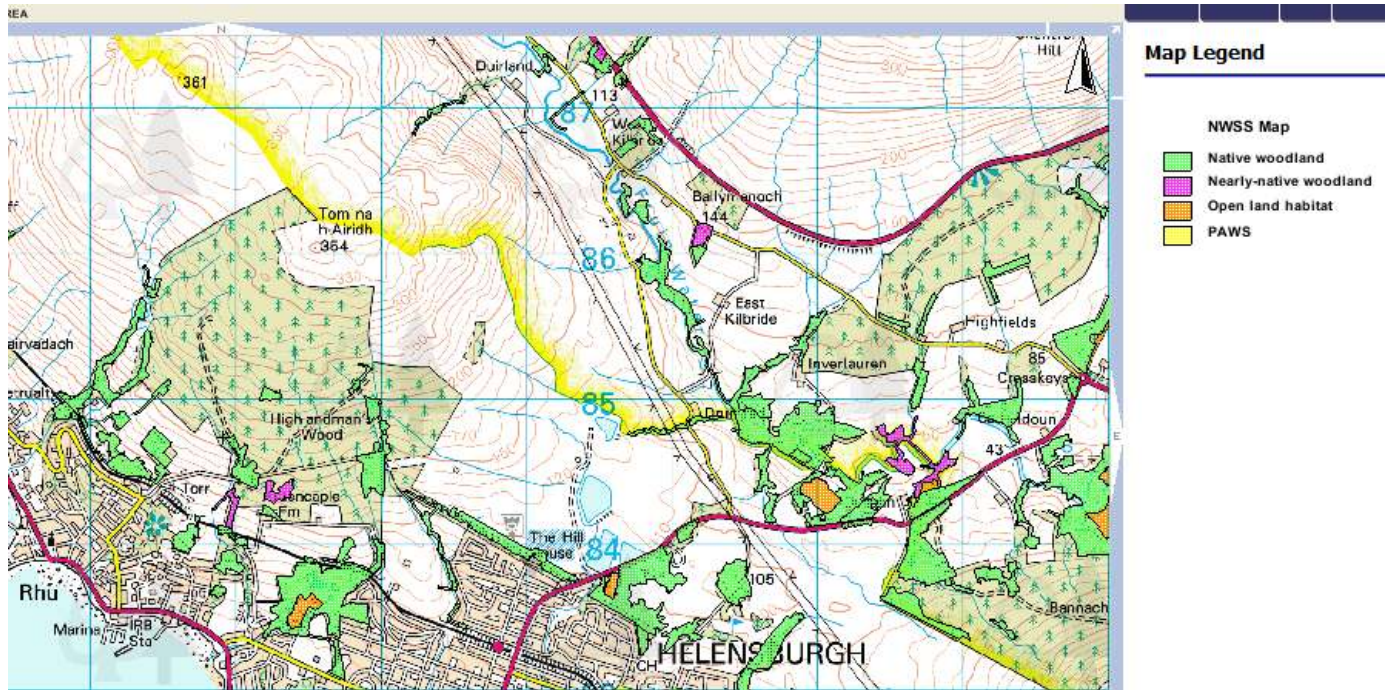
Haldane ARB 1952 **The Drove Roads of Scotland** (does not mention Highlandman's Road directly)

William C Maughan 1897 **Annals of Garelochside**, Alexander Gardner, Paisley and London.

George McLachlan 1894 **The Story of Helensburgh**, McNeur and Bryden, Helensburgh

John Mitchell 2000 **The Shielings and Drove Ways of Loch Lomondside**

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**Forestry Commission Scotland Native Woodland Survey 2014**



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The top left part of the 1732 designed landscape overlaps with Drumfad Wood. Please see overlay on modern OS map below. The majority of the banks that represent this designed landscape have been damaged by the forestry plantation. Care should be taken to preserve what survives.

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**Figure 3. Modern Ordnance Survey map of Helensburgh showing the extent of the 1732 William Boucher Designed Landscape area.  
(OS licence number AL 100016476)**

