

8/1/59

20 November 2008

Green Meadows
St James's Place
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 3UB

Dear Ewan

PATH WORK AND SIGNAGE ON BENNACHIE

I am writing on behalf of the Council of the Bailies of Bennachie concerning the path work and signage being carried out on the hill under the Heritage Lottery Project.

As you are aware the Bailies have a significant interest in the management of Bennachie and the Bailies Council are concerned that it appears that at no stage were we formally consulted for our views regarding the major programme of path extension and renewal, or of the proposed new signage.

It is appreciated that some members of the Bailies were also members of the Bennachie Centre Trust that had oversight of the project, and that most of the path work has been completed and a start will be made on the signage shortly. However the Bailies Council would like to ensure that in the future the Forestry Commission consult with the Bailies as part of the planning process when planning similar type work on Bennachie.

Yours sincerely

Alison Sutherland (Senior Bailie)

Cc Ian Fowell

8/1/59



Forestry Commission Scotland

**Moray & Aberdeenshire
Forest District**
Portsoy Road
Huntly
Aberdeenshire
AB54 4SJ
morayandaberdeenshire.fd
@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 01466 794161
Fax: 01466 794986

Forest District Manager
John D Thomson

Alison Sutherland
Baillies of Bennachie
Green Meadows
St James's Place
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 3UB

27 November 2008

Dear Alison

PATH WORK & SIGNAGE ON BENNACHIE

I refer to your letter of 20 November 2008, and must say I was surprised and not a little confused by the content.

In essence your letter raised two points and I will deal with these 2 key issues in the order you raised them;

- 1) That FES did not consult the Baillies Council at any stage regarding the Bennachie Project.

This statement does not accurately reflect the position. From the initial ideas that led to the project being funded by HLF, the Baillies were kept fully in the picture by James Mackay. As a senior figure in both the Baillies and the Bennachie Centre Trust at the time, James made sure that the fledgling project was fully communicated to the Baillies Council. He passed on the detail of discussions with all the project partners including FES on a regular basis.

You will be aware that the Baillies contributed £25k to the project (£12.5k to each of the visitor centre upgrade and path works). In reaching the decision to support the project to this level it would appear that the Baillies Council did feel that they were sufficiently well informed both as to the detail of the project and its objectives.

In addition to James keeping the Baillies Council informed in the pre-submission phase, once HLF awarded the Bennachie Centre Trust the grant, I attended a Baillies Council meeting on 22 November 2004 and gave a 2 hour presentation on the detail of the works to be undertaken on the hill. Gordon Cowie was Senior Bailie at the time and will be able to provide you with any necessary detail.

Proposed new signage – it was my understanding until your letter, that the Baillies Council continued to be kept fully informed by its members sitting on the Bennachie Project Working Group. This role was provided by James and Algy and we had presumed that Baillies Council members Mike Neely and Colin Millar as Treasurer and Chair of the Bennachie Centre Trust respectively, had taken over the role of keeping the Baillies Council apprised of the project progress. If this is not the case, then clearly all parties involved need to agree alternate communications.



It should be noted however, that the Bennachie Project Working Group were given delegated authority from the Trust to deliver the project, keeping the Trust (as lead partner) fully informed of progress, issues etc. By definition, the Bailies left the BPWG to "get on with it" on their behalf, as did the other partners.

Colin and Mike were fully involved in the discussions and proposals presented by Studioarc for the interpretation and orientation on the hill. I enclose the final proposals for the Bailies Council's consideration and either Mark or myself would be happy to attend a future Council meeting to discuss these in more detail if you wish.

2) "It is appreciated that some members of the Bailies are also members of the BCT...."

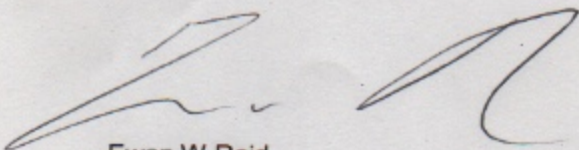
As stated above, from the beginning of the project – the Bailies Council members who also participated in the Project Working Group were we believed the key vehicles of communication between the two. To our knowledge neither the Trust nor the Project Working Group were informed of any change to this informal arrangement which we could readily have taken into account. If you would prefer that communications are not now routed through Colin and Mike please . contact Jonathan Young, Project Manager, to outline how you would like this addressed. . .

As for FES involving the Bailies in future projects/ plans of a similar magnitude this is not, and has never been, an issue. During the period of the Bennachie Project we consulted with you on the Bennachie Forest Design Plan and more recently on our proposal to do a feasibility study for a café adjacent the Bennachie Centre. We continue to enjoy Bailies support for work parties and value your input today as much as at any time in our long standing relationship.

On the subject of the Café – the feasibility report has now been delivered (later than the original timescales envisaged) and in summary, in the current economic climate, the business as proposed is marginal. As a result we will not be pursuing the proposal further at this time.

I am sorry that the Bailies feel FES has not communicated fully with them as regards the Bennachie project. Clearly however as outlined above this has been despite our efforts not because of any lack of action on our part. It would be useful to have your views in order that we can further discuss in order to ensure that any potential for future misunderstanding can be avoided.

Kind regards



Ewan W Reid

District Forester

Communities, Recreation & Tourism

CC Ian Fowell – by email

8/1/09

19 January 2009

Green Meadows
St James's Place
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 3UB

Dear Ewan

PATHWORK AND SIGNAGE ON BENNACHIE

Further to your letter of 27 November 2008 I have been asked by the Bailies of Bennachie Council to reply to you regarding this matter.

I think there may have been some misunderstanding with regard to the role of Colin Millar and myself on the Working Group considering the proposed new signage on Bennachie. In that role we formally represented the Bennachie Centre Trust although, with my Bailies of Bennachie hat on, I made Bailies Council aware of the draft plans prepared by Studioarc at a Council meeting on 29 July 2008 and on 30 July I sent them an e-mail with an attachment which showed the Studioarc proposals.

To save future misunderstandings the Bailies will ask to be formally represented on any future Working Group that is overseeing any similar project on the hill.

I note that the FES will consult with the Bailies in future regarding projects/plans of a similar magnitude and am happy with this arrangement.

Kind Regards

Mike Neely (Clerk to Bailies of Bennachie Council)