

Appendix I

PLANNING STATEMENT



**PROPOSED ACCESS TRACK TO LOCH GYNACK
200 METRES WEST OF PITMAIN LODGE,
THE PITMAIN ESTATE, KINGUSSIE**



PLANNING STATEMENT

In support of Proposed Access Track to Loch Gynack, Pitmain Estate, North of Kingussie

This statement provides information on the reasons for the proposed track, including the economic and social benefits, in support of the current planning application.

1. Background

The proposed track to the west of the existing conifer woodland forms the second phase of diversionary works that will allow the separation of access for estate management, guest lodge and recreational users. The proposed bridge over the Allt Mor watercourse and short section of track approved on 6 June 2013, as per 2012/0402/DET, provides the first phase of the access diversion. This will initially provide a shorter link between the game keeper's house and the agricultural building to the west side of the river as well as a more direct route out on to the hill for shooting parties, walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. This will also avoid disturbance to the guest accommodation which the existing track continues north from and then past the workshop to the hills beyond.

The existing track also branches off in front of the guest lodge in a southerly direction and then there is a further branch south east along a private driveway to the main house (Pitmain Lodge). The main track continues in a south westerly direction towards Loch Gynack. This track is frequently used by anglers who generally park their vehicles in front of Pitmain Lodge and walk through the adjoining field containing livestock to reach the loch. The tracks are also well used local routes by walkers, riders and cyclists. The east side of the woodland past Pitmain Lodge and the guest accommodation is a Right of Way.

The second phase of the diversionary access is intended to:

- (a) facilitate better estate management access to the hills including the movement of livestock between the southern fields and northern enclosures;
- (b) allow anglers to drive their vehicles almost to the loch shore without intruding on the privacy of the guest lodge and Pitmain Lodge; and
- (c) allow for vehicular use of the existing route to be dedicated to these properties in future.

However, as a Right of Way it is recognised that access along the existing route cannot be obstructed and that there is a legislative process to follow for diversionary measures in future.

2. Proposed Development

With regard to the detailed proposals forming part of the current application we advise of the following: -

- (a) The new track is approximately 750 metres in length.
- (b) The finished width of the new track does not exceed 3 metres to correspond with the width of the approved section and bridge.
- (c) A Highland grass seed and wild flower mix will be sown very lightly down the centre of the track.
- (d) No existing trees are affected.
- (e) To help minimise the visual impact it was originally intended that the new track would be off set a short distance from and run parallel to the existing fence on the west side of the woodland. However, ground conditions, site topography, the need to avoid major earthworks and



disruption to the natural environment as well as avoid steep gradients for use by vehicles now mean siting the track at a distance varying from 8 to 40 metres from the woodland fence. This position still minimises impact in the wider landscape.

- (f) Suitable works using existing turfs and topsoil removed during excavation will also help integrate it into the existing landform.
- (g) At the south end the track will tie in with the access to the proposed Power House 1 for the approved hydro scheme.
- (h) A landscaping statement which address the impact and indicates the landscape proposals is submitted support.
- (i) A separate construction method statement is submitted demonstrating how construction minimises environmental disturbance.
- (j) Details of appropriate diversionary and way-marking signage proposed are submitted.

3. Aims of the National Park

With regard to the four main aims for Scottish National Parks, set out by the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, we consider that the proposed development complies as follows: -

(1) To Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

The design of the proposed track is in keeping with the rural character of the area and will have little or no detrimental visual or wider landscape impact. More than two thirds of the track is located close to existing woodland to lessen the potential impact. The detailed construction involves the careful grading and covering of any cut and fill sections with natural materials. In addition, the development will be carried in a manner which will minimise impacts on the natural heritage.

(2) To Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

The use of existing natural materials located on or nearby the site is proposed. The track is to be formed by scraping and levelling the existing surface material and using surplus to cover exposed areas of cutting. As such, this promotes the sustainable use of natural resources.

(3) To Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

The proposed development has the potential to support access opportunities in the Pitmain area by providing an alternative route avoiding the guest accommodation and does not detract from enjoyment of the area by all users. This includes improved signage for the general public and access for certain sporting activities, notably fishing on Loch Gynack and game bird shooting and deer stalking on the hills. Promotion of better enjoyment of the area by the owners of the estate and their guests will also be achieved through separating domestic and estate traffic.

(4) To Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

The development will enable the estate to work more efficiently and allow for improved access without disturbance to residents of the guest accommodation. Improving the working practises of the estate will support economic development. This together with other activities are important to the long term viability of the estate and the local economy, which benefits from tourism associated with outdoor pursuits and enjoyment of the natural environment. In the short term construction works will be of some economic benefit through employment of a local contractor.



Loch Gynack is let out to the local community, without charge, for angling purposes. Improved access to the loch and other sporting and informal outdoor activities will enhance the recreational use of the estate by local persons which is also a social benefit. As such, the principle is in accordance with the aim and general planning policies to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area.

4. Cairngorms Local Plan

In terms of demonstrating compliance with the CNPA Local Plan policies, the following are relevant to the proposed development: -

Policy 5 – Biodiversity, which seeks to ensure no adverse impacts on habitats or species identified in the local biodiversity action plan.

The proposed development does not involve major earthworks and the route of the track avoids trees and a wetland area to the southern end. In such regards this should help minimise impacts on habitats or species.

Policy 6 – Landscape, which sets out that there will be a presumption against any development that does not complement and enhance the landscape character of the Park. Exceptions will only be made where any significant adverse effects on the landscape are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance and all adverse effects have been mitigated.

It is considered that there are no significant adverse effects on the landscape as most of the track will be discreetly located adjacent to an existing woodland. It is also designed to be integrated into the existing sloping land form through respecting the contours as far as practicable, together with sensitive cut and fill, remedial earth works, re use of turf, planting and re-seeding, as appropriate. As such, it will have little impact upon the wider landscape and will therefore comply with the policy. See the Landscape Summary Statement for full details.

Policy 16: Design Standards for new development, supported by supplementary planning guidance in the form of the sustainable design guide.

The design of the proposed track is functional and generally follows guidance set out in relevant guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage. The use of natural materials from the ground along the route and from a nearby borrow pit are suitable for this rural location.

Policy 34 – Outdoor Access, which encourages development that improves opportunities for responsible outdoor access. Any development which would result in a loss of public access rights or loss of linear access (such as core paths, rights of way etc.) will only be permitted where an appropriate or improved access solution can be secured.

There is a network of well used tracks around Pitmain, including a Right of Way leading north from Kingussie to the Creag Mor and Dubh hills and beyond. The current proposal will not block this Right of Way, but offer users an alternative route which avoids going past the guest lodge and main house (Pitmain Lodge). Directional signs are to be provided to highlight this option and to manage all visitors, whether casual walkers, horse riders, cyclists or anglers, or guests who are participating in sporting activities of fishing, grouse shooting or deer stalking.



The standard of track proposed is similar to existing tracks in the area whereby the route is suitable for all users notably for horses, walkers and cyclists. It will also provide for vehicular access for estate management purposes and anglers using Loch Gynack. As such, the proposed development is considered to comply with this policy in principle.

Conclusions

Overall, there should be no adverse environmental impacts as a result of this proposal. At the same time, public access over the existing popular recreational routes in and around Pitmain and Loch Gynack together with the estate management will be enhanced.

