

8/5/8

6/3/08

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

A quality future for Hillwalkers and Mountaineers

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Mark Reeve,
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Forestry Commission for Scotland
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Dear Mr. Reeve

PATHS ON BENNACHIE

I am writing to raise one or two issues regarding the recent pathwork on Bennachie. I would like to put our comments in the following context. North East Mountain Trust, which is dedicated to protecting the mountain environment, supports the maintenance of existing hill paths where these are seriously eroded. We consider that some of the resurfacing of paths on Bennachie, such as the paths from the Back O'Bennachie car park near Oyne to the Oxen Craig, and the path from the Visitor Centre to the Mither Tap, to be models of good practice. These well-constructed paths have been surfaced with material which blends in with the surrounding colours, thus making them unobtrusive visually. It is with this in mind that we have concerns about the recent work undertaken on three paths [Mither Tap to Oxen Craig; Mither tap to near Craigshannoch and beyond; Oxen Craig south to the forest].

These paths have, for considerable stretches, been surfaced in a very light coloured material. When standing on the Mither Tap, the first two of these show up as bold yellow lines snaking across the central area of the hill. Whilst the Bennachie 'plateau' is hardly remote land, it used to have a certain 'wild ambience' which is now completely lost. The visual intrusion is also amplified by the drainage ditches having been dug out in a very rough manner in places or, it appears, simply utilising the old path for sections. In addition to the insensitivity of this work, we would raise the question as to whether these three paths needed resurfaced in their entireties or whether surfacing and drainage in the areas of worst erosion would have sufficed.

It is unclear whether this work has been completed but I am sure that you are aware that there are pipes etc lying in various spots which we assume will be removed. On the track from the Mither Tap to Craigshannoch a 'quarry area' has been created with heather removed [for edging?] and material for surfacing left in a pile. We feel that it is important that this 'mini building site' be returned to its natural state as soon as is possible and would like to know whether this is the intention.

Cont/...

8/5/5

March 6, 2008

We appreciate that this work is now a 'fact' but would ask the Commission and the other partners involved in path repair on Bennachie to consider whether the upgrading of more paths on the hill is really necessary. It is deemed that it is necessary we ask that steps are taken to ensure that it is carried out in the least intrusive manner possible.

Finally, in case you are not aware of this, maintained paths right across the hill have led to mountain bikers using these. One of our members was met by half a dozen cyclists descending the Oxen Craig to Back O' Bennachie [Oyne] car park at speed. This obviously poses a nuisance and danger to walkers, particularly children, and the Commission may want to try to look at ways of limiting cycling to the forestry tracks which surround the hill.

Thank you for your interest and I look forward to hearing your views on these matters.

Yours Sincerely

Jennifer A Cook
NEMT Chairwoman