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Forestry grant aid refused to Monymusk laird

Sir Archibald Grant, of Monymusk Estates, has been refused grant aid from the Forestry Commission for the planting of trees on the Monymusk Triangle.

The site is one of the few gaps in unplanted land on the lower part of the Bennachie ridge up to the south-western slope of the Heather Tap, and the application is widely referred to consultants.

Their observations were reported at length to Gordon District Council Planning Committee, who were told that

Bailies of Bennachie, Campian Regional Council, the North-east Mountain Trust and a number of individuals had all expressed reservations about the proposals.

Their worries centred on loss of access and loss of the view from Heather Brig to Mither Tap; the use of electric deer fencing on an area widely used by families; the destruction of an area of natural regeneration; and a lack of a guarantee that 200 established Scots Pine trees, planted by volunteers, would be maintained.

Sir Archibald originally planned to plant 24.5 hectares on the Monymusk Triangle but a revised proposal submitted in April 1988 covered only 7.4 hectares.

The District Council lodged strong formal objections to the original scheme and retained its objection to the scheme as a whole. The council did accept the principle of planting in the reduced area and authorised the Director of Planning to negotiate a number of items to allow the

District Councillors made a site visit at the end of April 1988 and recommended that the electric fence be deleted; that Sitka Spruce be allowed rather than Douglas Fir and that the existing path be maintained, with vistas at occasional intervals.

Chairman of the North Scotland Regional Advisory Committee, Sheriff S. Scott-Robinson, visited the site in September with a sub-committee. In December, it was learned that the application for grant aid had been turned down on the grounds that it would adversely affect an amenity which has been enjoyed by the public for many years and that electric fencing would be inappropriate in such an area.

Sir Archibald can now appeal to the Secretary of State against the refusal or he can go ahead with the planting scheme without the grants.

Mr James Mackay of the Council of the Bailies of Bennachie, said, on hearing the decision: "We have always felt that this was an inappropriate planting plan for the area. It is good that the views of the Bailies and other groups such as the District Council have been vindicated."

"We are pleased that the recreational and amenity value of the area has been officially recognised."

scheme to be approved.

They asked for the inclusion of native hardwoods at the upper limit of the scheme and the retention of the Scots pines planted by volunteers.

They questioned the use of Douglas Fir in the scheme and the need for electric fencing, and requested further detailing of the proposed alternative footpath.