

PAPER 4

APPENDIX I

REPRESENTATIONS

From:Lynda Whitty
Sent:7 Sep 2013 01:23:11 +0100
To:Planning
Subject:Ref.2013/0249/DET. LAGGAN FOREST TRUST

Dear Park Planners

Laggan like many rural communities is desperately in need of commercial and social opportunities. Presently Laggan has no public transport, no village shop or resident Doctor and the new owners of the Monarch Hotel plan to close the hotel permanently from the 7th. October. This application for a Forest Centre at Wolfrax which is supposed to support local opportunities in fact is a direct THREAT.

I have 21/2 years of documented customer feedback which clearly shows traffic flow and I estimate 75%, at least, are from abroad (please come & see for yourselves my visitors books of 30 yrs.) The survey indicates a " Tea & Pee " brings customers in and the most popular direction of travel being West heading South.

There has been a significant increase in footfall since Base Camp closed. I have no objection if these mountain bike customers were catered for at the New centre. The problem is that a new all year facility will not be viable serving this market alone. The current catering franchise is contracted for a mere 6 weeks with additional days paid ad hoc. It is food breaks that brings in my customers from all over the world, direction of travel being mainly West heading South, but the sales from my shop keep the business viable. Retail sales form just under 50% of my total turnover. If I loose a significant percentage of the food break business to a facility 2 miles west of me I loose the corresponding opportunity for retail.

A permanent facility would be forced to seek and attract the passing trade (I know this because my figures contradict the assumptions of the Forest Centre business plans) at this point the publicly funded centre stands in direct competition to my small PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. It is not acceptable for public money to be used in this way.

I have for over 34 years employed more local staff than any other Laggan businesses and shown my sustainability (three recession) but I have recently heavily invested in the future with a new expansion of my business facilities. If Wolfrax's Forest Centre targets mountain bikers then there is no problem. However, the current proposal envisages an unsustainable new enterprise that will not work in its own right but in the process of FAILING will damage the viability of my own good little business.

May I end by offering all the funders an invitation to visit me and my business.

Yours faithfully

Lynda Whitty POTTERY COFFEE SHOP, LAGGAN

Comments for Planning Application 2013/0249/DET

Application Summary

Application Number: 2013/0249/DET

Address: Wolftrax Strathmashie Laggan Highland

Proposal: New reception centre to include bike hire, changing facilities, cafe and seminar space.

Case Officer: Fiona Murphy

Customer Details

Name: Mr Roy Tylden-Wright

Address: Uvie Farm Round House Uvie A86t Laggan Road - Balgowan West Access, Newtonmore, Highland PH20 1BS

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:1. The design is not backed by sound commercial assumptions.

Example: excessive rents saw the demise of a permanent catering provider. Trust projections employ the same level of rent for a permanent facility ignoring the current model: a seasonal catering van that attends at times of peak use. This model is popular and viable. The current design does not have a docking bay or deck area suitable for the purpose.

There is no business case for a bike shop - unused most of the year- but a maintenance dock stocked with the most common spares would work.

This and the bike 'shop' could be covered in the off season by the forest office (who currently offer stop-gap catering) if the staff could be persuaded to provide cover at times of demand (ie weekends & holidays), showing a commitment comparable with private business.

2. The design process and final result fails to reflect local character or provide local opportunity.

By employing remote urban professionals the Trust have ignored the pool of local design and building skills. The end result is a bland corporate design that does nothing to brand the facility. This design eliminates input from local designers and specialist builders: post and beam, pile mounted, roundlog for starters. Any of these could be employed to provide the necessary facilities, resulting in a process that provided real local opportunity for public display, local employment, local business development and training.

3. The defective business model will damage existing businesses.

Before the permanent catering facility fails it will turn to any additional source of revenue- inevitably that will mean the passing trade- and head to head competition with other local businesses. Even this will not work, but damage will be done to others.

This proposal has been designed 'up' to a budget not 'down' to real life. We need a building that belongs, that expresses community 'ownership' not disempowerment.