

Appendix I

Mr D Manson
Planning Officer
CNPA
Ballater

4th May 2010

Dear Mr Manson

Application No: 10/048/CP

Thank you for your visit to site on 16th April. We trust that you found the visit useful. As you noted we have a problem - our existing accommodation options are very limited. Our business has grown substantially over the past 24 months, and we continue to invest in our guest facilities which we believe will attract further business. The key growth area is educational activity breaks for schools. As we outlined in our initial supporting case, even at current levels of centre utilisation we are not able to provide a basic standard of accommodation to our staff. We are pleased to provide additional information in support of our application.

Purpose of development

We confirm that the purpose of the development is for the provision of staff accommodation to meet both an existing and developing need. The inclusion of five units within the application reflects our openness regarding our plans. Given the lead time required to put in place such a development, we did not want to be in a position where we were reverting to the CNPA shortly after completion of a first phase. As discussed, we would be happy with a condition preventing the separation of the staff accommodation from the centre buildings on the permission or, if it were necessary, we would be prepared to sign a Section 75 Agreement.

Site of development

Consideration has been given to making additional staff accommodation available within the buildings, however there are both practical and principle implications which prevent us from taking this course of action as we discussed during our meeting. Purchase of property out with the site boundaries has also been evaluated as have three sites within our boundaries.

- **Site One. South of the Allt.**

Deemed unsuitable because of reasonable flood risk in area, extent of the roadway required, including a new bridge, the level of tree removal required (established silver birch, alder, rowan) and difficulty in dealing with septic tank soakaway in an area prone to flooding..

- **Site Two. West of the site, up hill on site of existing storage yard.**

Previous discussions with CNPA, as part of a wider development identified this as a potential site for staff accommodation. Extensive work completed by architects and civil engineers in 2008. Cost of groundworks were prohibitive. New roadway and housing would be very obvious from outwith the site.

- **Site Three. North East of ground on existing plateau**

This is our proposed site of the new buildings. There is significant cost associated servicing this site, however we believe it offers the best balance between distance from the main centre while still facilitating on call duties. It is not obvious within the site unless you are arriving on site (a 3D graphic has been appended), and will only be visible from a short section of an estate road which goes along our boundary. Buildings will be set into wooded area giving a natural backdrop.

Current and near future need.

The table in the appendix outlines how we are presently managing to accommodate the staff, the size, location and an overview of the very significant issues that it presents us with. The table also shows how the situation will change post development to demonstrate both our existing business and the future growth over the coming year. It is not our intention to accommodate all our staff on site. We have a number of staff who live locally who are employed on a permanent (administration), seasonal (catering and housekeeping) or sessional basis (activity instructors and grounds work).

Design

We have had detailed discussions with our architects and considered your feedback and would make the following observations.

- **Consolidation of accommodation in to one building.** Having reviewed the proposed design again, we believe that this would not be appropriate. Expansion of the terraced unit beyond it's existing footprint would further increase the visual impact. If we were to maintain the size of the terrace, and redesign the internals to house four units, then to maintain the amenity within the building we would have to increase the height of the floor and effect move towards a two storey building , which again would be too big in the context.
- **Change of style to steading / stables.** The main way that this would be achieved would be through the reduction in size of the gable end profile and roof aspect. This would result in an increased floor area. Depending on the aspect of the roofing we may also lose the ability to use the loft space in a meaningful way. This may increase cost, increase visual impact and reduce in size of accommodation being provided. Houses of these designs would also be out of context as they would not normally have been build on that site
- **Reduction in the number of units.** We believe that we have reasonable justification for the number of units in our application – more detail in the attached table.
- **Exterior cladding.** While our drawings show the buildings in a reddish brown, the colour is limited by the software being used in the design. As indicated in our discussions we are happy to consider other colours of timber, or the use of timber that will clad and sit well with the silver birch. Most buildings on the estate are white harled, and consideration was also given to this, however timber cladding was thought to fit the most recent view of the CNPA as an appropriate finish.

It is our view that the existing design is the best compromise of floor area, design and finish within the context of the site. We have completed two 3D drawings of the site from different aspects which show how the buildings fit within the existing setting.

Should you require any clarification or additional information please do not hesitate to contact either Paul Bayton, or if in relation to design, our agent, Colin Armstrong Associates.

We look forward to our next meeting, which you suggested would be at your offices in Grantown-on-Spey.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bayton
Operations Manager
Scripture Union Scotland - Alltnacriche.

Current staff accommodation, challenges and the situation post development.

Role (Seasonal/Perm)	Current Accommodation	Size of accommodation	Location	Notes / Challenges	Future Role and accommodation plans.
Manager (Perm)	Bungalow	Three bed c110m ²	On site, 50m from centre	Good standard of accommodation, currently used for manager and family.	Remains unchanged
Asst Manager (Perm)	Flat	One bed c45m ²	On site in Sports building.	Sound ingress from sports hall, external outbuilding called the "music room" and from flat above – resulting in lack of privacy and disturbed time off. Fire alarms.	Role occupies new accommodation unit 1. Flat becomes available for seasonal staff use
House and Catering Manager (Perm)	Flat	Studio c30m ²	On site in Sports building accessed from public area	Access from within sports hall facility – lack of privacy. Poor insulation (both thermal and sound) and limited facilities. Significant noise transfer in to flat, from sports hall, "music room" and flat below. Intended as summer seasonal accommodation, but being used as permanent. Use will change once new staff accommodation is complete.	Role occupies new accommodation unit 2. Flat becomes staff room, provides office space and an option for overnight accommodation for visiting staff. Insulation (sound and thermal) will need addressed
Education co-ordinator (10 months considering perm)	Room in main house mid week, offsite at weekends	Ensuite room c18m ²	Within main house accommodation across from dining room	Inadequate space and poor location. Being within main building, staff can hear groups at all times. Use of this room directly impacts the size of school groups we can take (room takes up to 6). This room forms a key part of our access for disabled users. Weekend accommodation has to be sourced to make time off possible. Catering facility in duty room in separate building.	Role occupies accommodation unit 3. Room returned to use for guest disabled accommodation.
Catering Assistant (Seasonal)	Room in main house at all times	Ensuite room c12m ²	Within main house accommodation sleeping area	Extremely small ensuite room with poor location. Being within main building, staff can hear groups at all times. Use of this room directly impacts the size of school groups we can take (room takes 1 person). Weekend accommodation has to be sourced to make time off possible. Catering facility in duty room in separate building.	Role occupies main flat in sports block. Room returned to use for guest accommodation.

Role (Seasonal/Perm)	Current Accommodation	Size of accommodation	Location	Notes / Challenges	Future Use
Instructor (Perm)	Offsite flat (rented)	Studio c28m ²	Two miles from centre	Good rented accommodation, although limited facilities – eg laundry done at main centre. Staff cannot undertake overnight on call duty from home, so have to move to duty room, which has limited facilities. No local transport, staff have to use car, bike or walk. This requires crossing the A9.	Role occupies accommodation unit 4.
Instructor (Seasonal - considering perm)	Offsite flat (rented)	Studio c28m ²	Two miles from centre	Good rented accommodation, although limited facilities – eg laundry done at main centre. Staff cannot undertake overnight on call duty from home, so have to move to duty room, which has limited facilities. No local transport, staff have to use car, bike or walk. This requires crossing the A9.	Role occupies accommodation unit 5
Volunteer Instructors / Placements	Staying with local supporters of centre/ Temporary caravans Duty room	various	Varies	Caravans used as last resort, when there is no option. No private washing facilities – these are in the centre. If staying with local supporters then transport becomes an issue. No private washing facilities, doubles as staff room. Adjacent to other staff accommodation, suffers from noise transfer.	May stay with other seasonal instructors in accommodation unit 5, staff flat, or studio flat if only an overnight.
		c20m ²	In sports building		May be refurbished and accessed form staff flat to accommodate another seasonal staff.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR NEW STAFF HOUSING AT ALLTNACRICHE

Context

Alltnacriche is a residential activity centre, owned by Scripture Union Scotland, approximately three miles from Avlemore. The centre is set in 17 acres and offers group accommodation for up to 59 inside the main house and during the summer season an additional 30 may be accommodated in tents. The centre currently operates with approximately 8,000 bed nights and we believe an increase to 10,000 bed nights per annum is sustainable through development of the business. The centre is set in parkland and woodland, primarily of silver birch and Scots pine.

The centre was set up in 1988 as a self catering facility, with minimal input required to the groups in terms of the programmed activities. A development made to the staff accommodation was made in 1994. The centre has since seen substantial development with an increase in the level of catering and instructed activities being provided. A growing number of schools are using our educational activity breaks and this has increased the level of staffing required for instruction, catering and housekeeping.

Current portfolio of accommodation

In the outdoor residential activity centre industry, it is common practice to include accommodation as part of the remuneration package – the majority of which would be proximate to the centre. The current on-site accommodation allows for three permanent members of staff which comprises one bungalow, a one bed flat and a studio flat. The flats are located within an area which suffers from the noise generated by users of the centre. Fire alarm tests and activations cause regular disturbance – decanting of staff. Seasonal staff have been accommodated in temporary caravans, which are not connected to the water supply, and which have no private washing facilities – these being available in the main centre. This is not an acceptable solution for a seasonal, never mind an all year-round facility.

During the most recent season we let a property in Aviemore and housed other staff with families supportive of the activity of the centre. While this has alleviated the situation, it has underlined to us the value of on-site accommodation. As employers we are conscious that we have to rely on the goodwill of our employees. We also employ local staff on a permanent and sessional basis.

The current business and projected development requires the re-situation of current accommodation and provision of additional accommodation

To achieve the projected bed nights figure quoted earlier, the centre has to function as an all year round facility with the development of the activities offered. The full on-site staff complement would be:

- Manager
- Assistant Manager
- Housekeeping and Catering Manager
- Housekeeping and Catering Assistant
- Instructors (2)
- Schools Education co-ordinator

This would be supplemented by local permanent staff, seasonal and sessional staff. Scripture Union Scotland also runs a GAP year training programme for young people who are over 16. Participants in this programme will spend some time based at Alltnacriche and will require accommodation for the duration of the stay.

The re-situation of accommodation will allow an increase in the serviceable office space and the provision of better staff room facilities, as well as addressing the significant issues regarding the situation and noise transfer into existing staff areas.

Nature of employment and case for on-site accommodation

A member of staff is on-call at all times and must be in close proximity to the centre to deal with any queries that guests may have, or emergencies such as power outage or fire. This may be the case up to three times a week – asking staff to use a duty room on such a frequent basis is not acceptable. Staff are required to work split shifts and given the limited transport options from the site, on-site accommodation is the most practical option.

While the cost of accommodation in Aviemore is in line with the Scottish average (c£140k), the average salary in this industry sector makes housing locally well in excess of the financial means of staff – a situation that the wider financial market turmoil only compounds. We are committed to providing a good standard of accommodation for our employees.

Consideration has been given to purchasing locally, and for the most recent season we let property locally to see if this presented a practical option. This has affirmed our belief that on an operational basis, on site accommodation is the most practical and economic option.

- There is no public transport available to the site, many of our employees do not have access to their own transport - staff must be transported to and from site.
- Operational requirements require varying shift times dependent on role and this further complicates the number of journeys required to shuttle staff to and from the site.
- The accommodation provided has been a compromise, with members of staff sharing a property. This is not appropriate in anything other than the shortest term – other solutions were prohibitively expensive, with significant cost in sourcing let property locally as well as there being limited availability of suitable letting property.

While using seasonal staff would reduce the requirement for on-site accommodation, there are good business reasons to limit the use of this type of staff beyond the costs. These members of staff are not able to provide on-call cover, participate in evening duties, or work split shifts to the same extent.

Funding the development

Given the charitable status of the organisation, capital investment projects of this type are not taken lightly and would only be approved if deemed necessary by the Board. This approval has been received and the organisation is committed to the provision of good quality accommodation as part of the remuneration package. An appeal to supporters of the organisation has generated a significant financial contribution to the development in excess of £135,000.

Supporting conservation and education in the outdoor environment.

The centre works to minimise its impact on the environment, and promote the growth of indigenous species which support wildlife on our land. In 2005 as part of extensive refurbishment of the centre, solar panels and a ground source heat pump were installed in the main house, part funded by Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company. We work with the schools to deliver a programme which is in line with the Curriculum for Excellence, outdoor classroom and give schools the options of working towards the John Muir Trust Award during their stay with us. The accommodation will be environmentally sensitive in design and will form part of our education programmes both for schools that come for a residential, and also for local schools to visit. In 2009 we were featured in the CNPA schools video project looking at sustainable energy, and are currently looking to increase use of renewable energy in our main centre.

Contributing to local community life.

Increasing the portfolio of staff on site will support the ethos under which the centre is managed where we work together as a community, as well as contributing to the wider community. Both the Aviemore and Badenoch Cluster schools attend the centre for a residential event each year.

Policy

A number of policies within the relevant policy documents that apply in this area support this proposal. It is our view that the case for accommodation is consistent with the Highland Structure Plan, local plan for Badenoch and Strathspey and the draft deposit plan of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). The proposed development will further enable all year round provision of educational activities, which in turn will provide a sustainable base of business increasing employment and contributing to the local economy.

Highland Structure Plan

Policy G2

Proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- *are compatible with service provision (water and sewerage, drainage, roads, schools, electricity);*
- *are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking as well as car;*
- *maximise energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design, including the utilisation of renewable sources of energy;*
- *are affected by significant risk from natural hazards, including flooding, coastal erosion, land instability and radon gas, unless adequate protective measures are incorporated, or the development is of a temporary nature;*
- *are affected by safeguard zones where there is a significant risk of disturbance and hazard from industrial installations, including noise, dust, smells, electro-magnetism, radioactivity and subsidence;*
- *make use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and recycled materials;*
- *impact on individual and community residential amenity;*
- *impact on non-renewable resources such as mineral deposits of potential commercial value, prime quality or locally important agricultural land, or approved routes for road and rail links;*
- *impact on the following resources, including pollution and discharges, particularly within designated areas: habitats freshwater systems, species marine systems, landscape cultural heritage, scenery air quality;*
- *demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character and historic and natural environment and in making use of appropriate materials;*
- *promote varied, lively and well-used environments which will enhance community safety and security and reduce any fear of crime;*
- *accommodate the needs of all sectors of the community, including people with disabilities or other special needs and disadvantaged groups; and*
- *contribute to the economic and social development of the community.*

Developments which are judged to be significantly detrimental in terms of the above criteria shall not accord with the Structure Plan.

Strategic Aim No. 6

"Buildings should be energy-efficient and of attractive design in keeping with their surroundings. Use should be made of local materials wherever possible. People should live in settings which add pleasure to their lives not diminish their experience... We need to find ways of achieving quality living environments in both larger settlements and rural areas. By securing better living conditions for all we can also help create the climate for investment, for a vibrant economy and where the environment is valued by the community at large."

For the reasons below, we would consider that the proposal complies with policy G2 of the Highland Structure Plan.

- The proposed housing can be serviced within the site and will have minimal effect on servicing of the wider community.
- Staff would not require transport to get to work thereby reducing daily car trips to and from Alltnacriche.

- The houses will be adopting various measures to ensure they are as energy efficient as possible including super-insulation. In 2005 the centre itself invested in a ground source heat pump system, coupled with solar energy to replace the existing oil boiler which was used to heat the main house, and is committed to minimising the ongoing energy costs through the use of environmentally efficient construction of on-site developments.
- There are no known risks from natural hazards in the proposed area.
- The site does not fall within a safeguard zone.
- This is not a brownfield site, but there are no other suitable sites within the land ownership of Alltnacriche.
- The proposed houses will have minimal impact on the amenity of anyone other than the staff and residents of Alltnacriche, for whom their amenity will be greatly enhanced.
- It is unlikely that this proposal will have an impact on any non-renewable resources.
- Apart from being part of the National Park, this site is not within a designated area. It is surrounded by a hillside covered in birch woodland that does not have any specific protection.
- The site has been chosen to minimise the visual impact of the new houses both from the access road, but also from the main house. It is set within the trees on a slightly elevated platform. The houses will be timber clad so they will sit well within the trees. A steep pitched roof and windows with vertical fenestration incorporate the elements of traditional Highland housing design into the houses.
- Providing appropriate accommodation for all staff within the curtilage of Alltnacriche improves safety for all residents and staff, it will provide a sense of community that is currently somewhat disjointed.
- The houses will be built to current building standards and as such will meet the needs for accommodation for all staff.
- The outdoor centre community at Alltnacriche will be much improved by the provision of appropriate on-site accommodation.

Badenoch & Strathspey Local Plan

Policy 1.2.3 – Housing in the Countryside: Restricted Countryside Areas

A strong presumption will be maintained against the development of houses in the following areas:

(a) all sensitive areas;

(b) in areas where service restrictions become necessary, including Broomhill, Finlarig, Drumullie, Kinveachy, Street of Kincardine and Drumguish where drainage/ground conditions/access are considered to be suspect.

Exceptions will only be made where a house is essential for the management of land, related family and occupational reasons. Restrictions on the subsequent occupancy of such houses will be enforced.

Adherence to the principles of good siting and design will be required in such cases.

Single houses outwith recognised settlements will require to be; (a) properly located in harmony with the landscape; (b) compatible in scale and character with local buildings, where appropriate; (c) designed and constructed to a high standard with particular emphasis on proportions, roof pitch, fenestration and selection of materials.

The land associated with Alltnacriche is covered by the above policy from the Local Plan adopted in 1997. While the policy is not generally supportive of new housing in the countryside, it does indicate that exceptions can be made where a house is essential to the management of the land and for occupational reasons. We would suggest this is an exceptional circumstance where accommodation is required specifically to run an outdoor centre throughout the year and as such the design elements indicated in the Local Plan have been adhered to.

Development Plan Policy Guideline – Housing In The Countryside

Provision of housing associated with an existing or new rural business – *"The provision of housing to support these [rural business] enterprises may be required and national policy recognises the role of the planning system in facilitating this."*

While the Local Plan provides the policy for this area, the DPPG on Housing in the Countryside (August 2009) is a material consideration. This is supportive of the proposal.

Calngorms National Park – Deposit Draft Plan

Policy 24 - Other housing outside settlements

Developments for other new housing outside settlements will be permitted where:

- a) the accommodation is for a worker in an occupation appropriate to the rural location; and
- the presence of the worker on site is essential in order to provide 24-hour supervision of the rural business; and
 - there is no suitable alternative residential accommodation available including reuse and conversion of other buildings on site; and
 - the proposed dwelling is within the immediate vicinity of the worker's place of employment;

In this circumstance, it has been demonstrated earlier in this document that it is essential that staff be available on site for 24-hour supervision, that there is no year round alternative accommodation within the site and the proposed site is within the immediate vicinity of the place of employment.

Policy 27 – Business Development

Proposals which support economic prosperity development will be considered favourably where the proposal is compatible with existing business uses in the area, supports or extends an existing business, is located within an allocated site identified on the proposals maps, or where the proposed development:

- c) other business opportunities supports the vitality and viability of a farm, croft or other businesses in a rural location, is complementary to that current rural business activity or promotes diversification within that business, or creates new small scale development which supports the local economy.

Clearly staff accommodation linked to this outdoor centre will allow the centre to operate much more efficiently and safely, provide a better overall environment for staff and visitors alike and allows the business to expand the season in which it is currently constrained.

Policy 33 – Tourism Development

Development of tourism-related facilities / attractions, and proposals which support such facilities, will be favourably considered where they enhance the range and quality of tourism attractions and facilities, and/or lengthen the tourist season, have a beneficial impact on the local economy and do not have any adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park.

Lengthening the season in which Alltnacriche operates is a key aim to growing the business in this area. Expanding the season to a year round facility will only serve to benefit local services in Aviemore and the wider area.

Calngorms National Park – Priority Aims

Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes

The centre works to ensure that any development on site does not impact on biodiversity, but will enhance the seventeen acres we have. During educational weeks with schools the biodiversity of the site and conservation activity are key components of what we deliver. In past initiatives, some invasive species of

shrubs and trees have been removed from the site, open areas have been carefully replanted with native trees absent from the site which enhance the diversity, while other areas have been allowed to regenerate naturally.

Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access

Alltnacriche provides an opportunity for a wide range of people, including many school groups, from outwith the National Park to visit and enjoy everything the Park has to offer. Within the grounds of the centre itself, resident visitors can enjoy the variety of outdoor physical activities that the centre offers; the educational aspects of wildlife and sustainable living; and a high quality venue for groups going away together. Providing accommodation for more staff allows for a much longer season and therefore giving many more people the opportunity to visit this centre throughout the year. This meets at least two of the outcomes identified for this priority aim.

Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable

Every outdoor centre needs to have staff on site 24 hours a day and needs to provide accommodation for staff. As a centre, Alltnacriche have attempted to provide accommodation within Aviemore when they have run out of space, with very limited success. Staff do not always have access to their own transport and the cost of purchasing or renting property in the area is prohibitively high. Providing high quality accommodation for staff would allow the centre to recruit and retain staff far more easily. Part of the ethos of the centre is sustainable living and this will be carried through to the proposed new housing. This meets three of the outcomes identified for this priority aim.

Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park

The centre actively promotes the Cairngorms National Park as a destination in its literature and supports the priority aims of the authority through the provision of good quality educational activities (Incorporating the John Muir Award) and recreational activity. The programmes we offer promote an understanding of the environment, conservation issues, outdoor access education and encourage participation in outdoor recreational activities. The Centre makes use of and promotes many other local facilities in the area all of which combine together to give people a very positive experience of being in the area. This meets at least four of the outcomes identified for this priority aim.

Making Tourism and Business More Affordable and Sustainable

Part of the attraction of Alltnacriche as a centre is its situation within the landscape, the beautiful views, the peaceful setting. As a centre, it has gained an excellent reputation for providing high quality holidays for children from across Scotland. Many children come back year on year and many schools return year on year for the educational Spey Breaks. Throughout the year, the services of many local suppliers are made use of. This meets three of the outcomes identified for this priority aim.

Contribution to the economy

The centre contributes directly to the local economy, outsourcing many activities and transport arrangements to local suppliers. The value of the business to the economy is estimated to be in the region of £200,000 per annum based on our current bed nights – please see appendix 1 for the detail behind this information. We estimate that an additional 25% increase in bed nights is achievable and this will contribute a further £40,000 to the economy. A list of our main local suppliers is provided as an annex at the end of this document.

Summary

We believe that the provision of staff accommodation to facilitate current and future levels of business supports the construction of additional staff accommodation within the grounds of the estate. The proposal will also allow the redevelopment of existing staff areas. This will greatly benefit both the current and future members of staff and be the foundation for an increasing contribution to the local economy.

Paul Bayton, Manager, Scripture Union Scotland, Alltnacriche.

Appendix 1: Current Contribution to the Economy

Bed Night Driven Spend

<i>Split of bed nights</i>	Total number of bed nights - 8000		
	Holidays	Weekends	Schools
Catering	£4	£4	£5
Excursions	£2	£5	£10
Own spend on site	£1	£1	£1
Visitor local spend	£5	£10	£2
Optional Activities	£4		
Estimated spend	£64,000	£48,000	£28,800

Central Spend to the Economy

Rates and Services	£6,000
Council Tax	£3,000
Staff spend in local area	£24,000
Maintenance and repair	£18,000
Vehicle Servicing	£2,000
Local employment	£3,000

Overall contribution	£196,800
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Appendix 2: Sample of Local Suppliers used in previous six months

Loch Morlich Water sports
Loch Insh Water sports
Alvie Stables
Highland Wildlife Park
Highland Folk Museum
Reindeer Centre
Landmark Centre
Cairngorm Mountain Funicular
Extreme Dream Climbing Wall
Spey Valley Hire
Macpherson Joiners and roofing
Rob Mackay – plumbing and heating
Collin McKinlay – gas servicing
Macgregors Fire Protection
Logic Alarms
Highland Industrial Supplies
Stuart Grant – butchers
Stagecoach (Aviemore office)
Bremners Coach Hire

Sustainability Statement – Additional information.

Staff Housing: Alltnacriche.

Ref: 10/048/CP

The following provides additional detail beyond what was contained in our original supporting statement.

Staffing Structure:

We are happy to confirm that not all our staff are accommodated on site, nor is this our intention. We do not believe it to be desirable or commercially viable. There are a number of roles in the office, house and the kitchen which are part time which are not based on site are undertaken by people who live locally.

Supporting conservation and education in the outdoor environment.

The centre works to minimise its impact on the environment, and promote the growth of indigenous species which support wildlife on our land. In 2005 as part of extensive refurbishment of the centre, solar panels and a ground source heat pump were installed in the main house, part funded by Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company.

We work with the schools to deliver a programme which is in line with the Curriculum for Excellence, entitled “the classroom outdoors” and give schools the options of working towards the John Muir Trust Award during their stay with us. The accommodation will be environmentally sensitive in design and will form part of our education programmes both for schools that come for a residential, and also for local schools to visit. In 2009 we were featured in the CNPA schools video project looking at sustainable energy, and are currently looking to increase use of renewable energy in our main centre through the addition of more solar panels.

Specific considerations of energy source.

Consideration has been given to how we might make use of renewable energy in the proposed properties and the decision made to make use of economy electricity and wood burning stoves. The decision has been made on the following basis.

- Solar: Given the site location, and the level of tree cover, solar panels would not be an effective source of energy. In heavy snow the panels become ineffective.
- Ground Source Heat Pump: Experience has shown us that the ground temperature in our area is low and the gains made by using GSHP are modest. The site also works against the installation of a ground loop.
- Air Source: We are aware that air source pumps have been fitted in our area, but are concerned that they would not operate effectively in severe winter weather and would add noise pollution.
- Micro hydro: The stream on site is a flood stream, and does not provide the consistent level of flow required to make hydro effective.

In addition consideration was made regarding the financial effectiveness of the above technologies, and grants notwithstanding, felt that houses insulated to the current building standards would be most effectively served through the use of electricity, supported by wood burning stoves.

Enhancing the surroundings.

We are committed to the replanting of the trees that will be removed as part of this development, will ensure that bird boxes and bat boxes, which are already used through out the grounds will be placed in the immediate environs of the properties.

In building these properties we do not want to lose the very thing that makes Alltnacriche special for the many young people who come to experience the natural world, and will work to minimise the impact of what we build.

Paul Bayton. 24th May 2010.

