

AGENDA ITEM 6

APPENDIX 2

2019/0347/DET

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

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Client - Balavil Estate

Site Address – Balavil Estate, Kingussie, Inverness-shire, PH21 1LU.

Project – Installation of forest tracks at Croftcarnoch Forest Plantation (In retrospect)

Background

Balavil estate extends to approximately 7500acres (3000ha), access across the estate is served in the main by a single spinal hill road/private way of approx 12km(7.5miles) in length from the main estate holdings to the River Dulnan in the north west of the estate.

The Estate has proposed a network of track upgrades across its land to facilitate the future land management objectives, which include thinning the dense, native-species plantation woodlands, designating vast tracts of managed moorland for native tree planting, leaving areas fallow to rewild and regenerate naturally, increasing deer management further in these areas to eliminate browsing in order to encourage native flora to flourish.

Permission was granted by Highland Council in November 2016 by way of Prior Notification & Prior Approval (Ref No 16/04569/PNO)that approx 7km (4.4miles) be repaired and improved. This work has now successfully been completed. Further works to improve the same track extending to the River Dulnain are now underway, working closely in conjunction with the CNPA. Further applications have since been applied for track resurfacing works at Kennels woodland plantations and area known as Juniper south of Creag Bhalg.

Work to a partially-constructed track which follows the north and west perimeters of Croftcarnoch Plantation has commenced prior to planning consent being granted.



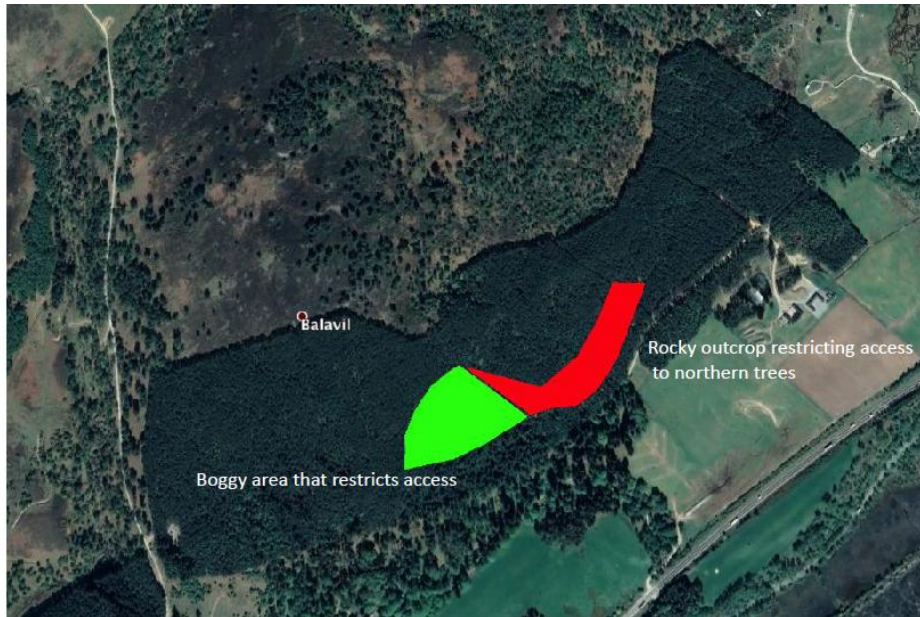
Section of Track awaiting final surface treatment

Justifications

The specific long-term objective of the Estate is to expand the naturally regenerating woodland of Creag Bheag with a native species planting regime around Creag Bhalg (in association with Trees for Life – please see correspondence attached).

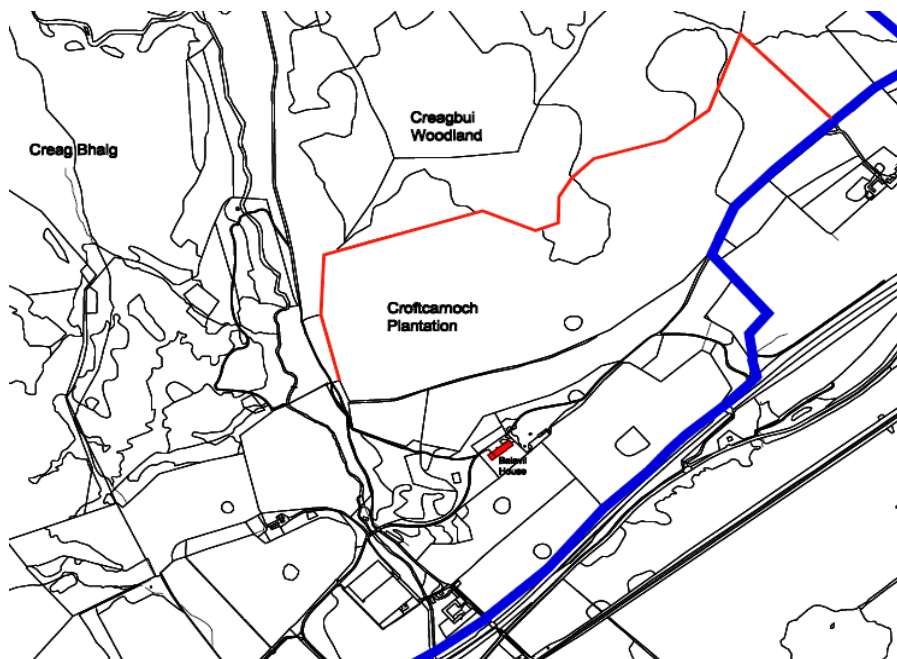
A further phase of forest/woodland expansion involves thinning out the dense Scot’s pine plantation woodland utilising the Croftcarnoch track and, following a period of increased deer management on Creag Bhuidhe and across the lower reaches of the Estate, allowing the open areas of moorland on Creag Bhuidhe (Craigbui Wood) to rewild and regenerate naturally.

Furthermore, it has been identified that large area within Croftcarnoch forest plantation has an undulated rocky outcrop which would be difficult for a forward machine or harvester to negotiate. The tracks around the perimeter would allow direct access and egress from any point for the aforementioned negating the need to take convoluted routes through the forest to carry out thinning works and extraction etc.



Description

1no section of forest track at Croftcarnoch is primarily identified as being sought for planning approval. Total distance – 1.7km or thereby.



Methods of Construction

The guidelines as set out by Scottish Natural Heritages Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands (2015 edition), also Good Practise in Design, Construction & Use of floating roads in Peat (Aug 2010) and SEPA advise on Pollution Prevention and Environmental management. Flood risk, surface water drainage and water engineering works. Borrow pits and Restoration and habitat enhancement are to be followed during the planning, design and construction phase of the works.

Works to construct the track would require the use of a 13 tonne tracked excavator to minimise wheel markings and assist compaction, a 10 tonne wheeled dumper and a vibrating roller. A stone crusher may be required on a loader for grading material onsite.

All plant and vehicles will be refuelled using on board pumps from bunded grab tanks to eliminate the risk of spills. A spill kit will be carried on site at all times.

It is planned that the Croftcarnoch track works are to be completed by the same contractor whom has carried out the works on the previously approved hill tracks leading to the Dulnain River, which have subsequently been over seen by CNPA during the working stages.

A short section of steeper track has been constructed along the mid section of the Croftcarnoch track where the gradient falls outwith that of the guidance of the SNH, It was decided that a shorter point to point section of track which minimised the visual and ecological impact on the CraegBui woodland landscape would outweigh that of having to deviate from the fence line of Croftcarnoch forest with an elongated arrangement of S bends to ascend/descend the gradient. The Estate appreciate that any 'wash out' or track erosions through vehicle and weather damage will be continually taken care of as part of the ongoing maintenances.

Furthermore a spur track of approx 100m in length or so has been created from the mid section at the highest point of the track heading north into the Creagbui Woodland which services existing pheasant feeders. As Balavil is also recognised as a Sporting Estate, the need to service locations around the estate such as these with minimal access/egress issues for personnel has been taken into consideration as part the new track planning.

For the most part of this existing track material will be obtained from 'winning' on site, from shallow borrow pits which run parallel to the upper most side of the track or from the material currently contained within the existing tracks. This method efficiently removes the requirement for hauling large quantities of imported material long distances from the public roads into the site.



Example of existing hill track construction at Balavil Estate

Culverts have to be installed/reinstated at various locations to take draining water away from the track. These will be placed at existing surface water crossings to improve and maintain the surface of the track by the use of large diameter piping. Twin walled pipe at either 450 or 600mm diameter with silt trap and splash stone detailing at each ingress and outlet. All carefully uplifted turfs will be laid aside for reinstatement onto bare surfaces to encourage regrowth. Parallel borrow pit drainage crossings will be installed at max 150m centres at locations to suit the existing topography.

Any borrow pits which are proposed to be shallow dish shaped excavations these will not be cut into the hill, as per the recommendations set out by SNH 'Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands'. All uplifted turfs will be laid aside for reinstatement over the surface of the borrow pit immediately after excavation.

Note – All uplifted turfs should be reinstated within 72 hours of excavation otherwise a method of hydration should be used to maintain sufficient moisture content in the turf.



Track Section awaiting final surface



Completed Turning circle (east end of track)

Proposed Materials

- Onsite materials won from parallel borrow pits; generally all won, graded and worked within the circumference of the excavator.
- Subsidiary materials from saucer borrow pits.
- Larger boulders brought up and laid aside for use at watercourse culverts.
- Culverts – 450/600/900mm diameter twin wall plastic pipe.

Design – Associated Documents

- 1:25000 location plan
- 1:7500 site plan – inc delineation of the track and areas of specific features
- 1:2500 site plan – identifying woodland/forestry areas within estate
- Construction Details – Typical profile of track construction inc. shallow borrow pit channel
- Ecological Report by Enviro Centre
- Supporting Correspondence from Trees for Life
- Woodland Regeneration Overview Plan
- Forestry Commission Felling/thinning License 2019