

## **Land Reform Review Group Submission of evidence from Glenfalloch Estate**

### **Introduction**

Glenfalloch Estate is pleased to submit evidence to the Land Reform Review Group. The submission includes a brief background on the estate and its activities, a summary of the various organisations with which it works and concludes with some comments relating to the Group's remit.

### **Estate Background**

The estate is a mixed use highland estate of 25,000 acres, located to the north of Loch Lomond and within the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National park. Activities on the estate include farming, deer management, fisheries management, native woodland management, hydro-electric generation and development and visitor related activities (camping, B&Bs etc).

There are five Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the estate, as well as a Special Area of Conservation. Parts of the estate are in a National Scenic Area and a Golden Eagle Special Protection Area.

The estate is privately owned and managed and has been in the same family ownership for 80 years.

The estate has one full time employee and employs one or two others on a part time basis. Much of the administration is outsourced and is overseen by the Managing Partner.

The estate's primary objectives, within constraints of a limited budget, are:

- to maintain current activities and preserve the traditional character of the estate
- To maintain and improve the natural habitat and bio-diversity specifically for:
  - Deer
  - Fish
  - Birds
  - Flora
- Support development of other sustainable activities in the glen

A significant recent development has been the commissioning of the first of four consented hydro-electric generating facilities on the estate's land. Whilst these are operated by an independent company (albeit the estate partners together own just under 40% of the company), the estate derives a significant income from this which will contribute to the ability of the estate to finance existing running costs and future investment as well as increasing the permanent staff on the estate.

## **Strategic direction, governance and management**

As will be seen from the detail given below, the estate's activities are already governed and overseen to a large extent by outside agencies. The following are the key elements which combine to give direction to the estate.

1. SSSIs: Each SSSI is governed by a management agreement with Scottish Natural Heritage. This prescribes permitted activities on each site, actions that need to be taken to maintain the site and agreed standards to be adhered to
2. Scottish Rural Development Programme: In recent years several initiatives have been undertaken to improve habitats in specific areas of the estate. This include regeneration and replanting of native broadleaf woodland, bracken eradication, wetland habitat improvement, vermin control to encourage increases in black grouse numbers, raptor feeding, and river margin protection and improvement. Each element has a specified set of deliverables in return for the payments received and is open to inspection at any time by SGRPID
3. Access provision under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
4. Deer management: As a deer manager, the estate is obliged to abide by the provisions of the Deer Code and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act. The estate also belongs to two Deer Management Groups (the Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG west of the A82 and the Balquhiddier DMG to the east of the A82. The estate reports to the DMGs on such matters as annual culls and counts, health of the herd and habitat impacts. A cull level is proposed and agreed with the group in order to meet the overall objectives of the group. This is overseen by SNH which can, if it sees fit, impose conditions and requirements relating to the cull and the herd. This has not occurred in our area.
5. The National Park: The NPA is responsible for a wide range of issues relevant to the estate, ranging from visitor access, to habitat management and planning matters. The NPA encouraged and supported the creation of a Land Use Management Plan. This document provides an inventory of the estate's natural habitats, including their condition and prescriptions for future management. This has been key in informing decisions on, for example, SRDP initiatives and prioritising areas of expenditure.
6. Fisheries management: The River Falloch, which runs almost entirely through estate land, is an important tributary of the Loch Lomond catchment. The estate works closely with the Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust to agree policies for and improvements to the fisheries.
7. Strathfillan Community Council: The estate maintains an active relationship with community council largely on an informal basis. In the case of the hydro development on the estate, it has been agreed in principle to provide some direct support to the community once the developments have reached a stage where such support can be financially justified.
8. Other agencies / organisations: The estate has relationships with a number of other bodies including the RSPB, the Scottish Canoeing Association, the John Muir Trust, The Mountaineering Council of

Scotland, the Mountain Bothies Association, to name just a few. In every case we believe we have good relations and have worked to address concerns that may exist. We also maintain an open dialogue with a range of politicians, civil servants and officials from NGOs.

### **Comments on the above**

1. We would submit that much of the estate's activities are already overseen / conditioned by an extensive array of stakeholders.
2. The Land Use Management Plan referred to was a significant development in providing an explicit statement of the estate's objectives, creating an inventory of "natural" assets and providing a series of agreed actions to be followed.
3. We may be fortunate in that our position within the National Park provides us with a natural "lead" stakeholder, which is reflective of the broader aspirations of the Scottish Government and, indeed, society more generally and we therefore feel fully accountable for our activities, successes and failures
4. In our work with local community representatives, members of the NPA and other organisations, we have never felt anyone desired closer engagement with our activities or decision making. Quite the reverse: most potentially interested parties seem only too pleased not to have to spend valuable time with us. It seems that they all have greater priorities elsewhere.
5. The estate is able to operate effectively owing to short lines of communication / decision making chains. The financial risk attached to each and every initiative resides wholly with the partners of the estate and is risk free so far as any other body is concerned
6. Although we are recipients of significant financial support (e.g. SRDP/ SFP), these funds are provided against a specific agreed plan. It has always been our policy to plough back any surplus that might arise on any programme
7. It may well be possible to replicate the conditions under which the estate operates (as outlined above) by the following specific means:
  - a. Encourage the compilation of a plan, similar to the Land Use Management Plan for a wider number of enterprises
  - b. Audit adherence to existing plans through agencies, for example, SNH has a statutory duty in relation to deer managers' activities to ensure that these are performed in accordance with the Deer Code / WANE. Another example would be compliance with the objectives of a national park. NPAs have significant resources at their disposal to monitor activities within their boundaries. Their composition should ensure that they reflect a wide constituency of interest in their specific areas and that such powers are exercised proportionately and with due consideration for the interests of different parties.
8. It is clear to us that the establishment of the National Park and the introduction of much recent legislation and various codes (Outdoor Access Code, Deer Code etc) has changed significantly the

perspectives of land managers, access takers and others who have (or wish to have) a stake in Scotland's land.

9. New relationships, where judged necessary, should be promoted as far as possible on the basis of mutual consent and should, on all sides, comprise parties who are knowledgeable, committed and qualified to contribute.

We would be prepared to answer any specific questions that may arise from this submission or to discuss this further with the Group.

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