

05 OCT 2016

Balavil Estate – 30th September 2016

Supporting Information for Prior Notification Application

PN Ref No: Bal 01. Name – Bothy OS Map Ref: NN 789 026 to NN 753 072

Scoping Opinion

At the outset, there is a requirement for an EIA scoping opinion in the CNP as a National Park, a request will be made at the time of application for this PN for an opinion from Highland Council.

It is suggested that as this track is existing and that this PN application will enhance the local environment of the tracks and in part mitigate the prominence in the landscape, an EIA would not be necessary. The points to note:

- Provide a repair to a width of 2.5m rather than a spreading track.
- An enhancement of the erosion of the gradients of the overhanging peatland.
- Reparation of all poorly drained surfaces with a defined and consistent drainage strategy.
- Mitigating the prominence in the landscape of existing borrow pits.

Information required as per The Highland Council's Guidance for Agricultural and Forestry Private Ways (January 2015) under Permitted Development Rights

- 1. A completed application** accompanies this supporting paper
- 2. Agricultural Holding Number** - Land Holding No: Balavil Estate – 79/439/0001 and in the name of the tenant, Mrs H Heerema.
- 3. Forestry Registration Number** – Balavil Estate – Craighui Wood – 030/001892
- 4. Agricultural and Forestry Activities** –

The Balavil Estate extends to about 7500acres (3000ha).

There is an extensive stock management undertaking and access is required over the whole area through this central track which extends for a further distance equidistant to this submitted Prior Notification. The management of the stock which will number 600 ewes and lambs requires constant and regular access to the sheep and movement of sheep every 6 weeks through Spring, Summer and Autumn for dipping and therefore requires good vehicle access for large transporters. Access using an improved track improves time management, better stock husbandry and considerable wear and tear of the vehicles.

A suckler herd of pedigree Belted Galloways has been created and will number 30 cows and followers.

There are 750 acres of forestry. There have been a number of years of low key management for Craighui Wood, which is part of a Forestry Commission Scheme and also around Creag Bheag. There is now a need for a renewed effort to manage these areas of woodland and this will require an upgrade of the track particularly from the Craighui Wood access down to the junction and to Mill Cottage and the main drive as the Georgian Bridge is too weak for forestry lorries. The area of woodland North of Fountainhead is also in urgent need of thinning.

This track is used for access for stock fencing contractors and the track affords an ability to gain access to some of the most remote parts of the estate and improving this existing track fulfils that role. Improving this existing central track negates the perpetration of numerous ad hoc tracks across the moorland.

Ancillary Activities

Access by the general public to the countryside is crucial to the Scottish Government's intention to uphold the enjoyment of the Scottish countryside and landscape. Improvement of existing hill tracks afford the opportunity for the public to enjoy the area whether on foot or by cycle and provide the means for the "Right to Roam". There is plenty of evidence to show that local residents in the Kingussie area use the estate for access.

Moorland management of the estate entails a need to gain easier access to the hills and repairing this existing track is the obvious way forward to achieve that outcome. Sporting pursuits, while not an agricultural use, do provide an important component of maintaining the fragile environment on the hills. Improving existing tracks prevents

further damage to the moorland by providing a more consistent access and not the poor landscape effect of a plethora of ad hoc or poorly maintained tracks across the hills.

5. **A scale location map of the whole track** – This map is attached (Scale – 1:25000) and shows the whole length of the track for the proposed repair at Balavil Estate including the areas of woodland – Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4. The main points of note are indicated along the route.
6. **The additional map** shows the specific route from the policies of Balavil House to the junction (Section 1) and includes the line of the track up from the bridge and Mill Cottage (Scale 1:7500) to the end of the birch woodland (Section 2). The main points of note are indicated along the first two sections of the route.

7. Description

Situated entirely within the Cairngorms National Park, the existing track runs from the edge of the immediate policies of Balavil House to a point 400m North of the Bothy at the above OS point. The track has a spur that comes up from the bridge adjacent to the Balavil House track and joins the main track at an existing junction at OS NN 788 026. The total length of track identified for repair on the plan is 4.4 miles in length. The track is identified on the accompanying plan at a scale of 1:25000.

The existing track is, on the whole, in fair condition and will provide a good base for improvement and upgrade for more and heavier agricultural and forestry machinery. The track can be divided into 4 main sections:

1. The short piece of track through area of open grassland from the immediate policies of Ballater House to the junction with the track coming up from the bridge.
2. The track from the bridge and Mill Cottage up to the junction and on through the birch woodland to the open moorland and the forest under a forestry scheme.
3. The track across open moorland with little or no evidence of peat
4. The remaining track past the Bothy to the end of this part of the PN application which passes beside the extensive peat bog.

8. Method of Construction

- **Plant Required** - the track would be repaired using an 8 tonne slew loader which would be on tracks to minimize any wheel markings and facilitating compaction. There will be a

need for a 9 tonne dumper and a vibrating roller. There may be a requirement for a stone crusher on a loader for creating a finer material on site.

All vehicles will be refueled using on-board pumps from a bunded grab tank to eliminate any spills. A spill kit is carried on site at all times.

- **Section 1** – Extending from the immediate policies of Balavil House, the existing track is to be constructed with an overlay of rolled 100mms of Type 1 granular sub base, topped with 70mms of binder tarmacadam and 30mms of top surface tarmacadam.

This track will access the reinstated first paddock for the pedigree Belted Galloway herd. The tarmac road will stop just short of the track up from the bridge and Mill Cottage.

The accompanying diagram shows a cross section of the repaired track – Fig 1.

- **Section 2** – The track from the corner of the main drive up through the junction and the birch woodland will be repaired by the use of small random borrow pits adjacent to the line of the track for on-site material. The track will be profiled with a camber to each side of the centre of the track to allow any water to run to the side of the track. The accompanying diagram shows a cross section of this construction – Fig 2. There may not be a requirement to construct a drainage ditch on either one or both sides of the repaired track depending on the existing track profile and topography. The track material will be rolled with the digger tracks and a roller.

On the steeper existing track coming up from the bridge and Mill Cottage, the steep sides of the embankment above the track will be graded back at a shallower angle. All turfs will be set aside for reinstatement onto bare surfaces to encourage rapid re-growth – Fig 3

There will also be a need for a maximum of 3 culverts formed to take draining water off the track on this part of Section 2. These will be placed at existing surface water crossings to improve and maintain the surface of the track by the use of piping. The pipe will be double walled 450 mms diameter plastic pipe with silt trap and splash stones at each ingress and egress of water through the pipe.

The map indicates the crossings and the accompanying diagram details the cross section of the culverts – Fig 4.

A short section (30m) of new track needs to be constructed to join an adjoining track coming in from the West which will create a triangle for accessing the main track going North and South and eliminate the need for extensive cutting across the slope. This short piece of track is 2.5m wide for smaller 4x4 vehicles and will be constructed along a short ridge to eliminate cutting into the gradient with a drain to the top side of the track. The map indicates the short piece of track and the accompanying diagram details the cross section of the structure – Fig 5.

The shallow borrow pits will not be cut into the hill but will be formed and used as per the recommendations in SNH's "Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands". This will be done by excavating in a saucer shape on level ground and not cutting a 'face' into the hill. All turfs will be set-aside and re-laid over the surface of the borrow pit immediately after the excavation. An accompanying cross sectional diagram details the form of the borrow pits – Fig 6

Near to the top of this section, an existing ditch will be re-profiled to catch the water from the top-side of the track coming Southwards and from the surface water coming from the North direction and run to the formed culvert using a 600mm twin-walled pipe - Fig 7.

The centre of the track will be seeded with appropriate hill seed mixture or seeds collected from heathers to affect rapid re-growth and produce a 'Land Rover' style track of two wheel lines. No turfs will be left to store for more than 7 days so that maximum growth vibrancy is maintained.

- **Section 3** – For the most part of this part of the existing track, it will be repaired from 'winning' on-site material from a shallow borrow pit running parallel on the top side of the track. This is an effective and efficient use of on-site material and eliminates mechanically moving large quantities of material long distances along the track.

An accompanying cross sectional diagram details the form of the parallel borrow pit arrangement – Fig 8

There will be a need for a number of culverts (about 8) to be similarly constructed as in Section 2 and constructed as Fig 4 with 450mms or 600mms double walled pipe.

Three existing borrow pits on this section of track will be used for some material where it is not possible to gain sufficient material to repair the track. All of these existing

borrow pits will be improved in landscape terms by better profiling and use of turfs and the material that has been taken out in reprofiling the turf erosion areas and the short diversion.

This short diversion is identified on the map and is where part of the track is in standing water where two areas of pooling has taken place. This water does not flow to any drainage course and it will be necessary to divert the existing track around the pools. This is a slight diversion to gain a hard base and an accompanying photograph and plan details this work – Fig 9.

- **Section 4** – While there is some need to re-profile some examples of over-lapping peat which has been undercut by erosion in Section 3, the main areas of re-profiling are on Section 4. The intention would be to fold back the over-lapping peat and re-profile the gradient to a 45 degree angle and pull back the peat onto the new profile. This technique is advised and favoured by SNH and provides the opportunity to reverse the erosion outcome – Fig 10.

There is further need to rebuild two small water source crossings which flow under two poorly constructed and maintained bridges. These will be reconstructed with 900mms double walled pipe and supported at the ingress and egress points with very large boulders which would be placed to 'lock' the pipe. This would eliminate the need for cement or other binding product and thereby protect the water source. These large stones would be brought along the track from a spot on the existing track where there is a plethora of larger boulders. An existing ditch will be re-profiled to catch the water from the top-side peat bog and the track and run to the two water crossings.

There will no use of cementitious binding material and the twin-walled 900mm pipe will be bedded into the bottom of the watercourse to a depth of 100mms and gravel encouraged on the floor of the pipe for fish access. There will a use of straw bales and a membrane for a temporary silt barrier in the unlikely event of any silt becoming apparent during construction. As with all the formed culverts, the pipe will be set back so that the stone cover will eliminate the edge of the pipe as recommended by SNH.

An existing borrow pit on this section of track will be used for some material where it is not possible to gain sufficient material to repair the track as the ditch on the top side is mainly of a peat composition and will not yield sufficient material. This borrow pit will be improved by better profiling and use of turfs and eliminating the sharp 'face' in landscape terms.

The map indicates the crossings and the accompanying diagram details the cross section of two bridges and culverts – Fig 11.

There are a number of photographs to accompany this supporting paper.

A number of passing places – probably 4 – will need to be created. The four of them will be at the 4 existing borrow pits and are marked on the plan in Sections 3 and 4. These will be a minimum of 4m wide and 15m long as per the recommendations of SNH's "Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands" (2015 edition)

9. Materials to be Used

- Section 1 – Tarmacadam overtopping Type 1 base.
- Section 2 – On-site material won from small random saucer borrow pits along this section of track
- Section 3 – On-site material from a parallel borrow pit and also a part of the section using material from 3 existing borrow pits alongside the existing track.
- Section 4 – A proportion of on-site material won from a parallel borrow pit with the remaining material from an existing borrow pit adjacent to the existing track. Some boulders brought up from beside the existing track for formation of the replacement bridges.
- All culverts to be constructed using double walled plastic pipe of 450mms, 600mms or 900mms diameter.

10. Design

All aspects of the design are featured in the accompanying diagrams.

The guidelines as promoted by Scottish Natural Heritage's "Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands" (2015 edition) have been followed and presented throughout this Prior Notification application.